



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 1 March 2022

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Tuesday 1 March 2022

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
SCOTLAND'S CLIMATE ASSEMBLY	2
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION	25
Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2022 (SSI 2022/8)	25
Scottish Road Works Register (Prescribed Fees) Regulations 2022 (SSI 2022/9)	25
M8/M73/M74 Motorways (30mph, 40mph and 50mph Speed Limit) Regulations 2022 (2022/26).....	25

NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
7th Meeting 2022, Session 6

CONVENER

*Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Natalie Don (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)

*Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)

*Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Ellie Clarke (Scotland's Climate Assembly)

Lewis Elliott (Scotland's Climate Assembly)

Joan Lawson (Scotland's Climate Assembly)

Susie Townend (Scotland's Climate Assembly)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Peter McGrath

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 1 March 2022

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:31]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Dean Lockhart): Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the seventh meeting in 2022 of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, which we are conducting in hybrid format.

Under agenda item 1, we will consider whether to take agenda items 4 and 5 in private. Agenda item 4 is consideration of evidence that we will hear under agenda item 2, and agenda item 5 is consideration of a letter on the draft national planning framework that we will send to the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. Do members agree to take those items in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Scotland's Climate Assembly

09:32

The Convener: We welcome members of Scotland's Climate Assembly for our next agenda item. We heard from assembly members back in September, and we were keen to follow up with the assembly once the Scottish Government had responded to its report at the end of last year. We note that the assembly came back together to consider the Scottish Government's response and that it published a statement on that last month.

With us are Ellie Clarke, Lewis Elliott and Joan Lawson, who are members of the assembly, and Susie Townend from the assembly secretariat. Good morning, everyone, and thank you very much for accepting the committee's invitation. It is a delight to have you here.

We have just over an hour for the session. We will begin with questions. I understand that Susie Townend will allocate questions to the relevant member of the assembly.

One of the issues that the assembly raised in its "Statement of Response" was the need to retrofit homes across Scotland to reduce carbon emissions, and one of its recommendations was on the need for greater clarity and detail on what financial assistance would be available to those most in need to retrofit their homes. In previous committee evidence sessions, we have heard that the support that is available is a bit confusing and not widely understood or accessible. Was that part of your concerns in raising the issue in your statement?

Susie Townend (Scotland's Climate Assembly): I ask Joan Lawson to reflect a little on her concerns about fuel poverty and ensuring that the poorest are not disadvantaged by the recommendations or, indeed, by the Government's response to how it could implement the recommendations. I might then pass on to Lewis Elliott.

Joan Lawson (Scotland's Climate Assembly): Fuel poverty was one of the major concerns in our group. We felt that the working poor—the hidden poor, as we called them—who live just above the threshold for receiving means-tested benefits would be more affected by fuel poverty, as they do not have the money to pay for fuel. That is a real concern, but there is not a lot of detail on it. One detail that we heard was that people with equity in their house will be asked to use that for retrofitting it. That is quite a scary possibility, because a lot of people are not in a position to do that.

Fuel poverty is really important and is currently at the forefront of the discussion, especially given the rise in prices. A lot of people are panicking about those things. For example, my mother lived in a single end in Glasgow and the family had electricity put in the house in 1948. They were told that it would never increase in price, so she is a bit miffed.

I will pass over to the next member now, if that is okay.

Susie Townend: Thank you, Joan. Perhaps Lewis Elliott can say more on retrofitting.

Lewis Elliott (Scotland's Climate Assembly): The consensus was—or several people in the assembly mentioned—that it is already difficult enough for people to qualify and meet the requirements for the various schemes and grants through which financial assistance can be provided to retrofit homes. In addition, there is another barrier, which is people's lack of knowledge about which schemes are available where they live.

There is a two-tier barrier: people need to qualify for the assistance but, first, they need to be aware of the schemes. Charities and non-governmental organisations are trying to spread awareness of the schemes and get that financial assistance to the people who need it but, ideally, the Government would do more to ensure that the people who need those schemes are aware of them.

Susie Townend: Thank you, Lewis. Assembly members were very keen for there to be retrofitting, and there was a strong recommendation on that. They saw it as a way to address fuel poverty by investing in insulation and helping people with that. They talked about making available grants so that people would not have to spend as much on fuel. The discussions focused on both climate change and addressing fuel poverty. I hope that that covers the question sufficiently.

The Convener: Absolutely. Thank you. Those responses were very helpful, and we completely understand the concerns that were raised. The committee has been focusing on retrofitting and the heat in buildings policy through our inquiry into local government, and we will continue to do so. That is a massive part of our climate change targets in Scotland, and the decarbonisation of heat is one of the big challenges that we face across all aspects of the policy. The committee shares your concerns in that area.

My second question is, again, on the "Statement of Response". It states:

"We would like to see a clearer roadmap ... We want the" Scottish

"Government to commit to more specific actions"

and

"targets ... so that we are able to hold them to account for delivery"

of climate change targets. That is very much in line with evidence that the committee has heard from the United Kingdom Climate Change Committee, local authorities and others.

It would be helpful if you could provide examples of where you think that more detail is required. If you have looked at a particular climate change policy or target, you might have thought that, although you agree with it and understand what the destination is, you need a road map and a bit more—or much more—detail on how to get there and what that means for everyone in society.

Susie Townend: I ask Ellie Clarke to start by talking about some of the areas that she is concerned about, in which she felt that there was not a sufficiently clear road map. I will then pass the question on to Lewis Elliott and then to Joan Lawson.

Ellie Clarke (Scotland's Climate Assembly): One of the areas that I looked into as part of my workstream was diet and lifestyle. It is astonishing how much of an impact the diet habits of the nation have had on our carbon emissions as a country. There could be a lot more detail on the changes that we could make to diet and lifestyle, and on how we can monitor progress in that regard.

One of the recommendations that we felt would be a good short-term and quick win is recommendation 26, which asks for the Government to commit to leading by example in public procurement. In addition, I highlight recommendation 39, which talks about a public education campaign to promote sustainable diets. We felt that progress on those aspects could be monitored immediately. We know that agriculture and food are responsible for around 18 per cent of Scottish greenhouse gas emissions. Starting with a figure like that, we could implement a change that would involve the Government setting a precedent and enabling people to make a culture shift away from high-carbon foods. We felt that that could take effect immediately, as it would not need investment or technological exploration.

I know from speaking to parliamentarians that the single procurement document, which applies to public procurement, is being reviewed this year. We are therefore at a stage when changes can take place immediately. If the Government's progress in its public procurement could be monitored, even over a year, we could quite easily quantify the changes that have happened in public bodies.

In addition, that would have long-term effects through producing a culture change, with people changing their diet habits—[*Inaudible.*—]—scale. If the Government set a precedent and developed practice as a prototype in public structures, tangible progress could be monitored and we could make projections as to the impact of making such a huge change in diet habits across the nation.

Susie Townend: Thank you, Ellie. I will hand over to Lewis Elliott, who can talk about some of the areas in which he would like to have seen a more detailed set of timelines or more immediate targets. I know that he wanted to talk about packaging, so perhaps he can discuss that now.

Lewis Elliott: I was just looking for an example of that and found the Government's response to recommendation 35, on food carbon labelling. With regard to a timescale, our recommendation was for the Government,

"Within 5 years, to have fully implemented food carbon labelling".

In its response, the Government said that it supports the recommendation in principle and is committed

"to exploring the feasibility of implementing food carbon labelling".

That response lacks the same urgency that we were trying to get across by putting a specific timeframe in our recommendation.

I understand that, when doing a feasibility study, it does not make sense to put an absolute end date on the project, but it would have been very helpful and encouraging to see an estimated date on which the results of the feasibility study would come out. Even just knowing where we are going as a next step would help to put us on the same page with regard to where we are going over the longer term.

On food packaging, I am not sure that I have any ready examples that would be relevant to the question, so I am happy to pass over to the next person.

Susie Townend: Thank you for that, Lewis. Joan, is there anything that you wanted to see a specific timescale on? You might want to talk about public transport and support for the Oyster card for Scotland recommendation; I think that we wanted to see something a bit more urgent than what the Government has agreed to in its initial response.

09:45

Joan Lawson: I was looking at retrofitting again in that context. We had asked whether that could be done by 2030. Again, I will give the committee

a personal experience. We tried to get insulation to bring our house up to Passivhaus standards, but we cannot find anybody in Scotland to do that. It is a great worry that there is nobody available, and companies in England are not willing to come up and help out.

Overall, I was a wee bit disappointed with the Government's response. We would, as an assembly, like to hold the Government accountable for the things that it has said that it would do. We would like to check up on it in a year's time to ensure that things are going the way that we hoped that they would. I do not know whether that helps.

Susie Townend: That is super, Joan. Thank you. I am sure that we will come back, in more detail, to the question of what we would like to see in the future.

I will add to what the members have said on the public transport recommendations. The assembly members made a recommendation for an Oyster card for Scotland. I know that the Scottish Government has been talking about that for some time, but members felt that its response slightly missed the motivation behind the recommendation. Assembly members really wanted to see a much more integrated, joined-up way of moving across and between different types of transport, and from one bus to another, and for there to be a mechanism to make public transport cheaper, particularly for low-income families.

However, the response was focused much more on using an Oyster card as a way of paying, rather than on the underlying principles of making it more attractive and much easier for people to use public transport, and giving them a nudge to get out of their cars and on to public transport. Members said that they were grateful to the Government for its response, which was certainly considered and detailed, and for engaging at that level, but they felt that there was a lack of ambition and urgency, and perhaps a lack of thinking with regard to what the members were trying to get from the Government in its response.

I will pass back to you, convener, for the next question to the assembly members.

The Convener: Thank you. Those responses were very helpful, and assembly members raised a number of points. There were good points on the Oyster card and the challenging 2030 target for retrofitting. Again, the committee will be looking at all those issues.

I know that other committee members want to explore some of those areas, so I hand over to Fiona Hyslop, to be followed by Monica Lennon.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members'

interests, which shows that I am a member of the stewarding group for Scotland's Climate Assembly.

Good morning, and thank you for joining us. In its statement of response, the Climate Assembly makes a very strong statement when it says:

"We believe, from the Scottish Government's response to our recommendations for action, that Government needs to think less about what they can't do and instead demonstrate a positive attitude, thinking hard about how they can make things happen."

However, the Government was responding to recommendations from the Climate Assembly itself, and a lot of those recommendations, in particular the latter ones, are in areas where the Scottish Government does not have powers but the Westminster Government does.

I know that the assembly members were informed by a lot of expertise in different areas. Were you quite clear as to what the Scottish Government has responsibility for and what it does not have responsibility for? Was it deliberate that you made recommendations on which the Scottish Government could not take action?

When you say that the Scottish Government should think

"hard about how they can make things happen",

is that in the areas in which it has responsibility, or are you asking it to try to have an impact in areas that are still reserved to Westminster?

Susie Townend: I ask Ellie Clarke to answer those questions first.

Ellie Clarke: We were aware of some of the devolved matters. Because the climate emergency is such a huge and overarching issue and one that affects Scotland, the UK and the world, and despite there being some barriers to making changes in policy and law, there is an overriding hope that the Scottish Government might have some leverage in influencing the UK Government and speaking with a loud and strong leadership voice to represent its people.

We were looking to the future, to a time when we have those powers, if we have independence. We can look with a more aspirational or inspirational eye beyond the horizons that we are limited to in today's political realm. That is what we were hoping for from our leaders. It felt as if things were being dampened down and everything was staying in its comfort zone. We identified a lack of inspiration.

In our statement of ambition, we communicate the—[Inaudible.]—that we, as a citizens assembly, were looking for. We did not feel that that was picked up on in the responses. We wanted more ambition and zest and more determination that we

can work through this. It felt as if that was lacking. We understand that there are devolved issues, but there seemed to be a focus on what we cannot do rather than on what we can do. That was what we were trying to get across.

Susie Townend: I saw Lewis Elliott nodding as Fiona Hyslop asked the question. Do you want to add anything to what Ellie Clarke said, Lewis?

Lewis Elliott: I would love to. I echo what Ellie said. There was an acknowledgement throughout the assembly that joined-up thinking is one of the most important things if we are to have a meaningful strategy for how we get from where we are now to net zero. That does not mean just between the sectors of Scottish industry or systems such as transport and food; it also means joined up thinking in the halls of power.

We were broadly aware of which powers are devolved and which are reserved. However, in our statement of ambition, we expect the Scottish Government to exercise its responsibility, as a nation within the UK, to have lines of communication with the UK Government. We want it to express the interests of the people of Scotland on issues that are not devolved and to say how we expect the UK Government to use its reserved powers in the interest of Scotland as one of the UK nations.

We talk about imaginative and innovative ways of getting things done. One example is about looking at climate change as a health or a human rights issue. I think that an example was used of having the right to breathe clean air. We realised that the Scottish Government does not have the powers to tackle that as a climate issue. If it is considered as a health issue, it can be thought of in terms of devolved powers. That kind of outside-of-the-box thinking and coming at the problem from that direction can enable more action.

Susie Townend: There was a strong desire, particularly in the statement that came out of weekend 8, to see better working across all levels of Government, including local authorities, the devolved Administrations and the UK Government. As Lewis Elliott said, there was frustration that there could have been a bit more creativity in responding.

The power over taxation on fuel perhaps does not sit with the Scottish Government, but there are other things that the Government could have done to encourage the same sort of response. It is about the tone of the response. The Government could have looked behind the recommendations to see what assembly members really wanted and engaged creatively with that.

Members sometimes felt that the issue of powers being reserved was often used as a bit of an excuse. As Ellie Clarke said so eloquently,

there may come a time when that cannot be an excuse. Our members would have liked to see what the Government could do in the future.

Fiona Hyslop: Thank you for your perspective. Clearly, the Climate Assembly has, in its work, done great service to the people of Scotland and beyond, but the formal work of the assembly ended with your final weekend. Is any process in place for further engagement and deliberation? How does the assembly propose to monitor the outcome of its work and continue to hold the Government to account for delivery of its recommendations? If such a process does not exist, that is a challenge.

I am conscious that this is the second time that the assembly has given evidence to the committee. Are there any specific things that the climate assembly would ask of the Parliament, or of the committee, to take forward the work, monitoring and accountability that some of your members have referred to?

Susie Townend: On the basis of the conversations that Lewis Elliott had with other assembly members a couple of nights ago, he might want to start off on that.

Lewis Elliott: We have been discussing recently the form in which the climate assembly will continue and how it will change and adapt to its new role of holding the Government to account, based on the Government's commitments in response to our report.

For me, one of the most important parts of that is to create a network in which assembly members who want to continue in that new role will be able to reach out to independent climate experts, the media, the Government and, especially, committees such as this one. The network would allow them to respond to new developments in climate policy as they come up, especially those relating to the recommendations and goals that we set out in our report.

How exactly that will be done is still under discussion, but we are looking into funding the facilitation of the meetings of the Climate Assembly in the way that the NGO that has been helping us out has done. I believe that it is called Involve.

Susie Townend: Joan, would you like to say a bit about how the children could continue to be involved and about the interaction between the children and the adults?

Joan Lawson: Absolutely. It is a big thing that we want to hold the Government accountable. It is just being nosy, really. We want to check that the Government is doing its thing.

I was so lucky to work with the Children's Parliament. The children were amazing and their

recommendations were astounding. They did not hold anything back. The children also want the Government to be held accountable. We had a meeting when one of them was talking about storming Government.

I feel quite proud of everything that we have done, and everything that the children have done is amazing. I would hate that to be wasted and nothing to happen. It is really important, because the children were so imaginative. They were a bit more daring than the adults. They had that kind of freedom. It would be such a shame to lose any of that.

Susie Townend: The other thing that was mentioned was the idea of being a resource, having had that learning journey as members of the assembly. Joan, you made a rather generous offer—I do not know whether you want to repeat it in the committee—to be available to sense check things. Do you want to say a bit about that?

10:00

Joan Lawson: Sure. Education is key. When I started on this journey, I knew nothing and I was in an absolute panic on the first weekend. I thought, "Oh no—what have I done?" I used to work as a careers adviser and in a jobcentre. The whole idea of no one being left behind is key in talking about the different careers that will be available and educating the country. We are just ordinary people who have learned about climate change over eight weeks. Use us to speak to people and to tell them about what our experience was and what is happening in the world. I still offer that.

Susie Townend: Thank you, Joan. Maybe Ellie Clarke can say a little more about the idea of a score card with 10 key performance indicators and a system for holding the Government to account, and whether she sees any role for the committee in assisting assembly members to do that.

Ellie Clarke: I first want to explain the position that we now feel that we are in. I think that the majority of assembly members feel that we have been through an incredible journey of learning and that, as ordinary citizens, we are now in a different place from where we were a year ago. I think that the recommendations need to be updated again, because the urgency needs to be picked up.

One question that I have asked ministers during the process of talking about our recommendations is: what are the main barriers that hold the Government back from acting with the urgency that we know is necessary? Patrick Harvie and Humza Yousaf, in particular, have concerns about the barriers of public uptake and public will. As ordinary citizens who have been exposed to the facts and evidence, as well as the reality of the situation, the members of the assembly can be

useful in showing that our leaders do not need to worry about public will and uptake from informed citizens. That is why education and public information are so important. With information, people can make informed decisions, and we do not need to worry about that as a barrier.

I hope that, as a citizens assembly, we can facilitate and help the Government to be the voice of confidence and speak on behalf of the collective of the citizens of Scotland, so that we can be sure that we are ready and will be ready. If the majority of people had that knowledge, they would be ready to move forward as well.

It is important that we have something tangible to move forward with, so the idea of having 10 key performance indicators is quite important. They would be decided by independent experts, but the assembly could facilitate and oversee that. There would be clear numerical and measurable targets so that we could meet on an annual basis and be able to interrogate and oversee clearly what was being done.

The next 10 years are critical. We are hearing from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the—[*Inaudible.*] Climate change is the greatest health threat to humanity in the 21st century, and we have to make a difference in the next 10 years. It is really important to use those measurable targets incrementally over the coming years. I hope that the assembly, working in partnership with the Government, can help with that.

Susie Townend: From the secretariat's perspective, I emphasise how impressive the commitment of assembly members has been. They started the process almost a year and a half ago and they are still committed to an on-going dialogue with Government, but there is no clear mechanism to allow that to happen. I would be grateful for any support that the committee could give to assembly members with their clear desire to remain engaged, to continue dialogue and to continue to hold the Government to account.

Fiona Hyslop: It is clear that the Climate Assembly is not going away but is going into the future. We are not the Government; we are the Parliament. However, if we can keep in contact, the convener might want to consider, along with committee members, what role the committee might have in anything that your members want to do to engage through the Parliament as they continue with their forum and networking. On that note, I pass back to the convener.

The Convener: Thank you, Fiona. Next up is Monica Lennon.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Good morning, everyone. I agree with our deputy convener, Fiona Hyslop, that the work that you are

doing is fantastic and we hope to have on-going engagement and dialogue with you. Your challenge to us, as parliamentarians, and to the Government is so important.

I also agree with the points that have been made about the contribution that the children have made. They are fantastic. I have been out and about locally, speaking to schools, and I think that children really get that this is about not only climate justice but social justice.

I was interested in the comments that Ellie Clarke and Lewis Elliott made about food. I know from speaking to young people when I do school visits that they are active in collecting food donations for local food banks and charities. They are aware of poverty, including food poverty, and of the amount of food that is wasted, even in their schools, and they feel frustrated by that.

How does the assembly believe that we can better address that? Other parts of the world have legislation that tries to ban food waste and contains quite serious measures. Is there more that we can do to reduce food waste in Scotland?

Susie Townend: Ellie Clarke will answer first and I will then pass the question to Lewis Elliott.

Ellie Clarke: It is about our personal choices. So much informs our personal choice of diet, and our current food system is broken. As a nation, we need to rethink the whole way that we feed ourselves. There is excess eating, which leads to obesity and ill health and is a burden on the national health service. The types of food that we eat are not good for the climate or for us. There is evidence that, if we eat for a healthier climate, we will also be eating for a healthier nation. A shift is needed in the way that Scotland perceives its diet.

I return to the point that knowledge and education are so important to enable people to make informed choices, which need to be accessible to all. We keep stressing that we are disappointed with the Scottish Government's response to some of our recommendations. They include recommendation 39, which calls for a public education campaign about sustainable diet, which is something that the children's assembly also felt strongly about. If people do not have the information, they cannot make the right choices. If there was a public campaign around sustainable diet that included food waste and eating the right amounts of food in the right way, it would have a huge influence.

The Government has a lot of leverage to change the psyche, and what is needed is a culture change. I mentioned recommendation 26. Again, we were disappointed that there was no uptake of that in the Government's response. There is huge power in public procurement, and the Scottish Government has control over that. If we changed

public sector canteens so that they offered sustainable diets, that would send out a clear message. It would set a precedent and provide a prototype to demonstrate how we could eat healthily as a nation. It would be only one meal a day for some people, or not even that, but it would send a clear message from the top down, and people would listen to that. The assembly felt strongly that, if that was accompanied by an education campaign, it would be a quick win that was easy to adopt. We were disappointed that there was no uptake of that recommendation.

Lewis Elliott: I agree with what Ellie Clarke has said. In addition, our recommendation 3, on food packaging, is essential with regard to tackling food waste. We are disappointed by the Government's response in that area in particular. The issue is about perishable foods being sold in large amounts. The key with any effective change that is brought in based on our recommendations is that it has to target the decision-making points of the relevant parties.

The supermarkets that sell large amounts of fruit and vegetables that will go off reasonably quickly in big bags rather than selling them loose and individually take the view that, if they package the items together and do not give the consumer any choice about whether to buy one item or a large quantity, the consumer will buy a large quantity, because that is the only way to get the food that they want. The waste is then not the supermarket's problem, because it happens in the home. If the consumer eats only one or two of the items and the rest go off before they can be used, that waste is not something that the supermarket has to consider.

Legislating to ensure that people have the option to buy perishable goods loose and in single quantities will give the consumer control over what is or is not wasted in their home. That is an incredibly important thing that has, sadly, been missed out of the response that we got from the Government.

Susie Townend: When members made the recommendation that Lewis Elliott mentioned, they were thinking not only about reducing food waste by enabling people to buy one apple at a time rather than six, but also about the fact that buying six apples in a packet is more expensive than buying one apple. That connects to the idea that Ellie Clarke talked about, which involves making sustainable, good quality food affordable. That points to the fact that members thought about the issues in a holistic way. They were asked to think about climate change, but they were also thinking about how they could make Scotland better in the future. Their approach was comprehensive.

Monica Lennon: I am grateful for those responses. You have given us food for thought.

There are things that Government can do, but there is also clearly a lot that we can do as members of the public to put pressure on retailers.

I want to return to public transport. You made some important and good recommendations on that, and there are things that we can get on and do right now. Last week, we had a session with some of the children from the Children's Parliament, and they made some points about making it easier to read and navigate timetables. That fits in with what you say about the Oyster card and making it easier to use public transport. I think that we would all agree with that.

Joan Lawson talked earlier about people on lower incomes and people who just miss out on benefits. In that context, what are your ideas about making public transport as affordable and accessible as possible for as many people as possible? The everyone aboard campaign is trying to extend the national concessionary scheme to people aged 26 and under and people who are on low incomes and on benefits. However, when there is a line in the sand, there is always someone who misses out. What model could we use or work towards to ensure that people are not priced out of public transport?

Susie Townend: I ask Joan Lawson to answer that question.

Joan Lawson: The issue is difficult, because a lot of benefits are means tested. From working in a jobcentre, my experience is that a lot of people just miss out on benefits. You would therefore really need to think about what you were doing if you were going to implement something based on means testing people on low incomes and having a cut-off based on how much money they earn. It would be difficult to do that in a fair way.

10:15

It is great that the Scottish Government has introduced free public transport for young people, but, a lot of the time, it has not highlighted that other people, such as disabled people, are also eligible for free public transport. That goes back to the issue of education.

I honestly do not envy the Government when I think about what it has to do in that regard. I think that it will be difficult to do it in a fair way.

Susie Townend: In their statement, the members said that they welcomed the fact that people under the age of 22 are now able to use public transport free of charge, as older people can. However, when they made their recommendation, they expected that the provision would be much wider and would include, as Joan Lawson said, the working poor and people who are just missing out on a lot of things. Those are

the people who need to be helped to use public transport.

Monica Lennon: I am watching the time and the convener's eye, but I have another question related to that. We want to make it more affordable to use public transport, but, in my community and across many parts of Scotland, the service just does not exist—bus routes have gone and it is not easy to use public transport. How can we ensure that we have good public transport across the country, particularly in rural and island communities?

Susie Townend: Ellie Clarke can talk about her experience in that regard, as she lives in a rural area.

Ellie Clarke: I am a cyclist. I have recently moved to the Scottish Borders and I am finding it difficult to travel in a sustainable way. Perhaps that is my fault for moving to a rural area, but it has made me realise that the community around me does not have options available. There is no bus service on a Sunday and there are inconvenient timings of services in the evenings. The integration of public transport does not seem to be working. For example, certain bus timetables work within one area, but they do not sync with the bus to Edinburgh.

There are other things that could be improved in transport. Active transport could be improved by having more facilities for bikes on buses. A lot of things in the system are just not working to support that.

There is an idea that Scotland could be leading the way and looking at some of these issues with a more aspirational eye. There are countries in Europe in which public transport is free for everyone. Could we perhaps raise our aspirations, not getting caught up in the nitty-gritty of who can and who cannot get free access to public transport or what is fair but, instead, opening up free public transport to everybody? If we did that, private car use would go down and the system would be fairer and more effective.

The question that was posed to the Climate Assembly was how we can tackle the climate emergency in a fair and effective way. I feel that it would be fair and effective to make public transport free for everyone and accessible to all. Money could come from taxing private car use and the carbon emissions from that.

Susie Townend: A message that I took away from the Climate Assembly, and which surprised me, was that the members recognised how difficult the task was for Government but they were ambitious and were prepared to tax areas that they felt were not helping Scotland in terms of climate or wider societal benefit in order to support the things that they felt were important, such as

providing people with food and affordable or free public transport.

Monica Lennon: Thank you, Susie, and thank you, Ellie, for being so honest and being a very strong advocate for active travel and public transport. Please do not apologise or apportion blame to yourself for moving to a rural area. We need to hear the voice of rural Scotland, too.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank all the assembly members for their incredible climate leadership. As a politician sitting on this side of the table, I find it pretty humbling. That is how it should be, so keep up the good work.

I spoke to some members of the French citizens climate assembly when they were in Glasgow at the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—and they said that they were working quite closely with the French Government on a number of policy areas. Did the Scottish assembly discuss that sort of thing? Are there particular priority areas, such as retrofitting or public transport, in which you feel that you want to go a lot further in working directly with the Government? How would you want to do that? What level of engagement do you feel that you are able to have as you move forward?

Susie Townend: I think that conversations are still at a reasonably early stage, but Lewis Elliott may want to comment on that.

Lewis Elliott: Thank you for the question. I would certainly be excited to have conversations on policy with Government at any level. With regard to the on-going role of the Climate Assembly, we are likely to see a reduction in membership to some extent depending on the new form that the assembly takes, whatever it might be. We do not yet know how great the reduction will be. When we know how many people we have left, there will also be a question about whether, individually, we might want to specialise a bit more. We have discussed a broad range of issues, but some issues resonate with some members more than others.

I would find it exciting and interesting if certain members of the Climate Assembly were able to network with some climate experts in order to increase their knowledge and awareness of certain issues. They could explore issues in greater depth than we were able to do during the first run of the assembly, and they could then use that knowledge as an inroad to more in-depth discussions on certain items of policy with the relevant parts of the Government and the Parliament.

Susie Townend: Thank you, Lewis. I will bring in Ellie Clarke, but first I want to let Mark Ruskell know that, following one of the conversations that

we had with ministers over the summer, the minister for education's team reached out to say that they would like to talk to some of our members about education, given that those members had brought their lived experience as teachers to the assembly. At lunchtime today, a couple of our members will meet education officials to talk about how to integrate climate change learning much more in the curriculum. They will each bring their experience of being both an assembly member and a teacher.

We would encourage more of that in the future. We need a mechanism to enable officials and ministers to reach out to assembly members, but we have not quite got that started yet. Ellie Clarke might like to say more about that.

Ellie Clarke: I thank Mark Ruskell for his question. As an assembly, we would be very interested in learning from other assemblies around the world, especially the climate assemblies, and forming links so that we become part of a greater whole, given that we are facing a global crisis. It is interesting to hear that the French climate assembly is working more with the French Government on more focused topics. There is definitely scope for that in Scotland.

After the official assembly finished, we had an initial meeting, but we are now in a situation where there is no funding to support the continuation of the assembly. We think that it is important that we continue to be supported with some kind of facilitation. We also think that working with experts is important so that we are updated on the latest evidence, and we need to ensure that we still manage to home in on the original aim of working in a fair and effective way. We need to hold on to our integrity and authority as a collective voice, and we need to continue our own knowledge journey. We need to be informed, as we are not experts at all—we are just regular citizens.

We will need some kind of framework that will hold us in this space to enable us to continue our work effectively. I ask the committee what funding could be made available to us now. We are not just assembly members but householders who have families—I have a little two-year-old. We all have pressures on our time, so there is a limit to what we can commit to. We want to give as much as we possibly can, but there needs to be a framework in place to make it feasible for us to continue our work.

Susie Townend: Thank you, Ellie. Finally, perhaps Joan Lawson can talk about how we could continue to engage with children in the future and have children be part of the conversation with Government.

Joan Lawson: If we could incorporate participation from the Children's Parliament along

with the adults, that would be a great benefit. I missed the meeting that we had about taking the climate assembly forward, but I think that it is vital that we do so, and that we continue to check up on things. Having the children involved brings a bit of fun—it is great. I have said this loads of times—I must be boring you senseless—but I repeat that their enthusiasm and zest for change is inspiring. If we can keep that going alongside the work of the adults, we will be doing a really good job. The question is how we do that.

Susie Townend: It is not just the children who are inspiring—it is all the assembly members.

Mark Ruskell: I think that we have all been inspired by the work of the Children's Parliament and by the creativity of young people. They often see links that we do not necessarily see.

I want to ask a detailed question about the assembly's recommendations on aviation and some of the tax options in that regard. Is it your view that a frequent flyer tax, for example, could be brought in? That could operate alongside the air departure tax. Do you have any thoughts about how the air departure tax should be changed in order to apply it to frequent flyers?

Again, I guess that we could go into quite a lot of depth, so it might be an area for a longer conversation with Government. However, given the work that you have done so far, do you have any emerging thoughts on how we could change the tax regime for frequent flyers in particular?

Ellie Clarke: To be honest, after everything that we have learned in the Climate Assembly and the situation that we are currently in, it seems as though the whole concept of flight travel is history. I find it difficult even to grapple with the fairness of taxes and the luxury of people being able to fly and take short flights. People should absolutely not be congratulated for frequent flying, which—as we all know—is damaging and adds hugely to our carbon emissions. I find it exasperating even to have conversations about air travel when we are trying to reduce the carbon footprint on micro levels. I am a bit perplexed, so I cannot add any more.

Susie Townend: Does Lewis Elliott want to come in on that? While I acknowledge what Ellie Clarke said, Scotland is now a very diverse nation, and we have a lot of new Scots who have family around the world. The assembly's original recommendation suggested that people could take their first flight without having to pay additional taxes but that, once they were doing a lot of travelling, there would be an incremental taxation scale to discourage frequent flying for business travel in particular. Perhaps Lewis could say a bit more about that.

Lewis Elliott: One of the ideas that we discussed was a banded emissions allowance system. For your first flight, depending on its length, you would not pay any additional tax, but, after you had flown a certain distance, the tax would be increased.

10:30

I am the first to put my hands up and say that I do not exactly understand the current system of taxation. However, I whole-heartedly support—as I expect a lot of the assembly members do—the principle of taxing frequent flyers more than occasional flyers; making alternative options available, especially for people who have family abroad; and ensuring that people have access to high-quality internet speeds for conference calling. That last measure would address both business and family reasons for travelling by providing an alternative that does not involve the huge emissions that come with air travel.

In the Government's response to some of our recommendations around air travel, the issue of frequent flyers, and the idea that we set out in one of our recommendations of eliminating or banning frequent-flyer bonuses or air miles, was pretty much ignored. The assembly was very disappointed about that, because we see such a measure as another high-impact easy win. It could create a major change in the culture around flying and the decisions that go into that by making it a less attractive option for people who use it as their current solution for business travel or seeing their families. I hope that the committee will discuss, and encourage the Government to discuss, options for eliminating frequent flyer bonuses.

Susie Townend: I point to what Joan Lawson has said on education throughout the session. The assembly members wanted to have clear labelling on the carbon impact of flying, and of all travel, so that people were able to make choices. Even one of the ministers whom we spoke to said that they were not entirely sure whether it was better to go by train, car or plane. We need to present the information clearly to people so that they can make choices.

The Convener: There are a couple of supplementaries in this area from Jackie Dunbar and Liam Kerr.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Good morning. With regard to what has been said about frequent flyer levies and increasing the air departure tax, did the assembly consider the just transition impacts of implementing such measures, especially in the Highlands and Islands, where flying is sometimes the only mode of transport?

Susie Townend: The assembly definitely considered that. One of its recommendations was

for investment in low-carbon flight—in particular, with an eye to the needs of the island communities and those critical services that will continue to rely on flight.

Members were not suggesting that there should be no flights between the islands and the mainland; they were thinking about how we could reduce the carbon impact. They were very concerned about that. The assembly had members from the island communities who were able to speak to that issue from personal experience. I do not know whether Joan Lawson wants to say anything on that.

Joan Lawson: No, I do not.

Susie Townend: That is okay. Jackie, is that sufficient or would you like a bit more detail?

Jackie Dunbar: Not really—to be honest, you are answering the questions very fully, which is much appreciated. I just wanted to highlight that, when we talk about flying, we sometimes think about flying abroad, which is not always the case. I am very thankful to the panel for their answers.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I ask the panel to follow up on what I thought was a very good question from Jackie Dunbar. I will press you for a little more detail on that, please. I hear the proposals, but what did the assembly conclude would be the practical impact of proposals such as a frequent flyer levy or increasing ADT on jobs, on the ability of the lower-paid to fly and on connectivity for places such as the Highlands and Islands and—somewhere that Jackie and I are very concerned about—the north-east of Scotland? What did the assembly conclude would be the practical impacts of those policies?

Susie Townend: The assembly was very aware that there will be—*[Inaudible.]*—just and fair, and that no area and no community should be left behind. The committee has heard powerfully from Joan Lawson and the others about how they thought hard about people who are on low incomes. I would not want the committee to think that the assembly had not taken account of that. That is why some of the recommendations on flying involved thinking about making the first flight available without a levy, so that people can see their relatives, and making exceptions for emergency flights for the islands. However, that does not mean that we can continue to behave as we have done. The committee heard Ellie Clarke powerfully set out that there have to be changes.

Does Joan Lawson want to say a little more about the process of ensuring that nobody is left behind and to speak to the concerns that Liam Kerr raised?

Joan Lawson: The process is going to be difficult, as with public transport. It is going to be

hard to ensure that no one is left behind. As Lewis Elliott said, that can be balanced by good internet connectivity, so that people who have family abroad can keep in touch. We did not want to put barriers in place to people travelling, but the issue is difficult.

Susie Townend: Thank you, Joan. One area where assembly members particularly recognised that the Government has made significant progress is in skills, reskilling and providing education for people to move from carbon-intensive industries into greener industries. That involves investing in skills for retrofitting, as well as encouraging people to retrofit. The assembly felt that the Government made a significant response on that, and that perhaps speaks to some of Liam Kerr's concerns about what will happen to ensure that we do not leave behind areas and individuals who are involved in industries that there will be less of and perhaps, ultimately, none in the future.

Natalie Don (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP): It is nice to see you all. You have answered the questions fully, so I will pick up on a couple of points that stick out. I will focus on the assembly's feeling that the Scottish Government's response to the sustainable diet public information campaigns recommendation is inadequate. What new initiatives and public information campaigns do you recommend?

To follow on from that, I add that those who are informed and aware of the situation know about the need to make more sustainable choices, but doing that is not always possible for people who are on low incomes. We touched on that when we talked about bulk packaging in our shops. Does the assembly have other ways or ideas to open up choices for everyone?

Susie Townend: I will pass the questions to Ellie Clarke, as I am conscious of the time.

Ellie Clarke: We considered the question quite deeply. We looked at a tax on high-carbon foods, which would make less carbon-heavy foods, such as organic fruit and vegetables, more readily available. We have an unfair food system, in that only some people—wealthy people—can afford the healthy food options. We feel that that is completely unjust; addressing that is part of the whole social justice movement that goes hand in hand with the climate change movement and the suggestions that we are making.

A public information campaign is such—*[Inaudible.]*—in the Children's Parliament as well, as it involves early learners who are ready and keen. A campaign needs to be run across the board—through schools, public—*[Inaudible.]*—establishments and public catering.

That is why we felt that switching publicly procured foods to plant-based and low-carbon

ones would send a clear message from the Government, which would go hand in hand with an education programme and would help to set up the change that is needed as we shift from the system that we are in at the moment to a fairer, healthier and more sustainable future.

The Convener: Natalie, I believe that you have one more question to ask.

Natalie Don: I do—it is about land use, which I know is quite a different topic. I noted the comments about community land ownership in the assembly's response. In what ways do you think that communities can be better supported to address the climate emergency? Do you believe that outright ownership of assets is the only way forward, or could better partnership working also achieve the goals? What additional policies would the assembly like to see implemented?

Lewis Elliott: We have seen some good examples and heard some excellent evidence of cases in which unused land was turned over to community ownership and used in a positive and climate-supporting way for growing and food production. That worked in cities and in more rural areas.

I do not know whether the ownership of land will be a key factor, but it is important that, once land that can be used in that way has been identified, we also consider the context of its use and ensure that we do not apply a blanket approach. We should ensure that it is fit for purpose with regard to whether it is in a rural or an urban area.

Susie Townend: That also speaks to one of the children's recommendations, in which they called for more community gardens. They did not specify the land ownership model, but they thought about how pooled sites could be used to grow food and to encourage people to learn how to grow food. That involves a comprehensive approach that is not necessarily based on one model of land ownership.

Liam Kerr: Natalie Don and Monica Lennon rightly asked about food production. The assembly made a recommendation about ending industrial fishing. I refer to the question about aviation and will ask the same one about fishing. What did the assembly conclude about the just transition aspects of ending industrial fishing for those who are employed in that sector? What did it conclude would be the impact, both on food supply and price—giving particular consideration to those who have less to spend on food—of ending that?

Susie Townend: I will pass over to Ellie Clarke in a moment, but I note that some of the recommendations on industrial fishing also came from the Children's Parliament and, in particular, from children in island communities, who recognise that the way in which the land and the

seas are being abused has an impact on biodiversity and the natural environment.

The other thing that I would point to is the fact that, when members were making recommendations around food, they said that they wanted food to be grown locally. They were absolutely not saying that Scotland should not be an agricultural producer; they were saying that the local growing of food should be prioritised. In addition, on taxation, they suggested that there should be taxation on high-carbon food, particularly things that are flown in from overseas—the strawberries from abroad, rather than the strawberries from around Dundee—and that the money should be used to subsidise the low-carbon food, which would increase the price differential.

I will pass back to Joan Lawson for a final word on that.

Joan Lawson: Again, with regard to what has been said about the skills of the workers, education is fundamental. There are many different areas that are relevant—Skills Development Scotland has a role to play, and people can use the jobcentres and so on. They can also use the Climate Assembly—that is what we are here for. People need to explore what new opportunities there might be, and that can be done by bringing all those organisations together.

Susie Townend: That is probably a good point to end on. The Climate Assembly is a huge resource, and the members have committed to ongoing dialogue and engagement.

Liam Kerr: Before we end, I have one further question. The Climate Assembly wants Government to create a scorecard with KPIs, which I think is a positive idea with regard to the measurement of what is going on. However, in that case, why does the Climate Assembly think that the reporting duties under things such as the fourth national planning framework—NPF4—and similar schemes are not adequate and will not deliver the measurement that we want?

Susie Townend: Lewis Elliott will come in on that.

Lewis Elliott: I think that our recommendations specified that the KPIs should be set by independent climate experts. That is an important part of the recommendations, because it will ensure that we benchmark Scotland against other comparable nations and countries across the world and that we measure ourselves on relevant metrics that are up to date with regard to the climate change science. Having that independence will ensure that we do not allow the Government to cherry pick statistics that paint it in a good light or that highlight the positive work that it has done. That positive work exists, but we need

the KPIs to truly reflect how Scotland is doing and how much better it could be doing. For that to happen, independent experts should be the ones to define those KPIs.

Susie Townend: I think that was very clear. I would add only that the members were asking for an accessible one-page document. The Government's response to the Climate Assembly's report was thorough and comprehensive, but it was also extremely long and detailed, and it was quite hard for people to get their heads around what exactly the response was. That is where the idea of having a 10-graphic one-pager that would be updated twice a year came from. That would allow everybody to see whether the Government was on track with some of the things that the members wanted the independent experts to come up with KPIs on. The idea was that a one-page document would be more accessible for everyone than a 200-page report. Often, we need to see lengthy documents from Government, but the members were looking for something slightly different.

The Convener: That brings us to the end of our allocated time. I thank the members of the panel for joining us and sharing their views on what the Scottish Government should be doing to tackle climate change, and I thank them and their fellow members of the Climate Assembly for their many months of hard work. I know that there have been work meetings in the evenings, at weekends and during lockdown, and their work is very much appreciated and valued. We look forward to ongoing engagement between the committee and the Climate Assembly.

Thank you very much, and enjoy the rest of your day.

Subordinate Legislation

Financial Assistance for Environmental Purposes (Scotland) Order 2022 (SSI 2022/8)

Scottish Road Works Register (Prescribed Fees) Regulations 2022 (SSI 2022/9)

M8/M73/M74 Motorways (30mph, 40mph and 50mph Speed Limit) Regulations 2022 (2022/26)

10:49

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is consideration of three negative instruments. The instruments have been laid under the negative procedure, which means that their provisions will come into force unless the Parliament agrees to a motion to annul them. No motions to annul have been laid. Do members have any comments on the instruments?

As members have no comments, does the committee agree that it does not wish to make any recommendations in relation to the instruments?

Members *indicated agreement.*

10:51

Meeting continued in private until 11:40.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot

