



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

**Tuesday 18 January 2022**

**Session 6**



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**Tuesday 18 January 2022**

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**NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> 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:**

Lorna Jarvie (Sustainable Scotland Network)

Màiri McAllan (Minister for Environment and Land Reform)

Mark McRitchie (Development Trusts Association Scotland)

Ailsa Raeburn (Community Land Scotland)

Philip Revell (Scottish Communities Climate Action Network)

Dr Tom Russon (Scottish Government)

George Tarvit (Sustainable Scotland Network)

Mark Williams (Sustainable Scotland Network)

John Wincott (Sustainable Scotland Network)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Peter McGrath

**LOCATION**

Virtual Meeting



## Scottish Parliament

### Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

*Tuesday 18 January 2022*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:45]*

### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Dean Lockhart):** Good morning and welcome to the second meeting of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee of 2022, which we are conducting remotely.

Agenda item 1 is consideration of whether to take items 5 and 6 in private. Item 5 is consideration of today's evidence and item 6 is consideration of our work programme. Do members agree to take those items in private?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## Subordinate Legislation

### Climate Change (Nitrogen Balance Sheet) (Scotland) Regulations 2022 [draft]

**The Convener:** Our first substantive item is the consideration of a statutory instrument on the draft Climate Change (Nitrogen Balance Sheet) (Scotland) Regulations 2022. I welcome Màiri McAllan, Minister for Environment and Land Reform, who is joining us remotely. I also welcome two officials: Kirsten Beddows, head of agriculture transformation for environment and climate change, and Dr Tom Russon, head of climate change legislation. Thank you for attending this meeting, everyone.

The regulations have been laid under the affirmative procedure, which means that the Parliament must approve them before they come into force. Following this evidence session, the committee will be invited under the next agenda item to consider a motion to approve the regulations.

I invite the minister to make a short opening statement.

**The Minister for Environment and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan):** Good morning, everyone, I hope that you can hear me clearly.

I am very pleased to give evidence today in support of the draft regulations to establish Scotland's nitrogen balance sheet. Nitrogen is present across our economy and environment. The benefits arising from it cannot be overstated: nitrogen is essential for the production of food—I am sure that we can all agree that we depend on food—and many other processes. However, the harms that are associated with losses of nitrogen into the environment can be significant. Those include contributions to climate change through greenhouse gas, impacts on human health through air quality pollutants and impacts on biodiversity through excess nutrients entering terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

That all means that the efficient use of nitrogen is an important issue with far-reaching consequences. I will give one example. The efficient use of agricultural fertilisers helps to reduce waste of nutrients, thereby minimising environmental harms and realising economic benefits for those who produce our food.

The importance of understanding nitrogen use at a national scale was recognised by the Parliament during the passage of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, with a commitment to develop the balance sheet that we are discussing today. That work has been taken forward by the Scottish

Government in a way that has provided key stakeholders across a range of sectors and interests with opportunities to input their views. I thank all those who have contributed and the scientific experts who have supported this very technical and complex piece of work.

In December 2021, we published the full data set for the first version of the balance sheet, accompanied by a comprehensive report setting out key findings. The draft regulations—if agreed by the committee today—will formally establish the following key aspects in law. First, we have prepared the balance sheet to be as broad in scope as possible, within the constraints of data availability. It covers not only the core engine of nitrogen use associated with food production but transport, industry, forestry and other sectors. It is very interesting that it looks at nitrogen flow not only within Scotland but into and out of Scotland, where that data is available.

That broad scope allows for a calculation that is truly economy wide of the efficiency of nitrogen use in Scotland. That term is defined in line with international scientific guidelines as meaning the ratio of nutrient contained in useful output, such as foodstuffs, to the total input of nitrogen through both human and natural processes. I like to think of it as the deficit between what goes in and what comes out—although perhaps my officials will cringe at that very simplistic approach. Application of that calculation to the initial nitrogen balance sheet—the data sheet that mainly relates to 2019—leads to a 25 per cent baseline figure for national nitrogen use efficiency. I emphasise that any one metric can capture only a small part of the rich and complex landscape. If members are interested in the details, I suggest that they read the accompanying report, which is very interesting.

A second feature of our proposed approach is for our balance sheet to be reviewed and updated annually with associated reporting to Parliament. That will support the on-going development of the evidence base as well as keeping track of progress in Scotland's nitrogen use efficiency.

To our knowledge, we are the first country in the world to enshrine in law a nitrogen balance sheet that is both economy wide and regularly updated. I hope that we can all agree that that is a further example of the Scottish Parliament's determination that Scotland should lead the way in addressing the climate emergency.

The balance sheet will provide the Government and Parliament with a powerful new tool to support evidence-based policy making at the interface of several strategic areas. I am very interested in the extent to which having a balance sheet that shows us how climate change, air quality and water pollution co-exist can indicate the levers that we can pull to meet some of our policy objectives. Put

simply, striving towards the efficient use of nitrogen helps to ensure that economic, environmental and wellbeing outcomes can be achieved alongside one another.

Having established the balance sheet, we have provided an innovative new evidence base to support it. We are at an early stage in the journey, rather than the final destination, which is why we have committed to a review. I look forward to working with Parliament and others with an interest in nitrogen as that work continues and the balance sheet develops. I hope that, as we see other countries around the world follow where Scotland has led, there will also be international comparators.

My officials and I are happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.

**The Convener:** Thank you for that statement, minister. Members, if you have any questions, please can you indicate that in the chat bar. I see that some of you have already done so.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** I welcome the balance sheet. It is a world first. The committee in the previous session spent a lot of time looking at the impact of nitrogen on climate change, air quality and water quality, so it is great to see that step coming through the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 and into law.

I want to ask about the application of the regulations. I understand that it is early days and that this is a world-leading approach, but how will the balance sheet and the action plan that is associated with it be used by regional land use partnerships and river basin management plans in the practical management of nitrogen? Previously in Scotland, we have had nitrate vulnerable zones, so there have been attempts to manage nitrogen in areas where we have particular problems in relation to air pollution and water pollution. How will this approach change the way in which practical land managers at regional and local levels go about their work? How will it inform their work and the options that are available to them?

**Màiri McAllan:** That is a very good point. I repeat the point that it is early days. The balance sheet is complex and will require review. As the review continues and the evidence is gathered, it will become a more useful policy development tool. However, in the meantime, its primary use is the extent to which it shows us how all those areas that you identified interact with one another. That is what I am most excited about.

If we think about the state of play prior to having the balance sheet, we know that actions are being taken right across the Government—for example, in the climate change plan update, on agricultural emissions, and in the cleaner air for Scotland 2

strategy with regard to air quality. Those actions are being taken in their individual areas. The balance sheet will allow people both within and external to the Government to see how those actions interact. Not only will that help what we are doing in the individual areas; it will allow us to see what actions will provide the most co-benefits across those strategic areas.

In terms of the trajectory, once the balance sheet is established, it is about allowing it to develop with greater information and more data. Its use within the Government will be about complementing the actions that we are already taking across the piece. I hope that it will also be an important tool for analysis and to suggest outputs for all the folk outside the Government who are working hard across all those important areas.

**Mark Ruskell:** Yes, but what about someone who is involved in a regional land use partnership? Can all those land managers and stakeholders use it right now? Could it help to inform decisions about what farmers are doing in riparian habitat management or nitrogen application on a catchment scale?

**Màiri McAllan:** Yes, it is helpful, but I would suggest that we probably cannot take it down to that granular scale at this point, particularly as regards the 25 per cent baseline figure. That is a high-level figure. The data sets are not at regional or farm level. We might hope to develop something like that in time, but what we have established right now is a high-level Scotland-wide and economy-wide picture from which developments will come.

**Mark Ruskell:** Thank you.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** Good morning, minister. The regulations strike me as welcome but extraordinarily complex, so I want to ask a couple of things to clear them up in my mind. Section 8A(5) of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 defines “nitrogen use efficiency” and you said that that means comparing what goes in with what comes out. Regulation 4 sets the baseline for that at 25 per cent. Will you explain what that means? What is that 25 per cent? What is going in precisely where and coming out precisely where, and why was 25 per cent felt to be the appropriate figure for the efficient use of nitrogen?

**Màiri McAllan:** You are asking the questions that I asked at the beginning of the process. I said that my officials would cringe at me describing it as what goes in and what comes out, but that is how I like to think about the process. You can imagine how that would happen in food production, for example. For the nitrogen that is put into the food production system, we calculate

the deficit, as I have been calling it, by looking at what is, not to be crude, excreted. The 25 per cent figure is essentially the baseline that has been calculated as being where we are just now across the board with the economy. That is explained nicely in the report—probably better than I can explain it today.

How I understand it is that we have figures for nitrogen use efficiency across, let us say, food production, and we can break that down into livestock farming and crop production. The overall figure for nitrogen use efficiency in agriculture is 28 per cent, so you can see that the national figure of 25 per cent is quite heavily dominated by the agriculture figure. However, because it is a whole-economy figure, we build in the figures for forestry, waste and industry, which is what gets us to 25 per cent. I can bring in Dr Russon, who is far more into the detail than I am, but that 25 per cent figure represents the state of play on average across the board in our economy just now. I hope that that is helpful, but I am happy to bring in my team if you would like a more scientific explanation.

**Liam Kerr:** That is helpful, minister, and I am grateful to you. I followed quite clearly what you said there, but I would not mind hearing from one of your officials as well.

10:00

**Dr Tom Russon (Scottish Government):** On the second element of the question, about what the baseline represents, I do not have anything to add—the minister has expressed it very well. This is the state of play that the best available data leads us to.

On the first aspect of the question, which was about unpacking the key outputs and inputs that give us the 25 per cent figure, I am happy to spend as much time as the committee’s patience will allow on unpacking those. There is a huge amount of detail on that in the published reports. However, as the minister alluded to earlier, the key outputs that form the top of that ratio calculation are predominantly to do with foodstuffs. They also include wool, which contains nitrogen, and forestry products, many of which contain significant amounts of nitrogen as well. Those are the main useful outputs coming out of the economy-wide calculation.

The input side, which forms the bottom of that ratio, is in many ways more interesting, in that it represents a combination of anthropogenic inputs. By far the largest one is the application of fertiliser for agriculture, but there are other things too, such as the amount of nitrogen contained in fossil fuels that are combusted for the purposes of transport, industry and energy supply.

Purely natural processes are also adding nitrogen into the Scottish environment. Nitrogen is being deposited out of the air on to ecosystems and biological nitrogen fixation is directly converting nitrogen from the air into part of plant material, for example. Both the anthropogenic and the natural processes form part of those inputs into the system.

As the minister pointed out, it is a very complicated system, which is bringing together human interventions and purely natural processes. In thinking about that 25 per cent baseline, it is worth unpacking quite a bit of those inputs and outputs and thinking about it carefully. I will stop there, but I am happy to expand further if that would be helpful.

**Liam Kerr:** I am grateful for that summary.

**Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** Thank you. That was a detailed question. I am interested in the context. Can the minister briefly expand on why nitrogen is so important, including perhaps in relation to greenhouse gas emissions generally? I am conscious of time, so a brief answer would be helpful.

**Màiri McAllan:** The first and foremost point is that nitrogen is one of the fundamental building blocks of life; it is present everywhere. As we have said, it is the vital underpinning of food production, and we can all agree that we need to eat. However, the balance sheet shows us that nitrogen is important not only for food production but for other economic processes such as the production of natural fibres and forestry materials, as Tom Russon just referred to.

In some situations, nitrogen can present real challenges, including in the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide, and in its impact on water quality, but it cannot always be viewed just as a problem. We need to be prepared to take a nuanced approach to what the balance sheet tells us.

For example, as I mentioned, nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas, emissions of which we know contribute to climate change. This is a helpful data set that demonstrates nitrogen across the economy and nitrogen coming into and out of Scotland; we need to be prepared to understand that nitrogen is ever present and it is not always a negative thing. We need to identify where it is and work on those areas. I mentioned in reply to Mark Ruskell's question that policy work is happening right across the Government—most particularly through the climate change plan update—to seek to pull all the levers to reduce the negative effects of nitrogen as a greenhouse gas.

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** The evidence session has been very informative. Will the minister explain the timeframe of the immediate next steps for the balance sheet?

**Màiri McAllan:** If the committee indicates its support for the draft SSI, we will be on track to fulfil the legislative requirements well in advance of the deadline of 23 March, which was to have the initial version of the balance sheet formally established in law. That is what we will do. As I said in my opening remarks, the process will include annual review and updating Parliament on the balance sheet, which will begin from next year.

**Natalie Don (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP):** I agree with my colleagues that the evidence session has been very informative. Could you clarify something? We have touched on this a little. We understand that food production lies at the heart of the balance sheet, but can you expand on the other areas that it covers?

**Màiri McAllan:** Of course. That is an important point, which I have tried to make throughout, but I will do so again. Food production is at the heart of the issue, because nitrogen is at the heart of food production, but it is not the only flow-in and we have sought to reflect that in the balance sheet. It is categorically not just about agriculture and aquaculture. The balance sheet covers the use of nitrogen in forestry and flows of nitrogen that are associated with fossil fuel combustion in sectors such as transport, industry and energy supply. It also looks to waste management processes, which can serve to recycle nitrogen that is taken in through human nutrition back into parts of the wider system.

We have a picture across Scotland and, where data allows, into and out of Scotland. It is a very broad-scope approach that is unique in the world, and I hope that other countries will follow where Scotland has led, so that we have an international comparison of how efficiently Scotland is using nitrogen compared with our friends and neighbours across the world.

**Natalie Don:** That is very helpful.

**The Convener:** I believe that there are no further questions from members, so we move to item 3, which is formal consideration of motion S6M-02578. Only the minister and members may speak in the debate. I invite the minister to speak to or simply to move the motion.

*Motion moved,*

That the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee recommends that the Climate Change (Nitrogen Balance Sheet) (Scotland) Regulations 2022 [draft] be approved.—  
[Màiri McAllan]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Convener:** The committee will report on the outcome of the instrument in due course. I invite the committee to delegate authority to me as convener to approve a draft of the report for publication.

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** I thank the minister and her officials for joining us today. I suspend the meeting briefly to allow us to set up the next panel.

10:09

*Meeting suspended.*

10:10

*On resuming—*

## **Role of Local Government in Delivering Net Zero**

**The Convener:** We welcome our second set of witnesses for our inquiry into the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net zero Scotland. Today we will hear from representatives of sustainable development in the public sector and from community groups.

The first panel comprises representatives from the Sustainable Scotland Network. I am pleased to welcome George Tarvit, who is director of the Sustainable Scotland Network; John Wincott, the chair of the Sustainable Scotland Network and environmental services co-ordinator at Fife College; Mark Williams, who is vice-chair of the Sustainable Scotland Network and head of sustainability and climate change at Scottish Water; and Lorna Jarvie, who is a steering group member at the Sustainable Scotland Network and co-ordinator for sustainability and fleet at South Ayrshire Council.

I thank you all for accepting our invitation and for joining the panel; it is good to see you. We have just over an hour. I believe that Mr Wincott will briefly introduce the Sustainable Scotland Network. All questions from members should then be directed to him in the first instance, and he will nominate one of his co-panellists to answer the questions. Mr Wincott, I hand over to you for a brief opening statement.

**John Wincott (Sustainable Scotland Network):** Thank you for inviting us today; we really appreciate the opportunity. First, I apologise for not making any advance papers available to the committee. Unfortunately, the invitation arrived on Christmas eve and our staff were already away. We tried to get some papers in later, but I believe there have been problems with the email system at the Scottish Parliament, which has not helped us.

I will briefly introduce the SSN, because I am not sure how much the committee understands about what it does. It has been said that if we did not exist you would need to invent us. I think that that need is more important as we progress with the climate emergency. I like to compare our function with, for example, that of the United Kingdom Climate Change Committee. I tend to regard the CCC as a critical friend, so in that regard we are different. The SSN is a delivery partner that works with the Government and Parliament to tackle the climate emergency and deliver the climate change mitigation goals.

SSN is made up of practitioners—people who work at the coalface. All the panellists work actively in the climate change sphere. In the past six months, we have been heavily involved in work with the Scottish Government to produce “Public Sector Leadership on the Global Climate Emergency: Guidance”, which was published late last year. The membership of the group for that work was selected from a steering group panel and included people from Scottish Water, NatureScot, local authorities, colleges, the national health service, universities, the SSN secretariat and Scottish Government officials.

On 8 December, after the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties, we had a conference that was entitled “COP26 ... What now?” We used that conference to launch the guidance to our membership. Around 200 people attended; we launched the guidance and explained how it would work. We also held workshops to start to address the challenges that people face when it comes to climate change.

We also work very strongly with the Government on the public body climate change duty of reporting; we provide support, resources and analysis in that area. We think that the analysis is particularly important, because the reports that public bodies submit are very detailed spreadsheets. The SSN pulls the key data from those. For instance, our 2019-20 analysis showed that between 2015-16 and 2019-20 public bodies reduced emissions by 28 per cent, which is no mean feat. Local authorities alone reduced emissions by 10.7 per cent between 2017-18 and 2019-20, and they saved more than 54,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in 2019-20 through projects that they implemented at that time.

10:15

The SSN is also heavily involved in addressing the challenges that we all face regarding climate change mitigation. Those challenges, which are often labelled as relating to either skills, speed of delivery or finance, are clearly major ones as we move forward.

The SSN provides an atmosphere of collaboration, support and trust. I have underlined “trust” in my notes, because it is so important in ensuring that we accelerate delivery, as we all now need to do.

I note that in the committee’s evidence session last week, one of the witnesses said that we need to be able to make mistakes. We do, because we are working in a very difficult environment and learning as we go. The trust element that the SSN brings through our members and steering group means that we can talk about things that have not

gone well and thereby prevent other people from making the same mistakes.

We can deliver those aspects by providing rules, tools, and training. The committee will see the rules in the guidance that we have produced with the Scottish Government. For the tools that are behind that, we are currently producing a manual that will be delivered to our members to enable them to use the guidance better. On training, we are ensuring best practice. We deliver those things by bringing a breadth of perspective, experience and maturity from the SSN’s membership. All our members effectively provide contributions in kind by virtue of the time that they devote to our efforts.

We will all try to keep our answers brief, so I will wind up. We will follow up with written supplementary information, should that be necessary. I thank the committee again for giving us time today.

**The Convener:** Thank you for that opening statement, John. It is a pleasure to have you and your colleagues in front of the committee.

We will move to questions; I will begin. At the committee’s previous two meetings, we heard from the United Kingdom Climate Change Committee, which you mentioned, and from a range of local authorities. Their evidence highlighted concerns around a lack of strategic consultation between the Scottish Government and local authorities and partners in relation to net zero implementation, and a lack of detailed policy guidance. The witnesses also called into question whether the 2030 targets in the “Heat in Buildings Strategy: Achieving Net Zero Emissions in Scotland’s Buildings” are achievable.

Do you agree with those concerns? What are the main challenges that the SSN’s members face in reaching net zero targets across the various sectors that it represents?

**John Wincott:** I would always have to agree with concerns that are expressed by the CCC; its members are experts, and it provides a tremendous amount of analysis and detail. If it expresses concerns, we have to take strong cognisance of them.

We are all aware of the tremendous challenge that we face. Achieving the target for 2030, and the on-going 2045 target, will not be easy—it will take a huge amount of effort. We like to think that the guidance that was released late last year will provide a lot more help and assistance to all public bodies because—for the first time—it breaks down in detail what people are aiming to achieve. Beyond that, I believe that statutory guidance will be produced this year by Government officials and will come through Parliament, and we will produce a manual that sets out more detailed approaches that can be used.

To be honest, I think that we are all concerned. The changes that we face, and the efforts and challenges that face us technically and socially are tremendous. Anybody who is not concerned perhaps does not understand the problem.

**The Convener:** You make a fair point.

The other common theme that has emerged from our evidence sessions with local authorities is that they do not expect the Scottish Government to finance the transition to net zero at local authority level. They make the point that the vast majority of funding will have to come from the private sector. Do you agree with that? If so, what concrete steps are the SSN and its partners and members taking to leverage in private sector funding? Are we at the beginning of the process, or are you seeing good examples of public and private sector partnerships through which private sector funding will start to feed into the transition?

**John Wincott:** It is early days in the leveraging in of private funding. As I said in my introduction, the thing to bear in mind is that the SSN represents all public bodies in Scotland. I know that local authorities are the focus of the committee's investigation, but what we are doing, primarily, is collaborating and working together better as public bodies across the piece.

Funding is an element of that. At the moment, funding is given to each public body, but there could be opportunities for better funding of change when funding that is in one body's bank account would be better spent on shared opportunities with another public body.

The SSN is certainly always open to talking to the private sector; we are talking to some private sector organisations. It is early days, but we recognise that the Scottish Government will not be in a position to fund all the necessary changes.

**The Convener:** I presume that, among your member organisations, a high number of public sector buildings will have to be converted to meet the target on heat in buildings by 2030. Apart from channelling private sector finance, has work started on identifying the number of buildings that will have to be converted, and on how that might work in various local authority areas? You mentioned that some of the buildings and projects would be best served by being dealt with across local government areas. Has work begun on the initial step of identifying the buildings that will have to be converted if we are to meet the 2030 targets?

**John Wincott:** Absolutely. The situation varies across the piece. There was the recent release of funding of £95 million, which was increased to £200 million, in grants for colleges and the NHS, primarily. That has been a big boost to our outputs, especially because it provided pre-capital

funding that has enabled, for example, Fife College, which pays my wages for my day job, to look at how we might put together projects that we were not able to consider previously. That seed-corn funding—if I can call it that—means that we can start to consider projects and make them shovel ready, so that they are ready to go when funding becomes available, which is good.

However, let us not pretend that the buildings situation is easy; it really is not. One of the campuses on my estate has a mix of old and new buildings. We have only recently managed to replace single-glazed aluminium-frame windows with double glazing, and a building has gas-fired boilers. If we are going to take out those boilers and put in something else, a massive insulation programme on the basic fabric of the building will be required, or we might instead have to consider hydrogen, for example. If we are to consider hydrogen, we will need to know the long-term plans for it and when it will appear in Kirkcaldy, where the campus is. Are we looking at other technologies that might be in their infancy?

Changing buildings is a huge programme, but everybody I talk to is heavily engaged in buildings and sees them as a serious challenge.

**The Convener:** You have touched on some issues that other members will want to pursue. I will bring in Fiona Hyslop.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I want to talk about conservation designations and to ask the panel about the challenges for buildings, particularly in terms of potential restrictions on glazing and insulation options.

I know that Historic Environment Scotland has been active on innovation through work with the City of Edinburgh Council. Can a balance be struck for historic urban environments, with celebration and preservation of them while future-proofing them against climate change? We know that there has been a successful conservation area regeneration scheme across Scotland. Is there anything like a conservation area climate change scheme that would enable us to tackle conservation areas in particular?

**John Wincott:** You have hit the nail on the head; that is a really difficult challenge. This is one of the areas in which the Scottish Government has some important levers. For instance, I have seen planning applications being submitted to change buildings' windows from single-glazed windows with wooden frames to double-glazed windows with plastic frames that look identical, but they have been rejected because the windows would be not wood, but plastic.

The question whether to conserve the original material, which might not be the most suitable for climate change purposes, or to conserve the

original look, is really interesting. That is a question that the Scottish Government, working with Historic Environment Scotland, could look at. The best solution would be one that provided a good answer regarding climate change mitigation and carbon reduction that did not detract from the historic nature of the building.

I do not know whether any of my colleagues want to add to that. I am not seeing any waving hands, so I might be the only one.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Does anybody else want to comment? I know from my experience as a minister that there is work going on in that area. I suppose that we need to find out from local authorities why the work has not been rolled out as much as it could have been.

**George Tarvit (Sustainable Scotland Network):** I emphasise that the SSN is pan-public sector. Historic Environment Scotland has been a very active SSN member over the years, so we would work with it to get the right advice. The subject probably lends itself to the work that the SSN does on local place collaboration. There is recognition that there are significant challenges, and there is probably a need for a shift in how local authorities address issues such as planning regulations. Our role would be very much to bring our members together to ask them how we should tackle the problem together.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Thank you. Partnership is a theme of the inquiry.

I move on to water and the challenges of working together. You talk in your route map about innovative partnerships with local authorities and public sector agencies. I am particularly interested in your work with Scottish Water. There has been some good work done on flood prevention between local authorities, Scottish Water and Scottish Canals. From the perspective of Scottish Canals, more could be done with West Lothian Council and the City of Edinburgh Council on preventative work. Could you comment on opportunities in that respect?

We are limited by time, so could you also address issues around rivers and Scotland's waterways? We know from the Environmental Audit Committee in England about concerns about levels of pollution. Scottish Water's net zero emissions route map might be helpful in that respect. It would be interesting to hear your views on partnership working, particularly in relation to water.

**John Wincott:** That is an excellent broad question, if I may say so. I will pass the question over to Mark Williams shortly, who will keep his response as brief as he can. Rivers and, especially, the pollution risk is a very hot topic at the moment.

**Mark Williams (Sustainable Scotland Network):** The key point that Ms Hyslop raised was about partnership, which has been the theme of the last couple of questions. My perspective is that none of us can deliver net zero as a single organisation. It is really about there being partnerships to deliver on-the-ground improvements at the geographical scale that will be necessary for achieving net zero.

There are many such partnerships. There are things that we have had to do over the years in Glasgow—for example, the Metropolitan Glasgow Strategic Drainage Partnership, which recognises that Scottish Water cannot wrestle alone with the drainage issues in Glasgow. We need multiple local authorities, roads authorities, developers and various other partners around the table to help us to make the strategic choices that will enable Glasgow to sustain its infrastructure in the future.

There is also Clyde Gateway and the opportunity to bring things like district heat into the approach. Getting partners together is the key to unlocking finance for the investment that is required to deliver net zero, to join together the sources of heat and the recipients of heat, and to enable projects to work appropriately. Scottish Water has been open to such partnerships—for example, the Stirling district heat network and the advanced manufacturing innovation districts that are developing in the area around Glasgow airport.

Partnership is key in enabling us to deliver on the issues and—as was mentioned earlier—on the investments that are required. More generally, I am keen that water be reflected more in the net zero goals—for example, regarding use of water in the home, how we heat water and how we drain our infrastructure.

10:30

We bring climate adaptation and mitigation together when we start to look at the issues at that sort of scale. Scottish Water will be, and is, actively seeking partnerships and working with local authorities on the drainage side, looking at how we use water in the urban environment and so on.

On the issues more broadly, another area in which partnership is key relates to the landscapes in which we operate, with regard to what we can do to improve Scotland's natural capital and the ability of our landscapes to lock up carbon, and to improve water quality and management of water and natural resources. Again, that comes down to partnership. Scottish Water is building a partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland regarding some of the land that it leases from us—around Loch Katrine, for example. We are seeking

to work with the organisation on land management plans to support delivery of improved carbon capture, and improved quality and biodiversity in the environment.

Achieving net zero will, throughout the entire process, be about partnerships and how we, as public bodies, work together. We need to do so, first, in order to understand the issues, which—as was mentioned earlier—are complex, and, secondly, to find solutions not only on investment but on skills and capabilities, to enable us to build capacity to deliver on the agenda.

I realise that that was a very high-level walk through a number of issues. I am happy to take further questions.

**Fiona Hyslop:** What challenges are there in that regard, and what would better enable that work to happen?

**Mark Williams:** We have some good examples—we now need to look at how we scale them up to deliver more in those different areas.

I mentioned the advanced manufacturing innovation district Scotland site in Glasgow. I am not particularly close to that work, but it is a great example of bringing together multiple partners to start the flywheel going in order to generate ideas and investment and build capacity to deliver more. We need to make the connections—we need to look at national, regional and local planning to see how we can join that up even more.

I have recently been speaking a fair bit with Lewis Barlow at the Scottish Government, who is looking into that and driving the carbon agenda for the city region and regional growth deals. We are looking at how we build carbon thinking into those Government and local government initiatives. There are key opportunities for us to understand the problem and to understand where the carbon is, and then to join the partners together to look at how we leverage the investment and the opportunities to deliver low-carbon infrastructure.

We need to start to generate more activity and get the flywheel going a bit faster to get opportunities springing up all over Scotland. We can look at what works well in the existing partnerships and at why we have been able to deliver certain initiatives in certain areas—for example, in Stirling and through the Aqualibrium project in Campbeltown, which uses heat from sewers to heat the local leisure centre. We need to look at those opportunities and the partners involved and think about what works well and how we learn from those examples and apply them further. There are some great examples that need greater recognition.

You mentioned smart canals and that Scottish Canals is looking at how we can integrate

infrastructure to support collective outcomes. That is not easy—it takes time and effort to engage and build those networks—but we need that sort of thinking across Scotland in order to drive the net zero agenda forward.

**Fiona Hyslop:** That is very interesting. Does anyone else want to come in on water before I hand back to the convener?

**John Wincott:** No. Mark Williams has covered the subject really well.

**Fiona Hyslop:** In that case, I will hand back to the convener.

**The Convener:** I will bring in Monica Lennon, to be followed by Liam Kerr. It is over to you, Monica.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Good morning to all our witnesses. My interest today is in waste and the role of public bodies in Scotland's journey to a fully circular economy. How do public procurement practices need to develop to achieve a circular economy, and how well is that work being co-ordinated across the public sector? Where is innovation happening, and what do you see as the main challenges?

**John Wincott:** That, again, is a huge question. Somebody should have warned me that the committee has big questions.

Where do we begin with the circular economy? I listened to the presentations last week, in which a lot was mentioned about the original consumption at the start of it all, what we buy and how easy it is to buy circular economy products. On a personal level, I bought a product that is refillable but, when I tried to refill it, the shop that I bought it from did not sell the refill. I had to order the refill by mail, which cost me £2 more than the original product cost. That is not a refillable product. Nobody will spend £2 more on the refill than they spent on the original product. If tiny things such as that cause issues, how are big organisations going to move on?

You are right in saying that we should look at procurement and the public pound. How can we leverage that? Obviously, if public bodies initiate better thinking among suppliers, those suppliers will roll that out to their other customers. We can start to move our spending and say to suppliers, "Look, we want reusable and minimal materials and no packaging." That will mean their adopting those practices across the broader piece, as well. How we use procurement to drive that forward is a really good point.

Waste is a huge challenge. I know that the target for zero waste going to landfill was pushed back because of the challenges around being ready for that, and I know that there is a lot of talk about whether getting energy from waste is a better way of waste disposal. It is clear that that is

better than putting waste in landfill, but how sustainable is getting energy from waste? There are a lot of questions around that.

On what SSN can bring, if it is determined that waste is a key factor for public bodies in general, SSN can start to work on that and look at that as part of the guidance that we already produce and as part of delivering the manual behind that, as well as looking at workshopping. To be honest, nobody around the table at SSN has all the answers, but, when we are all put together, we are much bigger than the sum of our parts. That is why we exist. That is where the strength lies.

I do not know whether any of my colleagues wants to come in on that. Does Lorna Jarvie—

**Monica Lennon:** Before that, I want to go back to something. We are hearing about lots of examples of good practice across the public sector, but there is frustration that they are not being scaled up. I am thinking about the innovation question. There will be some really good stuff out there. How can we unlock the opportunity to scale that up? Maybe your colleague can pick up the innovation part of the question.

**John Wincott:** Yes, I think so. I was talking about workshops and sharing best practice. To be honest, it is just a matter of time. The SSN secretariat is a very small team and, although the steering group and the membership provide a lot of contribution in kind, there is a finite number of priorities that we can address. If waste becomes the priority for SSN, we will workshop that, share best practice and innovate.

I was going to invite Lorna Jarvie to say something, because I know that she has experience of that, potentially in her local authority as well.

**Lorna Jarvie (Sustainable Scotland Network):** Yes. I thank the committee for the opportunity to speak to it this morning.

When it comes to the circular economy and procurement, it goes without saying that, in my local authority and within SSN as well, we are trying to work with procurement colleagues but also with colleagues across local authorities. It is sometimes easy to forget that procurement takes place across the local authority staff complement. Even in looking at issues relating to single-use plastics, as we have done in our local authority, the challenge is not about working them through with a small group of staff; it is often about working them through with the entire procuring staff body, which is vast and scattered across many different services. That is a difficult challenge, and we have to take a lot of people with us.

That takes us back to a lot of the things that we spoke about early on, such as communication, dialogue and everybody understanding the big vision of where we are trying to take things. That links to the climate literacy agenda, which we have to scale up if we are to be able to tackle the problem. It is really important in our organisations—whether they are the local authorities that we work with in SSN or the other public bodies that we work with—that that vision of where we are trying to get to with the agenda is clear for everybody and that people understand their role within that, no matter what local authority service they are in or what level of officer they are. We all have to recognise the part that we can play.

That goes for the work that we have been doing regionally, too—we have been trying to do work across the Ayrshire region, where I am from. That came out of a question that was asked at a community planning partnership: what do we need to do to help to achieve the vision of net zero for Scotland? What part do we have to play?

The question is the same when we come to procurement and the circular economy. To be successful, all the players—and there are many—need to be clear about what part they are playing. Is it the dialogue that we might be having with suppliers quite far down the supply chain that will unlock things? Is it just a matter of what an officer buys on a particular day for their small task or objective?

Everybody needs to understand how they can contribute helpfully to that, and we still have a lot of work to do to get consensus.

**Monica Lennon:** It sounds as though there might not be enough clarity at this point. Making the transition to a circular economy is a really important mission for all of us.

Let us stick with procurement, which is a specialist area. I apologise that we did not get your document in time, because of the recent information technology problems. What are some of the barriers and challenges around procurement? I heard, for example, that some local suppliers who provide goods on a leasing basis and who can refurbish goods often find that they cannot supply the public sector because of the way in which budgets are measured, so local authorities and the public sector end up buying things brand new, which might sometimes be the right approach but is not always. Are those the kinds of conversations that take place? How does that feed up to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities or the Scottish Government?

**John Wincott:** I see that Mark Williams has volunteered to answer that question. Procurement is an area that Mark is particularly focused on. Would you like to come in, please, Mark?

**Mark Williams:** Yes, but with apologies, because I typed R in the chat box before you asked about some of the barriers for local authorities.

From a Scottish Water perspective—I am not particularly experienced on the local authority side—I will pick up on the point about how we take the innovation side into the supply chain. Procurement is obviously tremendously important for us, at Scottish Water, in driving towards net zero. Within our net zero goal, we have included the investment emissions from our capital programme. Although those emissions come from the supply chain, they come under the umbrella of what we regard as influenced emissions, and we have captured those as part of our goal. The key thing that we had to do concerned the delivery partners and frameworks for the current programmes and ensuring that our goals for net zero, as stated in this group of the Government, are properly locked into our procurement frameworks, so that the partners who are working with us are committing to supporting those goals and to having their own carbon management plans for the products and services that they provide.

We recognise that there is a very broad range of skills and experience among those in the supply chain, as well as knowledge of what the goals mean for their products. Some of the major suppliers and construction firms are relatively well engaged, although knowledge tends to decrease as we go deeper into the supply chain.

We have had to consider how we build capacity within our supply chain so that partners understand what we are asking of them, which is to come forward to us, whether that is about carbon or about alternative materials that will deliver low-carbon outcomes.

It is also about how we build in low-carbon designs. As part of that, we have had to create a challenge to those in the supply chain and build capacity to create the knowledge with them, giving them the tools to understand how much carbon is in the materials that they procure or the services that they provide. We can then start to consider what is good and what is bad and how we can drive down the carbon factor. We are trying to bring partners on that journey so that they can do that.

We have broadly shared the tools that we have made available—the embodied carbon calculators and various other things—within the Sustainable Scotland Network. One of the key things that we are looking to do is build that awareness across the wider public sector in Scotland. From our perspective, we are talking not just about the Scottish Water supply chain, as that supply chain supports a broad range of the public sector when it comes to delivering investment.

It is key that we get a grip on procurement in the public sector. That issue has been a priority for us in trying to drive down emissions from capital investment.

On Monica Lennon's question about the procurement rules for local authorities, I will defer to somebody else, if that is okay.

10:45

**John Wincott:** I suggest that Lorna Jarvie comes in on that question.

**Lorna Jarvie:** Conversations about leasing as opposed to buying new, for example, take place. We hear about them in our own local authorities, at SSN and in other public bodies. It is a question of scale and whether we can get the range and number of products or services that we are looking to get. We have looked at whether we can buy food supplies, for example, from our own local authority area, and we have needed to consider the question of scale, the responsiveness of suppliers and so on. Such issues can be a barrier to the newer, smaller and more innovative circular economy solutions that are appearing.

Local authority officers and the Sustainable Scotland Network need to look at different ways in which we can unlock some of the real challenges. We need to get better at moving away from new deep solutions that are based on bulk buying from large suppliers and begin to be more flexible in that respect. That is not easy, though, because there are difficult challenges with both approaches.

In the network, we have been having conversations about procurement for a long time—for many years. I have been a member of the network since 2006 and sustainable procurement has been a constant theme over that time. The challenges are not easy, but there is a will and a desire to get beyond where we are just now. We have strengthened the network by bringing people together to have those conversations with other partners and stakeholders. Some of our conversations and dialogues go beyond the public sector, as we talk to businesses and sectors that we were not talking to previously. For example, we are moving into the realms of food and agriculture, and that started with a conversation about food procurement. That work is developing, but we need the ability to do a lot more work to get past the challenges that we have.

**Monica Lennon:** In the interests of time, I will hand back to the convener. I would love to ask questions about food waste and procurement, which Lorna Jarvie mentioned, but another colleague might pick that up, and I might be able to come back in later if there is time.

**The Convener:** I will bring in Liam Kerr.

**Liam Kerr:** Earlier, the convener talked about funding and the need to leverage private finance. The Scottish Government proposes to deliver its heat in buildings strategy using £336 million this year and £1.8 billion by 2026. Will that be enough? As far as the witnesses are aware, is there a sufficient plan to leverage the £33 billion that will apparently be required?

**John Wincott:** That is a very difficult question. We are quite early in the process of working out the exact cost per building. As I said, at Fife College, we have only just managed to look at how we can reduce the carbon output of some of our buildings, because the seedcorn funding has only recently become available.

It is difficult to answer the question. If you asked any local authority or public body whether there was enough money to upgrade its buildings, the answer would almost certainly be no. Nobody will ever say that they are being given enough money or too much money. It is more a case of providing the data that shows what is needed to upgrade the buildings. The NHS has done a lot of work on its buildings, and universities and colleges have done the same.

I do not know whether George Tarvit wants to come in.

**George Tarvit:** The point that I was going to raise relates to procurement, but it might relate to finance, too. It is about the public sector working together to identify effective interventions and then using those as a portfolio for investment, whether it is public sector or private sector investment.

Last week, you heard a lot from the council leaders about the fact that it will not be purely Government spend that will meet the targets; it will be some sort of combination of the public sector spending and sending the right signals, the private sector meeting us on that journey and then the steps that individual households will take to move on the agenda. Obviously, a lot of issues need to be addressed around the macro economy, such as having the right pricing signals and the costing of carbon in the process.

All those issues are bearing down on us as we try to pull the plans together. One thing that has struck me as critical over the years is the need for the public sector to get together a consistent project register so that public sector bodies, individually and at a place level, understand what interventions and projects they want to progress. We can then get into the detail of costing those plans and getting the right technical advice on whether they are the most cost-effective way to take forward the agenda.

I think that all of us on the panel would say that there is an awful lot of work yet to be done to close the gap between the climate change targets and policies that are coming forward and the actual process of delivering. We need to answer the questions about who pays, how we pay and over what timeframe.

SSN is playing into that space. In the final session at our conference in December, we looked at finance and skills. There is interest in a process that would allow public sector bodies to skill up in this space. A lot of public sector bodies have not had the capacity to do that actively over the years in order to pull together business cases. However, given the scale of what we are looking at between now and the target dates at the back end of this decade, there is an awful lot of work to be done on that.

Some of it comes down to embedding the issue as a corporate priority in the long term. A lot of the efforts that we have seen across the network and the public sector over the years have been a little too sporadic. There is good practice in pockets, but we now need that to be embedded and the action to be driven forward.

**Liam Kerr:** I am grateful for those answers. I think that what I am hearing, particularly in George Tarvit's answer to the second part of my question, is that there is not yet a sufficient plan to leverage the £33 billion. On that note, in an earlier answer to the convener, John Wincott mentioned the Scottish green public sector estate decarbonisation scheme. Is that scheme sufficiently funded to decarbonise the public sector estate?

**John Wincott:** Thank you for getting all the right words in the right order. I struggle with that acronym—it trips me up every time—so I will not say it again.

Frankly, I did a little jig of joy when the £95 million was first mooted, especially when it was then effectively ring fenced for organisations that had not previously had access to such funding. I am sure that you are aware that organisations such as colleges and the national health service cannot, for instance, borrow through Salix. We have therefore not been able to access funding in the past that would enable us to do the sort of building works that other public bodies could do. When we got that fund, and when there was short-term and long-term planning money, that was a really positive step. Obviously, the increase from £95 million to £200 million is also extremely welcome.

It is too early to say whether that is enough, but my hunch is that it is probably not. For example, the NHS's initial estimates of building refurbishment requirements are for quite a large

spend. However, at the moment, we do not know. At Fife College, I have leveraged in some of the money. We have been given the grant, and we have done our first sweep of project planning and come up with budgets and costings. We are looking at about £600,000 for the first tranche of works, and after that there will be more.

When we start to delve into the issues, that is where the pre-capital funding is really important, because it gives us a chance to bring in experts and consider what we need to do. We can then put together project registers, which George Tarvit talked about, and work from that point.

It is still early days. I hope that, if we have solid projects that deliver the goals that we are all trying to achieve, the Government will look again at the £200 million and increase it again. My hunch is that it will probably not be enough, but I would rather see the figures once people start creating project registers and we have proper quotes for what we really need.

**Jackie Dunbar:** I am interested in planning obligations and land value capture. Should land value capture be directed and used proactively to achieve net zero? What would a robust and successful system for land value capture look like in practice? I am in your hands as to who is best to answer.

**John Wincott:** I think that all of us recognise that planning is one of the key levers that are in the Scottish Government's hands. We are not planning experts on the panel, but such experts are available. Would Lorna Jarvie like to kick off? I will come back at the end if necessary.

**Lorna Jarvie:** As John Wincott said, I am not an expert in land value capture. In planning in general, it is important to grasp and take forward the national planning framework 4 to its full potential for the agenda. On the specifics of land value capture—*[inaudible]*—would probably be better placed than me to provide the detail.

**John Wincott:** If it is okay with the committee, I recommend that we should take the question away and come back with a more detailed answer. Land value capture is a serious challenge that needs to be addressed. Planning provides the opportunity to bring joined-up thinking, if we want to call it that, to the environment, so that we plan for 2050 and beyond and not for 2025. We should not build houses today that will not be fit for 2030. Planning should capture all that automatically. Land value capture is a specialist subject, so I do not want to pontificate on it.

**Jackie Dunbar:** I totally understand you not being an expert, because I am absolutely no expert, which is why I find these questions interesting. I would be delighted if you got back to us in writing.

I am happy to have a written response to my next question, too, if that is more appropriate. Should section 75 agreements and land value capture work together to deliver infrastructure that is future proofed and adapted to the climate emergency? I am happy to have a written response if you feel that that would be better.

**John Wincott:** We will give a written response but, having watched last week's meeting, I will say that section 75 is an old tool—it is in an act from 1997. The requirement has moved on tremendously, as Aberdeen found when it tried to broaden the scope of section 75, which led to a failing in court. That was a lesson for all local authorities that the way in which section 75 agreements are written does not provide the degree of flexibility that is wanted at the moment.

We will provide more detail in writing, but you are absolutely right to start questioning historical planning legislation and frameworks and to ask how we can bring planning into the fold of climate change. I am not saying that it is not—that would be unfair—but some planning tools were created before climate change was the issue that it is and before climate emergencies were declared. Modernisation is certainly needed.

**Jackie Dunbar:** I am still a serving councillor on Aberdeen City Council and I was there when the case that you referred to happened. That is all that I have got, convener.

**Natalie Don:** I am interested in climate change reporting. Will you provide extra information on how public bodies have responded to statutory emissions reporting requirements? Are there gaps in calculating and reporting on emissions? If so, how might they be addressed?

11:00

**John Wincott:** The answer is Excel spreadsheets. Climate change reporting is the tool and my favourite thing in the world, so I thank you for the question. Climate change reporting has tremendous possibilities for assisting public bodies to progress. Unfortunately, it has not been used to its fullest yet. I have a wish list to give to the committee at the end, and one of the things on it is to make better use of climate change reporting.

The reporting system at the moment is a little bit clunky, if we are honest. It uses ProcXed as a platform, which was not originally designed for that. The system is set in a statutory instrument, so we cannot change any of the questions or the answer frameworks without changing the law, which is awkward, but we are working with Government officials on refreshing the process.

Local authorities and public bodies use the system. My organisation, Fife College, compares

reports with those from other colleges. We actually swap each other's homework, mark it and then do what each other is doing on how to improve. Local authorities do the same. Public bodies of a similar ilk share best practice using the reporting process. However, it could absolutely be done better.

This May, we will bring together a conference that will look at the reports, engage with our members and share best practice. I suggest that the committee might be interested in such an approach. It could look at the reports, compare like with like and perhaps delve into a bit more detail. I am not aware that the committee has ever done that in the past—but correct me if I am wrong.

The reports could be a vital tool and organisations use them, but they could be used more extensively.

**Natalie Don:** Has the duty to act sustainably made a material difference to the way that public bodies plan and operate?

Additional requirements for climate change reporting were introduced last year. How have they been received and how are they being implemented?

I am sorry if I cut off Lorna Jarvie there.

**John Wincott:** Lorna Jarvie will flag it to me if she needs to speak.

That is another excellent question. It has been in law since 2009 that, in exercising their functions, public bodies must act in a way that is best calculated to deliver on climate change mitigation and adaptation goals and that they must act sustainably. That was not necessarily rolled out to public bodies with sufficient emphasis when the law was adopted. It is now much more at the forefront of their minds because it is in the new guidance that we produced, for instance. We stated clearly that it is a public body climate change duty and the fact that it says “you must” leaves very little wriggle room.

There is still work to be done on that. If I am honest, public bodies in general need to consider how to embed the duties in everything that they do. There are areas of really good practice and areas that could be improved.

It is a really good question and another one of my favourite topics, so I thank you for that.

**Mark Ruskell:** I will ask about a couple of areas that have not been covered yet and, perhaps, a few wrap-up questions from last week's evidence.

I will ask first about transport, which we have not talked about. Many public sector bodies are now considering the provision of office accommodation, transport and a different work-life balance post pandemic. What impact is that having?

Related to that and to the climate target is the Government's target for a 20 per cent reduction in vehicle mileage. How do we reduce that mileage?

For essential travel, how are we progressing with the procurement of electric vehicles and decarbonising the travel that is required?

I do not know who to direct that to, but I see that Lorna Jarvie is nodding her head.

**Lorna Jarvie:** The questions around transport are critical. It is such an important area to tackle and, like much of this jigsaw, it is not easy.

On work-life balance, the green recovery and transport, in a context where we are still home working, there is a huge potential right now to get this right. It is so important that we do so at this point in time. There has been a lot of change in transport over the past 18 months to two years because of the pandemic; some good things and some bad things have happened. If we do not move quickly now to make sure that we embed the good stuff and move away from some of the negatives, we will only be building up challenges and giving ourselves more hurdles for the future.

We are working well to bring EVs into our fleet in local authorities. We have done that with funding and support, and are at the stage of moving towards less necessity for that support, because it is having a mainstreaming effect. However, there is clearly still a long way to go. Electric vehicles on their own cannot be the answer. When we talk about reducing vehicle mileage by 20 per cent, we have to understand that EVs are not the solution to everything and that we need to look at sustainable and active travel and transport as well, especially in our towns and cities. We are aware of that; it is not easy, and as a network we talk about it frequently.

It is also completely bound up with the questions around planning and how we deal with that going forward with NPF4 and the way that we make these significant changes, because this is not about a tweet here or there, but about huge changes in the way that we do things. It is also about changes in the way that we think about things. It comes right back to the question at the start about whether we are communicating about this enough, and that is not necessarily just about communication between the Scottish Government and local authorities, but between local authorities and our communities as well. That goes back to the point about understanding, dialogue and conversation, so that we are on the same page moving forward.

I do not know whether that answers your question.

**Mark Ruskell:** That is useful, Lorna. I have had a few conversations with public sector bodies in

the past few months, and I know that a number of them are questioning whether they need large office spaces. We talk a lot about the cost of carbon reduction, and I wonder whether there are savings to be made there or whether there is a particular trend of working out the assets that organisations have and perhaps thinking about their service delivery in a different way.

**Lorna Jarvie:** Definitely, and that is absolutely what most local authorities are talking about right now: using the different models of home working, agile working or hybrid working, and releasing the need for some of those assets. If we do not need them going forward, they can be put to other uses. Essentially, we can focus on having a more appropriate estate for our needs. We can move towards the notion of 20-minute neighbourhoods as well, so that people can work closer to where they live in a lot of instances where they need to access offices. There is lots of potential there, but it is a significant change.

In my local authority, we are going through a process of looking at what we could move to and what savings that would bring us. It is fair to say that the challenge is that the investment that we need to make in our estate to meet the 2038 target is significantly greater than any savings that we will make through reduction of the estate, and—*[Inaudible.]*—that same jigsaw, and it all has to be part of our green recovery from Covid.

There is no way to separate the challenges of meeting net zero, adapting to climate change, having a just transition and making a green recovery. Those things absolutely have to mesh. For every climate solution that we have, that is the message that we get back. It does not matter what piece of work we do—if we focus on one of those nuggets, the other pieces will come back in the responses and the conversations.

**Mark Ruskell:** So it is not just about a single yearly budget conversation; it is more about a transformative change in organisations.

**Lorna Jarvie:** Yes. We have tried to use our data and information about our estate and our emissions. We started on that journey with the reporting. To hark back to the earlier question on duties, it has been so important to have the duty on reporting and to start the data collection in local authorities. Then it is about drilling down into that, service by service, looking at the buildings that are used, the fleet and the mileage that is generated. That has started a conversation about what it means on the ground and in reality for each service. No matter whether the service is estates, asset management or energy management, or social work, education or catering, we look at what its emissions are. We look at the implications of delivering the service for direct scope 1 and 2 emissions and for the wider scope 3 emissions

through procurement or transport and all the other aspects on which the service has influence and the potential to show leadership.

**Mark Ruskell:** George Tarvit and Mark Williams want to come in, and I see that John Wincott has something to say.

**John Wincott:** Mark Williams will come in shortly, but I want to just add that home working is not carbon free either. That was picked up in the reporting this year, as our reports included home-working carbon. Public bodies had to estimate the percentage of staff who were working from home and then an approximate figure was applied to that as a factor. We are actually reporting on home-working carbon.

I think that Mark Williams wants to come in. I am conscious of time, so I ask him to be brief.

**Mark Williams:** I intended to come in on reporting, so I will maybe build on that in the context of transport. The repository of public body reports that we now have is a fantastic data set on how public bodies and local authorities have regarded the issue over the years. It shows what our transport emissions, energy use and emissions from buildings have been over the years. We need to use that and get more value from it. We need to look at it in the context of our office strategies, transport strategies and the procurement of green fleet.

We need to beef up the reporting side and get a proper comparator that shows where the sectors are and what sectors can learn from one another. It is about that shared knowledge. I am happy to be corrected, but I think that the repository of data sitting here in Scotland is unparalleled in the UK. I am not aware of that level of data existing anywhere else in the UK. It is a tremendous resource to help to target and understand the problems and challenges. The more that we can do to leverage that value and target those areas, the better. As we go through this transformative change, with hybrid models, office strategies and transport strategies—obviously, there is the broader transport agenda, which Lorna Jarvie referred to—organisations need to keep a closer eye on that repository and look at how we use it more beneficially to support that change.

**The Convener:** We have a couple of minutes left, so I will just—

**Mark Ruskell:** I am sorry, convener, but I have one more question, and I think that George Tarvit wanted to come in.

**The Convener:** Okay—that is fine. Go ahead, Mark.

**Mark Ruskell:** I will ask my final question, and then maybe George can come in on that and the other aspects.

At last week's meeting, the leader of Glasgow City Council, Susan Aitken, made an interesting point about the capacity in councils. She was talking about the capacity in her council, which is the largest in Scotland, but that is clearly an issue across multiple councils. For smaller councils, it will be an even bigger issue. How can councils work together? How can there be a sharing of capacity across the public sector? SSN is obviously one route to do that, but how do we create vehicles that enable councils and public bodies to work together to create more investable propositions, whether that is on heat, transport, procurement or any of the other issues that we have spoken about? Is there enough collaboration?

11:15

**George Tarvit:** That is why SSN exists, why it survived and why the members continue to support it. We have shifted from being a programme that is based on a charity to being hybrid funded across the public sector. There is always more that needs to be done, and we do a huge amount of sharing. That probably rests on the fact that the core membership of SSN is the lead climate change officers in the public sector, so that is a huge asset for Scotland in driving that agenda forward.

The critical thing is for us to network beyond our network, and we are extremely well plugged into other bits of the public sector. One of the key messages that is coming up is the fact that climate change needs to be taken out of a green sustainability ghetto and mainstreamed into the public sector. We see that on the back of the strengthened legislation, the clarification of the policy landscape and the stepping up of leadership; the conversation that the committee had last week with the council leaders is a reflection of that.

Scotland now takes a very mature approach to climate change and recognises the need to secure those co-benefits. Lorna Jarvie mentioned the green recovery and the just transition, and that is about recognising that, by taking action on climate change, we will build a better Scotland. The SSN has always played a role in creating that trusted space, which John Wincott mentioned earlier, for professionals to come together. On top of that, we do a fair bit of work in that space between the likes of the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers to support leadership within the public sector. It is a case of building on what we have. SSN is a fantastic asset for the public sector. As has been mentioned, if we did not have SSN, we would have to invent it, but now we need to invest in it, because it creates the platform

through which participation and collaboration can be accelerated. The targets that we face in the next eight years are dramatic and hugely challenging, so that is just a rallying call to use the network to support further, deeper and broader collaboration.

We have touched on a lot of policy areas today. We have contact with a lot of other stakeholders in the public sector and local government that we can pull in, in order to provide further evidence to the committee, and we are more than happy to do so. In short, it is a case of investing in the asset that we have, which is well established and well trusted in the public sector.

**The Convener:** Mark Ruskell has indicated that he has finished asking his questions, so I have one brief wrap-up question, which is more an observation on the evidence that we have heard today and reflects something that the UK Climate Change Committee has told the committee as well. In a number of areas where fundamental, transformational change is required—such as sustainable procurement, the circular economy and the heat in buildings strategy—it sounds like, in large part, things are still at the conversation stage, for understandable reasons. When do we move to delivery and implementation, so that we can start to see fundamental change? In that respect, do you think that the 2030 target for converting all public buildings is achievable, or do you think that it will be very challenging? That question is for John Wincott.

**John Wincott:** The 2030 target will be tremendously challenging. I think that it is still possible, as does the CCC, but it recognises that there are huge challenges ahead. You are right about procurement which, as somebody said earlier, we have been grappling with for a long time. The frameworks are still not the best that they could be, because they are still based on pound spend, and the cheapest product is not always the most carbon-efficient product, so we need better metrics on procurement. However, at least we are now moving in the right direction. Procurement is high on the agenda for SSN to start to address this year, and it will be part of our operational plan for 2022.

As George Tarvit has said, however, one of our key challenges is capacity. We have effectively come up with a list of areas that we would want to tackle in the coming 12 months. We have negotiation with the Scottish Government, and we cherry pick the most high-priority areas and those that can be afforded the time. We are funded by a hybrid funding model, so some of the money comes from the Scottish Government, some from local authorities and some from the national health service. We are not a hugely wealthy organisation. We do an awful lot of work based on the

contributions in kind that our members provide, rather than relying on money.

If there are barriers to collaboration they need to be removed, wherever they are found. That needs agility, and it is something that the committee and the Government perhaps have not had to face before, as some of the barriers have been in place for a long time.

We invite you to better utilise the knowledge that we bring to the situation—referring to both SSN's membership and our officers. As the earlier questions indicated, you should use the tools that already exist better. You should use section 44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 more formally and more forwardly, so that people are aware of the duty. You should use the climate change duties reports more. They are all public documents: if you go to the SSN website you can download every public body's duty report since 2015. Anybody who is interested in how public bodies are performing can go online and download a spreadsheet or a pdf document—yet I do not see those reports being used anywhere near as often as they could be.

Those are the key asks that I would bring to the committee to take forward.

**The Convener:** That is very helpful, John—thank you very much. I thank all our panel members for joining us this morning and helping the committee to better understand the role of local authority delivery partners in the transition to net zero.

11:21

*Meeting suspended.*

11:23

*On resuming—*

**The Convener:** Our second panel comprises representatives of community groups across Scotland. Their organisations are all members of the Scottish Community Alliance. I welcome Philip Revell, who is convener of the Scottish Communities Climate Action Network, and Ailsa Raeburn, who is chairperson of Community Land Scotland. They are both members of the Scottish Community Alliance. I also welcome Mark McRitchie, who is interim chief executive of the Development Trusts Association Scotland. Thank you all for joining us. We have about an hour for our discussion and we will move straight to questions.

My first question relates to our discussion with our previous panel about the level of funding that is available at local authorities for the transition to net zero. It would be good to get your views on

whether the funding that is available from local authorities matches community aspirations to reduce emissions and adapt to net zero. Related to that, what are the key barriers to community organisations accessing private finance? What action can policy makers take to encourage more private finance to assist with community activities?

**Philip Revell (Scottish Communities Climate Action Network):** I am sorry, but I am not sure that I quite understood the question. Are you asking about the funding that communities receive from local authorities or the funding to local authorities to support communities?

**The Convener:** What funding is available from local authorities to community groups to assist them and their various projects to deliver a local transition to net zero?

**Philip Revell:** The answer is almost none. A tiny bit of funding is sometimes available through local community planning partnerships, but otherwise there is minimal funding, as far as I am aware.

**The Convener:** How do you raise funding, if you are able to do so? What alternative funding channels do you have available to support community projects?

**Philip Revell:** Such channels are very few and far between at the moment. Some funding comes directly from the Scottish Government. Up to now, for most of our members, the funding has come through the climate challenge fund, which is now coming to an end. Some money comes from other Government funds that are directed more to disadvantaged communities, such as the investing in communities fund, which is not currently running. Other sources of finance include the national lottery and charitable grants.

The lack of meaningful long-term funding for community-led action is a huge issue, so most of our members are dependent on volunteers for a large part of what they do.

**Ailsa Raeburn (Community Land Scotland):** I thank the committee for the invitation to speak. I agree with Philip Revell. There is very little direct funding from local authorities, but most of the community land owners that we represent across Scotland have been able to access central Government funding. That includes the climate challenge fund—as Philip Revell said, that is coming to an end—as well as community and renewable energy scheme funding and other funding sources such as those for active travel. Community land owners have been quite successful at applying for and securing such funding for their projects, but the funding sources are few and far between and they are very resource intensive.

There are opportunities for communities to work directly with local authorities, particularly on funding streams that might come online. The reverse of that is that local authorities can take a short-term view. I know that last week's witnesses would not agree with that, given the evidence that they presented. However, from the perspective on the ground, there have been occasions when communities have taken a broad, long-term view about projects but have been hindered by local authorities that still take a short-term, financially driven view and consider the cheapest option.

That brings me back to what the previous witnesses said about local authorities still being slightly constrained by procurement and financial management aspects—I am sure that that is reflected in the funding—and therefore being unable to get a broader picture of what such projects are likely to deliver and the value of getting communities involved in delivery.

That is my answer to your first question. I do not know whether you want me to answer your second question or whether you want to bring in Mark McRitchie.

**The Convener:** Please address the second question and I will then bring in Mark McRitchie.

**Ailsa Raeburn:** There are a number of barriers to community land owners accessing private finance. There have been some successful cases. They are few and far between, but there are some great examples that we can learn from. Langholm in the Borders was able to work with private funders—via intermediary organisations such as the John Muir Trust and the Woodland Trust—on carbon offsetting, and there are philanthropic donations. Community land owners are starting down the route of accessing private finance, but the Government could be doing things to support that.

The models of community governance currently fall under the community right to buy and the Scottish land fund. They could be broadened out to enable more private interests on boards, with the communities still being in control and leading on developments. There are opportunities. I know that the Scottish Land Commission is thinking about different models involving more private finance, particularly around things such as carbon-offsetting income.

11:30

As well as being the chair of Community Land Scotland, I am chair of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, and we have been able to work with some intermediary organisations to start to draw down that type of finance while keeping the overall principles of developing a circular economy, building local community wealth, having local

democratic governance and so on. There are opportunities to move in the direction of bringing in more private finance while keeping those underpinning principles, which are really important.

**The Convener:** That is great—thank you. I put the same questions to Mark McRitchie.

**Mark McRitchie (Development Trusts Association Scotland):** Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to share the reflections of DTAS and our 300 community-based members, which range in scale from the volunteer-based set-ups that Philip Revell mentioned all the way through to trading organisations that own assets.

As my colleagues mentioned, there are some exceptional organisations that have been exemplars in progressing their work with a patchwork of funding from a multitude of sources. They have not been primarily local authority led, and there is certainly concern about whether there will be a cliff edge in community activity when the CCF comes to an end in March.

In last week's evidence session, Councillor Jenny Laing mentioned the pressure on local government budgets, and we recognise that. Linked to that, there are definitely issues to do with capacity and resources, as well as internal expertise, which Councillor Susan Aitken mentioned. We recognise that it is not just about the funding programme; it is also about the support that goes alongside that.

Having said that, there are some great examples out there of work that has gone on around the net zero issue in the broader sense. As part of the legacy from Covid, we have seen some examples of community food provision with pantries and community fridges, which is having an impact on waste. That has come about through the quite amazing community response to Covid across the country.

To build on Ailsa Raeburn's points about private finance rather than repeating them, I note that there is an element of community organisations being risk averse. They often have no asset base, and although they are entrepreneurial, the approach has often been to build things with very few starter elements. There is concern about finance having to be paid back and what will happen if things do not go according to plan. What will be left? Unfortunately, we have members that have experienced damage to infrastructure and the community has taken time to recover. Organisations are quite concerned about that. There has certainly been a lot of conversation about whether that is the only route to take or whether we can be more creative in our approaches to financing community-based activity.

**The Convener:** I thank you all for those responses. You have touched on a number of issues that I know my colleagues will want to explore. I hand over to Fiona Hyslop.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Thank you for joining us. I am interested in the positives and what community organisations want to do in the net zero space. If there are no local authority funding streams as yet, what support can local authorities give? I am particularly interested in heat in buildings. Does the power of local organisations to influence and deliver on that offer great possibility? As has been mentioned, volunteers are the backbone of community organisations. If central funding is given mostly for capital or projects, will people capacity be an issue? If councils are interested only in what they finance—or, to be brutal, in the short term, as we have heard—what is needed for the people resource to help communities to do their projects?

I would like to hear from all three witnesses on that, if possible. After that, I will be happy to hand back to the convener.

**Philip Revell:** There is a fundamental mismatch in scale between so-called local government and the scale at which local community groups operate, which is a fundamental problem. Another fundamental issue involves culture and mindset. Government in Scotland in general has a top-down, centralising mindset, and local authorities frequently do not really see communities as key strategic partners. Communities are often keen to work with their local authority, but the mismatch of scale is a problem. Finding a way in to the right person to speak to in a council and the right way of getting support can be difficult for a small community group.

You mentioned the people resource. What has been lacking in the past 10 to 20 years is community learning and development services, which have been slashed. In many parts of Scotland, councils do little community development work, but that is a vital function that communities need.

I do not know whether that answers your questions. I am not sure that I have remembered all your points.

**Fiona Hyslop:** You have been very direct. That is helpful.

**Mark McRitchie:** I think that we all agree that the vision is right. Many community organisations are at an early stage and people capacity is an element. In our internal work to look at co-investment, I have seen the benefit of giving what are often small sums to organisations, which enable the start of a synergy around activity. The net zero agenda very much fits into that.

There is a bit of caution, because a lot of my members are still in the recovery phase. Despite doing a huge amount of work in the Covid environment, their trading has not returned to pre-Covid levels. They are now focusing on the year of the squeeze; there is definitely pressure, so achieving net zero becomes another thing to do—they have to consider how it fits with their current resources.

On the point about local authorities not having resources, perhaps they do not fund community-based activity, but all the local authorities talked about eye-watering numbers for the investment that is needed and about where that investment might come from. There are concerns about their approach. I am disappointed that council leaders continue to use 20th century approaches to a 21st century problem. They continue to look at private finance, scale and business cases. Sometimes, the key benefit of being net zero might not stack up in the financial sense. Where do such projects go?

A number of cities described inward investment as the model, but we know that the trickle down does not happen. If investment comes in, where will the green jobs be? How will we ensure that the green jobs are in our communities and that we do not export the work? Some of the moves that Crown Estate Scotland announced the other day involve building capacity to fabricate the turbines in the Highlands, as opposed to bringing them in from Germany or wherever.

There were discussions on procurement earlier today, as well as last week. There is a kind of unwritten approach that says that we must do this at scale, but some of the great creativity and therefore maximum net zero benefit comes from looking at how we do procurement. At the moment, it prevents participation and locks us out. Research that has been done by my English colleagues at Locality shows that there are great benefits in doing contracts at a smaller scale, and we have the ability to be creative with that and gain advanced learning. However, local government continues to think about scale rather than the diversity that can add to the richness of what we are trying to do.

**Fiona Hyslop:** It would be helpful if you could send the committee any examples of good projects that you have seen across Scotland.

**Ailsa Raeburn:** Examples are really important. I take Mark McRitchie's point that, without assets, community organisations can be risk averse. If they have either land or buildings, communities can take more risks, and some have done that successfully.

I will send the committee a report that we published last year, which is called "Community

Landowners and the Climate Emergency". It gives six great case studies of communities that are already at the delivery stage. We have talked before about how we move from thinking to delivery, and Carloway Estate Trust, which NatureScot picked as an exemplar of peatland restoration, is taking projects forward now. A community organisation in Buckhaven and Methil is running several food and community growing projects for local food production.

If we look to the west coast, Gigha was at the forefront of community energy in 2005, almost 20 years ago, and it has used income from its four turbines to bring its housing stock up to a really good standard and start work on energy efficiency. It has also done an active travel project and reduced car use. Elsewhere, the Lister Housing Co-operative in Edinburgh was the first organisation to get consent for solar thermal panels on all B-listed buildings.

There are lots of examples of communities that have assets. From Community Land Scotland's perspective, it is critical that they have ownership of those assets, because they can start to look at different routes and think differently. I will share the report that I mentioned with the committee, because it contains some useful examples.

On community-led activity and why it would be useful to get more local authority support, I note that the Scottish Government's research shows that 60 per cent of emissions reduction will have to be social: it will have to be done by people rather than through technology. Again, there is evidence that community-led projects influence behaviour change. As I mentioned, I am the chair of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, and Eigg is a first, certainly in Scotland, in that it is completely dependent on renewable energy 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. That is part of the solution.

The other part of the solution is to get people to use less energy. Lots of projects on Eigg are scalable and transferable to other, similar locations where we could educate people in how to use fewer resources and less energy. There are lots of really useful lessons that can be learned.

Returning to local authority support, I note that there are issues around the short-termism that we have spoken about and the financial constraints that local authorities are working under. Revenue support to develop community capacity is critical, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise has been providing that successfully for a number of years. Schemes of that sort need to be rolled out elsewhere, particularly in the south of Scotland, and further cemented in the HIE area in order to support communities.

With regard to staff capacity, community organisations are staffed by volunteers, as Fiona

Hyslop mentioned, and their boards are made up of volunteers. I am a volunteer. We do not have the skills and resources, but we can nonetheless do fantastic things with relatively little—actually, very little—investment in staff capacity.

Those are the key messages. If we are to get more local authority involvement, support for skills development through staff capacity at the local level is really important.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Thank you—that is helpful.

**The Convener:** I will bring in Monica Lennon with the next question. Over to you, Monica.

11:45

**Monica Lennon:** Sorry, convener—I am getting a message on my screen as I have had to reconnect. I missed the past five minutes as I had some IT problems; I apologise for that.

I want to pick up on the theme of waste management and the role of public bodies in Scotland in the journey to a circular economy. I will ask our second panel of witnesses specifically about the role of communities. How well are local authorities involving communities in the full agenda? We heard some frustrations from witnesses on the previous panel about resources and some aspects of engagement. I am interested to hear what the main challenges and opportunities are. Perhaps Philip Revell can start.

**Philip Revell:** Are you asking specifically about waste management and the circular economy?

**Monica Lennon:** Yes, that is correct.

**Philip Revell:** There are many examples of communities and local authorities working together to intercept waste before it goes to landfill, for example, and putting it into reuse hubs and that sort of thing. In general, I come back to my first point, which was that the market is extremely challenging for small, local community organisations that want to collaborate meaningfully with local authorities, because there is a mismatch of scale. Too often, local authorities do not see community groups as key strategic partners, and that is a real challenge.

My hope is that, through the new regional networks that are emerging, which will transition to regional and community climate action hubs, it will be much easier to establish a more strategic approach and greater collaborative working between the public sector and community organisations. There is a desperate need for infrastructure in communities to enable them to create local circular economies that are based around not just managing waste, but reducing waste in the first place and creating more of a sharing economy by setting up tool libraries and

other sharing libraries, re-use hubs, repurposing workshops and so on.

I am not sure whether that addresses your question.

**Monica Lennon:** That is very helpful to get us started. Perhaps Ailsa Raeburn can add to that, or share some different thoughts.

**Ailsa Raeburn:** I agree with Philip Revell. Communities have been leading on a lot of projects, such as local reuse hubs and recycling initiatives, that have been very successful. Again, it comes down to the fact that the projects are local and are able to influence local behaviour.

One of the witnesses on the previous panel said that all these initiatives cannot be top down, as they do not work when they are top down. A lot of local authorities are too big, so they are not able to work on the scale of a local community. I am thinking for example of Highland Council, which is based in Inverness, and the island of Eigg. The community on Eigg is able to organise its own facilities, but the island is very remote. The system in Highland Council—I make absolutely no criticism of the officers, who are extremely helpful, or the councillors—does not really work for Eigg because the scale is so different, and that is an issue. If we could look at working on a much more local scale, that would be helpful.

The circular economy point is interesting. I know several community land owners who are developing quite significant projects, often with support from the Scottish Government through its various funding streams, and one of their key outcomes is to develop the circular economy. They are thinking about how they can use local materials and labour and ensure that the benefits from those projects stay in local communities as far as possible and do not leach out.

It would be interesting to talk about that in more detail from a procurement perspective and a grant funding perspective. One of the outcomes that is asked about on grant applications could be how the organisation is going to help to build local community wealth and the circular economy. That would get every type of organisation—including communities, which are pretty good at it—thinking about how they use those national resources to build local assets.

**Monica Lennon:** Again, that is helpful. I put the same question to Mark McRitchie.

**Mark McRitchie:** The overall impression with waste management is still that local government is doing things to its residents, and therefore they are passive in the process. At the committee's meeting last week, an example was used of reducing the number of uplifts of black bins. That was presented as a way of saving carbon and

helping to meet net zero but, actually, the community will see it as a reduction in service. However, individual residents are interested in what is going on. It is about bringing us into the conversation and treating us as adults. There is an element of understanding that and having that conversation.

On the broader point about the circular economy, at last week's meeting, one of the local authority witnesses mentioned IT distribution and the reuse of computers. In Glasgow, the delivery of that was led by third, community and voluntary sector groups, which were able to reach out and ensure that the equipment was given to those who are digitally excluded. That issue has been highlighted in the past two years, and there are examples of work on it. The question is how that is done at scale.

There is definitely social enterprise activity on the circular economy. Development trusts have worked with independent social enterprises on repair hubs. Rather than people throwing away their old toasters, we want to see whether we can fix them and extend their economic life. There are elements of that that could be extended and evolved across the network.

**Monica Lennon:** For my next question, I will stick with you, Mark, and then go back to the other witnesses. You made an interesting comment about communities often feeling that things are being done to them and not being fully engaged in the conversation. Taking the example of food waste, I ask each of you to give your perspective on how development trusts, community groups or community land owners can be involved in driving change and action and raising awareness. I recently spoke to Zero Waste Scotland about food waste, which is a hugely challenging issue for local authorities and right across the public and third sector. Mark, do you have any ideas or feedback on that?

**Mark McRitchie:** Certainly. Some of the early phases of climate challenge funding supported the use of food and food waste, as opposed to growing. There are some good examples of that. Unfortunately, we were subjected to what in effect was a postcode lottery. Some projects were successful for a couple of years, but the funding then moved to projects in postcodes that had not been successful. That left the projects that had done some really innovative work stuck.

The model has evolved. It is interesting to see how food pantries have developed. A good number of our members have taken that approach, which is seen as a much more dignified way to provide food. Many of those projects are driven by surplus food and food that is close to its end date.

The community fridge network is a different model. It is UK-wide and there is an aspiration to grow it in Scotland. That is a different approach, because there is potential for donations from members as well as the use of surplus food. That is at the early stages but, as Ailsa Raeburn said, we have members with bases or assets across the country that could be good places to use, because they are trusted places. That could be really interesting as it evolves. Food is very much a social thing and is, therefore, very powerful when we are looking at community.

**Monica Lennon:** That is very helpful, Mark.

I have a supplementary question for Ailsa Raeburn. You talked about the fact that it can be more difficult for larger councils to get engagement right. I doubt that we will change the size of our local authorities overnight, so what advice do you have for them? What would you like them to do differently?

**Ailsa Raeburn:** The first point is about food waste, which comes back to my earlier point about driving behaviour change, and that is very effectively done at a local level. Some of the community land owners, particularly in the Outer Hebrides, such as Galson and Carloway—*[Inaudible.]*

**The Convener:** Monica, it looks as though we might have lost Ailsa. Do you want to move on to your next question?

**Monica Lennon:** Yes, we could move on to Philip Revell and perhaps come back to Ailsa if she reconnects.

**Philip Revell:** There are lots of examples across Scotland of community-run larders, pantries and fridges, which make food available that would otherwise have gone to waste. Community-run supper clubs also use food that supermarkets would have thrown out. There are also many projects that try to close the loop more locally, such as composting schemes that keep nutrients local. However, the much bigger issue is how we address food poverty and create a less wasteful food system. For me, it is about how we rethink the economy and create local wellbeing economies.

To come back to Monica Lennon's point about changing the scale of local authorities, I am not suggesting that we do so, because we need local authorities to be at the scale that they are, but we also need a much more local scale of democracy that communities can relate to.

**Monica Lennon:** That is helpful; thank you, Philip. You will probably be aware that an MSP has proposed a right to food (Scotland) bill, so you might want to engage with that.

Convener, it looks as though we do not have Ailsa, so I am happy to hand back to you. If Ailsa's connection returns, perhaps we can hear from her towards the end of the session.

**The Convener:** That is great, Monica. You are right that Ailsa is not available, but I hope that we can come back to her in a short moment.

I will hand over to Natalie Don.

**Natalie Don:** *[Inaudible.]*—touched on some of the challenges that communities face, such as finance, volunteers and relationships with local authorities. I am not sure whether you feel that there are further challenges, or whether we could focus more on the positive side. Are there any opportunities for community-led emissions reductions and the just transition that is associated with that? In which sectors are there opportunities for innovation, learning and partnership? That question goes first to Mark McRitchie.

**Mark McRitchie:** That is a very good question. There absolutely are opportunities. The development trusts that I work with are very much can-do organisations that are keen to work. Philip Revell's point about scale and engagement is a challenge in relation to that, but interesting things still come through from that.

Council leader Margaret Davidson talked about the charging infrastructure and putting charging points all the way up the north coast 500 route. Things like that are interesting, because there is an opportunity for community organisations to be involved in that and to have charging points. We have assets spread across the country, and there could be charging points around and next to community buildings.

12:00

One of the issues with charging infrastructure is not the infrastructure itself but the fact that many charging points do not work properly. Folks with electric cars have talked about having to go to multiple charging points. If a charging point is the responsibility of a development trust, for instance, we might find that it is looked after, because it is connected to sustainability and there is a vested interest in having the charging point working. It would be interesting to see how that would work.

The other week, my colleague was involved in a discussion with the Scottish Government about active travel. In such discussions, there is a lot of talk about the quality of pavements and ensuring that they are up to scratch—living in Glasgow, I totally agree with that—but one of the rural participants flagged up an issue by saying, "What is a pavement? I don't have any pavements." We must remember that active travel means different things in different places. The infrastructure,

whether it is public transport or pavements, is not the same in all communities, so we need to think about how that works.

We have members that are looking at community transport and how we deal with a very patchy transport set-up. You cannot get to certain parts of Glasgow after 6 o'clock at night, so how does that allow people to engage with work opportunities and be part of metropolitan life? That is the case in our largest city; the situation will be worse in other communities.

There are opportunities and our colleagues in the Community Transport Association have done some interesting work. Again, it comes down to technology. In some ways, policy is ahead of the technology. We still do not have high-capacity electric minibuses. The difference between a nine-seater minibus and a 16-seater minibus might not seem as though it is very much, but that presents some challenges in relation to viability in transport. There are initiatives that have the potential to connect to other aspects of the broader agenda.

**Philip Revell:** There are huge opportunities. The Scottish Communities Climate Action Network has a vision of a just and equitable Scotland in which communities are empowered to use their collective intelligence and local knowledge to create locally adapted solutions for a zero-carbon future. In communities, there is a huge amount of creativity and willingness to make that happen. They just need the basic infrastructure and resources to unleash community-led action. That action is not just on the climate emergency; there are opportunities to join up a raft of agendas and to rethink the sort of future that we are trying to create and how we can ensure wellbeing for all in a thriving environment. It is key that we take climate action out of its environmental silo and see that tackling the climate emergency can also tackle inequality, disadvantage, biodiversity loss and so on.

I do not know whether committee members will have seen it, but, prior to the meeting, I sent the committee a short paper outlining the infrastructure resources that communities need in order to unleash community-led action. We do not need to keep reinventing the wheel. We know what works and, in outline, what every community needs in order to unleash community action. The challenge that we face is unprecedented, and none of us has beaten it before, so we need to find ways to tap into everybody's collective intelligence at all levels and into local knowledge to create local solutions. That is potentially a hugely exciting opportunity, but we need to be careful not to overwhelm people and cause them to lose hope and fall into despair. Time is very short, but this is potentially a very exciting opportunity to transform our way of life and the economy.

**Natalie Don:** I absolutely agree. Thank you.

I am not sure whether you heard my question, Ailsa. If you have anything else to add, you are welcome to.

**Ailsa Raeburn:** Am I unmuted now? Great. Sorry, I did not hear your question. Are you happy to repeat it quickly?

**Natalie Don:** Essentially, we have spoken about some of the biggest challenges that communities face, such as finance and volunteers and relationships with local authorities. My question was trying to focus more on the positive side, looking at the opportunities for community-led emissions reduction and in which sectors there might be opportunities for innovation, learning and partnership that stem from that.

**Ailsa Raeburn:** Thank you. I think that communities have decades of experience of working in partnership, because for so long they were not able to deliver things themselves and had to do things with partners. It is only since communities have started to apply more assets and influence that they have been able to move ahead and take risks that perhaps their public sector partners have not been able to take. I certainly reflect Philip's point that there is absolutely no lack of ambition in communities to make their places better. They are very focused on what they can do to make them a better place to live and bring up their children and to ensure that people have decent housing and can stay there. There are lots of great lessons that individual communities can share.

Some of the challenges have already been outlined. There are often volunteer boards and there can be volunteer burnout. There is need for more skills training and staff capacity. However, we have seen where those models work, so we are not reinventing the wheel there; we are just learning from things that do work, including from HIE and the support that it has put into community development over a number of years and which could certainly be rolled out more widely.

Another point to make is that, for many communities, the climate emergency is not in a silo; it is part of the everyday things that a community needs to think about to make it more sustainable, in human, financial and environmental terms. They do see the picture in the round. There do not tend to be the silos that we talked about a wee bit with public agencies or the need to break out of those silos. Community land owners will certainly look at the sustainability of their community in the broadest sense, whether it concerns people, money, jobs, housing or the environment.

There are lots of lessons that we can learn and scale up if we have the right sort of resources

invested in communities and in developing some of those partnerships. We have talked about partnerships with the public sector and with intermediary organisations—as I have said, the Communities Housing Trust was mainly successful—but also with the private sector. I was involved with the acquisition of the island of Ulva, and Macquarie Bank—the Australian bank—was very keen to engage. It saw a lot of benefit in engaging in those parts of projects. We are seeing more of private companies wanting to invest in community-led projects, because they see that broader sustainability picture. I think that we can do a lot more around scaling up that type of activity if we have the right resources and skills in place.

I think that it is really positive and, coming back to Philip's point, there are lots of things that we can do. There is certainly no lack of ambition.

**Natalie Don:** Thank you.

**The Convener:** Next up, we have Jackie Dunbar. Over to you, Jackie.

**Jackie Dunbar:** I thank the witnesses for coming to the meeting. I could not agree more with you when you speak about communities being best placed to tell us what they need with regard to the problems that we face as we move forward. Of course, different communities will have different problems and different solutions.

My question is on transport—specifically, active travel and public transport. Those areas are key in trying to reduce private car use, although some communities might feel that they will be able to reduce their private car use much more than other communities might. How can communities work with public bodies and local businesses to encourage the use of more sustainable forms of travel, whatever those may be? Perhaps Philip Revell can start.

**Philip Revell:** There are all sorts of ways to do that, but communities need the infrastructure. That means active travel infrastructure, such as footpaths and safe routes for cycling, as well as car sharing schemes and clubs—peer-to-peer car sharing and that sort of thing—and decent, interconnected public transport. Fundamentally, however, we also need to reduce the need to travel, and that aspect is currently not being talked about enough. Getting to net zero is not just a question of changing to electric cars; we need to fundamentally rethink how we get around and why we need to do so.

There are a lot of opportunities to localise economies so that people are able to work and play locally rather than having to travel as much as they currently do. That includes looking at ways in which we manufacture stuff. There is no need for us to have supply chains that extend around the

whole world; we can set up manufacturing much more locally—for example, through the cosmo-localisation approach, which combines global design with local manufacture. That approach enables the development of a local circular economy to a much greater degree—when items reach the end of their life, they can go back to the manufacturer to be repurposed and remanufactured. The issue of sustainable travel is connected with everything.

**Jackie Dunbar:** I could not agree more. I will go to Ailsa Raeburn and then to Mark McRitchie. I am sorry—I should have said that before.

**Ailsa Raeburn:** Your opening statement about communities being best placed to tell us what they need and what works locally is absolutely right, because what might work on Mull would not work in Glasgow. We need to take account of that in thinking about public transport, in particular when we are considering the best solutions for remote and rural communities. The solutions will not be the same across the country.

As I mentioned, communities are at the forefront of much of that type of work. As some committee members will know, Huntly in Aberdeenshire has a big active travel project—it is developing safe routes to school, and it has a car club. Over on Gigha, the big issue is trying to reduce the number of car-borne visitors to the island, because there is only one road. The community has worked with local partners to develop cycling routes and with CalMac Ferries to reduce the number of cars that come across on the ferry. It has also developed a campsite so that people do not need to bring their car. Communities have solutions to local problems such as the need to reduce car-borne travel. As I have said, there are a lot of good examples that could be scaled up elsewhere.

A big issue is that many of the funding schemes that fund such projects—I will be interested to hear Mark McRitchie's view on this, if he is speaking after me—tend to be too short term. A funding scheme is here and gone within six months, so communities do not get the time to plan. With successful funding schemes such as the Scottish land fund, which I am particularly aware of, we know that the scheme will be in place for five years, for example, so a community can plan, consort, develop partnerships, get match funding and talk to businesses, and it can then make an application and deliver a project.

There is a real sense of short-termism—there is a funding pot for something specific that the Scottish Government, for example, is currently keen on, and it is gone in six months. We are not getting the benefit from all the capacity-building work that communities are doing on those projects. There are a lot of examples that could be scaled up, and there is a lot of learning from

existing communities that we could use. I make a plea: if we are going to have funding, whether from local authorities or central Government, it must be long-term funding. Funding should run for at least three years so that communities can plan, because community organisations, for all the reasons that we have talked about—they have volunteer boards and are understaffed—cannot devote one member of staff to a particular project full time as a local authority might be able to. They do not have that luxury.

I will pass over to Mark McRitchie.

12:15

**Mark McRitchie:** I echo Ailsa Raeburn's comments about the timeframe for development. As one of our colleagues mentioned in the previous session, it takes time to embed initiatives properly and to get engagement and an understanding of the process.

With regard to practical solutions, there are models for car clubs. DTAS members are involved in, and actively support, such initiatives. We have also heard about the development of initiatives such as cycle libraries. If we want everyone to go about on a bike rather than in their own car, we need to look at the options that might be available.

The point that Philip Revell made about localising economies is significant. There has been a dilution of public services in communities. For example, health provision has become centralised, and folks have to travel further to access healthcare. There is also the question of how healthy our high street is. Some of DTAS's member trusts are actively involved, along with colleagues in Scotland's Towns Partnership, in looking at the services that are available on the high street and at how we encourage healthy and diverse towns across the country in a way that means that folks are genuinely living in a 20-minute neighbourhood.

More generally, one of our colleagues made the point in the previous session that we are now in an interesting recovery environment. For the past two years, we may have had around 20 minutes of local exercise daily—for many of us, that was probably the first time that we actually got out of our cars regularly and went out walking. There is a question around how we encourage families to continue with that, rather than simply diving back into the car, whether it is diesel or electric powered, and to think about what is around them.

That will raise some interesting questions. We have communities in which the concept of a 20-minute neighbourhood is simply a joke—it does not apply because it is not feasible. There is an element of increasing pressure on people by

taking away their ability to move about to access the necessary parts of life.

On a broader point, in the previous session, George Tarvit mentioned a public register of projects. That would be interesting, because it would potentially give us the opportunity, early doors, to see what is being suggested and planned. Communities could contribute to the process, rather than local authorities simply presenting things and saying, "This is what we're going to do—it's all done and dusted." There is an opportunity for them to say, "Guys—if you did this, there could possibly be some added value for both the capital and the revenue side." That might make for some creative thinking.

Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, a register of surplus assets was brought in. Communities said, "Ah—we could do X, Y and Z with that", in a way that local authorities and public bodies had not even thought about. The same could apply to net zero projects.

**Jackie Dunbar:** That is all I have, convener, so I will pass back to you.

**The Convener:** I will bring in Mark Ruskell. We are running up against the clock slightly, so succinct answers would be helpful. Over to you, Mark.

**Mark Ruskell:** Access to resources has been a bit of a theme this morning. I want to go back to Ailsa Raeburn and Mark McRitchie on access to land. It seems that, as we are tackling the climate emergency by developing renewables and putting in place nature recovery measures, carbon sequestration and so on, communities could have a role in that regard. However, access to land is a concern, and issues have been raised around green lairds and private sector investment in land. What do you see as the most important next steps in land reform, if communities are to become more involved in climate adaptation and mitigation? Perhaps Ailsa Raeburn can start.

**Ailsa Raeburn:** We all know that land and land use are key to Scotland's ability to meet its net zero requirements. There will be significantly more tree planting, long-term forest management, peatland restoration, soil improvement and retention, restoration of salt marsh as a carbon store, and so on. All those activities are land based. We need to make major policy changes to connect those land use imperatives in order to ensure a just transition and build community wealth.

From Community Land Scotland's perspective, the land market is still dysfunctional, and it is certainly failing to meet the ambitions for a just transition. As it stands, it will at the very least undermine or more likely defeat the ability of local

authorities and their partners to rise to the challenge of achieving net zero.

We need more regulation around the land market. The coming land reform bill gives us an opportunity to start to address some of the highly speculative investments that we are seeing at the moment, particularly in rural land. Those investments are driving up land prices hugely so that not only communities but other organisations, such as Forestry and Land Scotland, Crown Estate Scotland and local authorities, are becoming unable to engage in that market and acquire land to help to deliver Scotland's long-term land-based net zero strategies. There is a real danger that all the available land that is suitable for that type of use will be sucked up by that superheated private investment market, because Scotland's land market is unregulated and anybody can engage in it.

That rise in prices is being driven by the anticipated rise in capital values that we are seeing at the moment, underpinned by public subsidy. Together, public subsidy and the rises in land value are helping to entrench wealth in the pockets of those who are already wealthy and stopping the involvement of other organisations—particularly, from our perspective, communities but also organisations such as Forestry and Land Scotland and Crown Estate Scotland, which could interact in the market and buy up some of the carbon potential for Scotland. How are we going to save some of that carbon potential, which Scotland will need in the future? We are assuming that we will never be able to deal with all our emissions, so we will need some carbon offsetting. Currently, it is all being sucked up by the private sector, which is not delivering a just transition or community wealth.

There are things that we can do around public interest—for example, there could be more land market regulation and possibly a new right-to-restore type of right to buy for communities, with communities being able to list things such as sites of particular interest. Communities have proven beyond doubt that they can lead on local restoration—I will send you the study that shows that. There are also really interesting opportunities for local authorities and organisations such as Forestry and Land Scotland and Crown Estate Scotland to partner with communities—opportunities to bring organisations together.

That is obviously my pet topic. I will pass over to Mark McRitchie now. A huge amount can be done to start to address some of those issues and ensure that Scotland has the capacity, within its own land, to deliver net zero.

**Mark Ruskell:** Thanks for that comprehensive answer. Does Mark McRitchie have anything to add to that?

**Mark McRitchie:** Yes. Ailsa Raeburn was very comprehensive, but I have a couple of points about the concern about the buying up of land for carbon credits and locking out communities, and the concern about that particularly from an international perspective, with the offset. There is an opportunity around vacant and derelict land, and the huge scale of how we utilise that. Some of our members have done some early work on that. There is the element of how to maximise that benefit to consider. Some creative work has been done on that and how it should sit within the broader context of net zero.

**Mark Ruskell:** Thanks. That is useful.

Philip Revell mentioned that the climate challenge fund is coming to a close at the end of March. The Government has shifted into a new programme of climate action hubs, and there has been some limited investment in climate action towns. Will you reflect on whether the model of climate action hubs is, in effect, taking the CCF to a more mainstream roll-out of solutions? Have there been issues with that? What has been the reaction of your network's members?

**Philip Revell:** [*Inaudible.*]—land is a fundamental resource and asset. Too often, communities do not have access to that fundamental resource that is on their doorstep, which limits what they can do. Land prices are another huge issue that needs to be addressed urgently. That ties in with the planning system, which too often totally disempowers communities.

To answer your question about community climate action hubs, they are at the early stages. SCCAN is actively supporting the Scottish Government in rolling out the hubs, which can play a key role in enabling a more strategic and collaborative approach that will help to link community-led action with the wider third sector and the public sector.

We support that approach, but it must come with resources. Communities are being helped in different ways to come up with local community climate action plans but, unless there are resources and funding to implement those plans, communities will rapidly become disillusioned and disengaged. A way needs to be found to enable the hubs to fund and resource projects that are planned in their areas. We have—[*Inaudible.*]—question mark. There is a big gap in funding for the next year. That will be an issue for many of our organisations, which will shed staff and lose a lot of expertise and momentum for the projects that they are running.

**The Convener:** The final question will be from Liam Kerr.

**Liam Kerr:** I will be brief. I direct my question to Mark McRitchie, who I ask to give a brief answer if

possible; the other witnesses can come in if they have something to add.

The heat in buildings strategy requires homes to have an energy performance certificate rating of C by 2033. The installation of new or replacement fossil fuel boilers will be phased out after 2025 for off-gas houses and from 2030 for on-gas houses. Are communities aware of those impending deadlines? Is sufficient support available to them to meet the deadlines? In any event, are communities aware of that support?

**Mark McRitchie:** The answer to all those questions is no. We have been involved with a trust that is looking to retrofit new boilers in its facility. It looked at a number of technologies, including a woodchip system. It decided not to install that not because of the cost, which was several times that of a gas boiler system, but because woodchip deliveries would be needed every three weeks, which would disturb neighbours.

I do not think that there is awareness at all. One element of the CCF was the ability to have a conversation about what was going on. I go back to my point about the need for dialogue that treats us and residents as adults, so that we can have conversations about what things should look like and how we can make progress. New builds are fine, but we could be creative about how we link the retrofit element to green jobs. However, that feels like a concept that is not linked to things such as the no one left behind approach and the change that is coming in the employability system just months from now.

**Liam Kerr:** I put the same questions to Philip Revell.

**Philip Revell:** The general lack of awareness is a huge issue. More to the point, there is a lack of anywhere for householders to go for knowledgeable expert advice that they can trust. There are models under which communities are providing that—they are well placed to do that if they have the resources.

One of the best examples comes from Fife. The Cosy Kingdom project operates across Fife to provide tailored expert advice to householders. Such advice needs to be linked with support for householders to implement measures and with local tradespeople who have the knowledge and skills to implement the measures that are needed to drastically reduce energy consumption, which is what we need to focus on.

There is a massive challenge in how we roll out a retrofit programme for the whole of our current housing stock. Communities have a key role to play in that by providing trusted advice and supporting local enterprises and businesses to do the work that is needed.

**The Convener:** That brings us to the end of our allotted time. I thank our panel members for joining us and for helping us very much to understand the views of community groups on our inquiry's key themes and on how to help local groups in the transition to net zero.

12:31

*Meeting continued in private until 12:46.*



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.

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