



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Economy and Fair Work Committee

Wednesday 8 March 2023

Session 6



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Wednesday 8 March 2023

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1
JUST TRANSITION (GRANGEMOUTH AREA).....	2

ECONOMY AND FAIR WORK COMMITTEE

7th Meeting 2023, Session 6

CONVENER

*Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- *Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green)
- *Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
- *Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP)
- *Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
- *Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con)
- *Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab)
- *Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

- Malcolm Bennie (Falkirk Council)
- Adam Gillies (Grangemouth Community Council)
- Diarmaid Lawlor (Scottish Futures Trust)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Anne Peat

LOCATION

The James Clerk Maxwell Room (CR4)

Scottish Parliament
Economy and Fair Work
Committee

Wednesday 8 March 2023

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:31]

Decision on Taking Business in
Private

The Convener (Claire Baker): Good morning, and welcome to the seventh meeting in 2023 of the Economy and Fair Work Committee.

The first item of business is a decision to take in private item 3, which will be a discussion of the evidence that we hear this morning, and all future discussions of evidence heard as part of the inquiry. Are committee members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Just Transition
(Grangemouth Area)

09:31

The Convener: Our next item of business is the third evidence session of our inquiry into a just transition for the Grangemouth area. Today's evidence session will focus on the partnership working that is needed to facilitate a just transition. I welcome Malcolm Bennie, who is director of place services with Falkirk Council; Adam Gillies, who is from Grangemouth community council; and Diarmaid Lawlor, who is associate director of place with the Scottish Futures Trust.

As always, it will be helpful if members and witnesses keep their questions and answers as concise as possible.

I will let all three witnesses address this question, but I will come to you first, Malcolm. We are looking at a just transition for the Grangemouth area, but there is still some debate about what "just transition" means. What is the working interpretation that is being used for the Grangemouth area, and do people have an understanding of what people are trying to achieve?

Malcolm Bennie (Falkirk Council): In the context of Grangemouth, my view is that the town is on the edge of the huge successful industrial complex but that, in recent decades, it has not significantly benefited from that. That is especially true in the pockets of deprivation in the area. Grangemouth has five areas that are in Scotland's 10 per cent most deprived. More people are dying younger in Grangemouth than in Falkirk and Scotland as a whole, and premature deaths from cancer and coronary heart disease are also higher. Therefore, there is a tension between it being a place that is doing incredible commercially successful things and it having a community that is not benefiting from that.

Now, as millions of pounds are about to be invested in transitioning the industrial complex towards a net zero future, it is important that Grangemouth and its community get a fair share of those benefits. In my mind, a just transition would be a point in the future where a green industrial complex offers high-quality jobs to the workforce that has successfully reskilled from the existing industry and where corresponding investment in the local area means that the Grangemouth community has improved opportunities for employment and a better quality of life.

To be honest, if I were to walk through Grangemouth town centre right now and ask

people what “just transition” means and what it means to them, I do not know whether the term would resonate with everyone. Collectively, we need to agree on exactly what that just transition is. I have just given you my interpretation, but I am not suggesting that mine is the one, so we need to agree on exactly what it is. Trying to articulate that to the local community is a big job, and Adam Gillies would be much better placed than I am to talk about why the just transition is relevant to the community.

The consultation and engagement that was done with the community during the past three to four years posed that question, and the feedback that we got was that the just transition was seemingly not overly relevant to it. Maybe that is because Grangemouth is seen as a large industrial complex that will go from being a petrochemical plant to a hydrogen plant, so they ask, “What’s in that for me?”

However, I do not want to be negative. There are so many exciting opportunities and there is so much potential in Grangemouth, but we need to transition that into delivery so that people on the street and in the community see something happen and see that we are making a big difference to their lives.

The Convener: Thank you. Diarmaid Lawlor, I will come to you next. We received your paper yesterday, and it talks about a number of projects and things that are happening in Grangemouth—in particular, greener Grangemouth, which I think more members will ask questions about. Is that largely where you play a role in delivering a just transition for Grangemouth? Do you think that the public have an understanding of the projects that you are working on and what they mean?

Diarmaid Lawlor (Scottish Futures Trust): Yes, absolutely. I will answer those questions in two parts: first, I will talk about what the just transition is, and then I will talk about some of the work that is being done.

There are two ways of looking the just transition at the community level. The first is by looking at the International Labour Organisation’s definition of a just transition around decent work. It has broken down decent work into four things: the right opportunities, protection from harm, protection of rights and dialogue.

Those four things seem very relevant in the context of Grangemouth and the totality of infrastructure, investment and industry, as they are about making more opportunities for the community, ensuring that there is more protection in an environmental context and that there are more rights to environmental justice, and the part about dialogue is particularly relevant.

With Adam Gillies and other colleagues, we were in consultation with the community last week about greener Grangemouth. We said, “Here is an amount of money from the growth deal, capital investment and a revenue investment that is good, but small, and as with any money, it will always have its limitations.” The question is: what will we do with £10 million in capital and £2 million in revenue in an area of transition? The answer is to spend it wisely on what is needed, but also to use it to convene, co-ordinate and collect all of the other things that are happening around the area.

Greener Grangemouth is one small thing that will have a target for money, but its purpose is really to use that money as a way of convening conversations with others so that the just transition in Grangemouth can be meaningful in three specific ways. The first is that the transition helps the community to build on its strengths and capabilities, the second is that Grangemouth is able to build structure and hope for the future, and, fundamentally, the third relates to relationships and partnerships. It is not only about spending the money that we have now, but about how we use the totality of energy, capability, community and resources as we move forward.

Yes, our work is about greener Grangemouth, and yes, the greener Grangemouth project is about a spend programme, but partly the intent is to use the project as an opportunity to convene.

The Convener: Adam Gillies, welcome to the committee meeting. Do you want to say a bit about what you think a just transition means for Grangemouth and what success would look like?

Adam Gillies (Grangemouth Community Council): Thank you for having us here to talk about a just transition for Grangemouth. Historically, Grangemouth has seen what is probably an unjust transition. It has moved from being one of the most prosperous towns in Europe to—if you look outside of the industry—a town that looks like industry has left. That is probably the best way to explain it.

Our community has had a lot of false dawns. I do not know whether the committee has had a chance to see the consultation report that was published in 2019; it is a 200-page document that led to what we see as a watered-down version of the community action plan. I was looking at the community action plan this morning, and it still disappoints me, to be honest.

A just transition would see Grangemouth prosper from the industry that is underlining the Scottish economy. We understand that sharing the benefits of Grangemouth is of national importance, but it feels like we as a community have to accept the negatives of the industry. There are plans to put in a freeport and like that, which would involve

skilling up. A local community does not just skill up—that just does not work. We need something in between. We need to regenerate our town centre. It is not about just spending money on creating; it is about how our town operates for a net zero future.

We attempted to diversify the community action plan to focus it more on net zero. At the centre of that would be bringing rail to Grangemouth. Rail in Grangemouth would do a number of things. It would allow legislation that has already been passed in this Parliament to make massive changes to Grangemouth. Sorry—I am a wee bit nervous. Today is the first day I have ever been in the building like this. We looked at a plan for a train station in Grangemouth. That started in 2018, and a lot has changed in five years. The community action plan must change, and it must change dramatically to achieve what we all want to see. The plan for a train station in Grangemouth would allow the 20,000 new jobs to be sustainable.

We cannot replace the chimneys that are causing the problem in the first place with 20,000 cars. If you look back at what has been invested in through tax increment financing—TIF—you see that that funding has gone to upgrade motorways. That does not scream, “We are looking at net zero.” We need better public transport, and we are talking about not just buses, but a mix. The majority of those 20,000 jobs, by far, will not go to Grangemouth residents. If we can offer public transport that filters people into our town centre, that would regenerate our centre, which would create jobs that do not require a lot of skilling up and that people could enjoy right now, and that would make a difference to our community.

Underlining that, we would look to have a parking levy, which is in legislation that was introduced in this Parliament, but which at the moment, I believe, is only operating in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The levy does not have to be Falkirk Council wide; it could be just for the Grangemouth community to realise the benefits of what is being offered to the Scottish economy with the 20,000 jobs.

With regard to a net zero economy, if we see 20,000 cars coming into our town, that would be an unjust transition. To mitigate against those things and realise the benefits, what we are proposing should be delivered: free public transport around the Grangemouth area, underlined by the parking levy. As a community, we would see the benefit of people not using cars, and the levy would also fund free public transport in our area. Having a circular economy where we all benefit is how we would see a just transition to net zero.

The Convener: I will come back to Malcolm Bennie. We have been looking at the Grangemouth future industry board. Are you involved in the board?

Malcolm Bennie: Yes, that is correct.

The Convener: Will you give us a view of how the board operates? Is it effective in terms of bringing together the public partners? What do you see as being the priorities of the board members?

09:45

Malcolm Bennie: Falkirk Council is a key player on the Grangemouth future industry board. The group is collectively working to align public sector activity in the Grangemouth area. It brings into one space all the different public sector agencies that, typically, do their own thing in a silo approach and we try to align where the shared priorities are and where we can each support one another. It is chaired by the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise and, in essence, it brings together the key decision makers to promote investment, growth, innovation and the competitiveness of the site.

From the council's perspective, one of the key aspects is the Grangemouth flood protection scheme. I am not sure how much the committee is familiar with that but I have been thinking about it in advance of the meeting. Sea levels are rising and Grangemouth—the town and the complex—will suffer from that. It is essential that that huge piece of infrastructure be developed to protect Grangemouth residents, the complex and Scotland's future economy through the protection scheme.

The council is looking for the scheme to be progressed through Government funding, because the current estimate for it is about £600 million. The funding model for normal flood schemes would be that a council provides 20 per cent of the capital investment and the Scottish Government provides 80 per cent, but with a cost of £600 million there is no way that we can do that. One of our priorities through GFIB is to work with Government partners and agencies to raise the profile of the scheme, because there is no just transition for Grangemouth unless we ensure the long-term sustainability of the area.

I have been in post for a year, so I can talk only about the time that I have been involved in the GFIB. It is novel—it has not happened before. It is great that the Scottish Government is highlighting its priority for the Grangemouth area by establishing the board and committing manpower to it.

We have spent a fair amount of time working out the governance arrangements, because it is a new

sort of entity. We are now at the tipping point where we need to see the group collectively deliver something that would not have happened if GFIB did not exist. It would be unfair to ask whether it has been a success yet, because it takes a while for such a group to be established and the governance to take control, but, over the next year, we need to see some sort of outcomes from it that would not have happened if the GFIB did not exist.

We will probably come on to discuss what we would like to change to support a just transition. We could look at some sort of dedicated resource to the GFIB because, at the moment, it is individuals who have their normal jobs doing those as well as the GFIB. I am not undermining that at all—everybody is putting in a big commitment—but some sort of dedicated resource and financial commitment would be good.

The way that the model works at the moment is that we are all sat there with our own funding piles wondering whether we can collectively use them to do something different. However, if we are objective, we are all struggling with our funding piles and competing priorities, so there is not great potential for us to be able to take some money from our pots and put it in collectively. Some sort of seed funding investment into the GFIB to give it financial muscle might accelerate it.

I want to be positive about the board. It is a welcome development. There are no other places in Scotland where we have a board of public sector organisations all coming together. There is good, strong leadership. There is passion and interest. The guys have been up to Falkirk and Grangemouth a couple of times. In the next couple of months, a visit is happening to see the flood protection scheme sites and where we are talking about. I am positive, but, to go back to my point about delivery, it is time to see something happen.

The Convener: That is helpful—thank you.

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): Good morning, everybody, and thank you for coming along. I know that my colleagues will have a lot of questions to ask, but I want to start at the centre. I was so struck, Adam, by your submission, which I know from my personal representation absolutely strikes a chord in the heart of the community. I point out, in particular, the issue around housing. How can you attract people if there is insufficient housing, too many flats and so on?

I was also struck by the disconnect with the submission from the Scottish Futures Trust, which identifies that a lot of good stuff is going on—a lot of good stuff is going on with the council, too. From a local community point of view, what would you like to happen that would ensure that you feel that you are genuinely at the heart of a

community-centred just transition that can fan out with all the other good work that is going on? What would you like to see happen?

Adam Gillies: Words are easy, I believe, but actions speak louder. You mentioned housing, and I will go back to something from a few weeks ago. You will know of Kingseat Avenue.

Michelle Thomson: Yes.

Adam Gillies: Flatted accommodation is an issue there. Someone with a well-paying job will not want to live in a flat on Kingseat Avenue.

As I said, actions speak louder than words. You will hear different things when you meet people from the council. Actions by different parts of the council sometimes do not match the community action plan or what the people want to see. I have had meetings with the head of the council, and I have asked him why things are different in different parts of the Falkirk Council area that are in Grangemouth. From what people in the community have said, it seems that the council has just put on a sticking plaster or something to make the place look nice.

The council's actions are not following what the community needs. We can see that in different ways. The planning system is supposed to have protections for Grangemouth. The third national planning framework—NPF3—mentions that the community of Grangemouth, which has “long lived” with industry, should be “protected and enhanced.” Just two weeks ago, however, another house in multiple occupation in Grangemouth was given planning permission. Another HMO is on the way, and there was another one the year before.

That is not the vision in the community action plan. The same is happening with different departments in the council. Regarding education, for example, our children want to do advanced highers in Grangemouth high school, but they are put in a taxi and moved away to another town to do those highers. How do those actions prove that everybody is on board? Every part of the community and every part of industry is saying the same thing.

I am sorry—I didnae get on to the second part of your question; I was focused on the housing point.

Michelle Thomson: You have probably given me enough to go on. I want to bring in our other two witnesses, too, to get their reflections. Many initiatives have already been put on the record. We have talked about the flood prevention scheme, which I agree has very good comms. From the perspective of your respective agencies, what would you like to be done differently in order to square off the disconnect between the community's perceptions, which have been so elegantly articulated, and the activity that is going

on now, both in the short term and in the longer term?

Diarmaid Lawlor: That is a great question. We had a consultation with the community just last week, when it was rightly noted that although the community action plan offers a key vision for the community, there is frustration on two levels. First, it has been watered down. The second point is about accountability for the vision, so that if we say, “We’re going this way,” everyone works around that.

From our point of view at the Scottish Futures Trust, it is interesting to look at what is going on within the community. We could mention the Friends of Inchyra Park group, which Adam Gillies is in, there is the Zetland Park project, and there is the Charlotte Dundas heritage trail. All of those initiatives are community led and passionately led, and they tend to work around specific local areas. It tends to be that one bunch of people organise around their particular area, and a different bunch of people organise around another part of the town.

For me, it would be good if, first, we could get more co-ordination between the good stuff that is happening in the community and, secondly, we as agencies, and departments and portfolios, were able to co-ordinate so that the totality of spend could work in a really interesting way. Thirdly, it would be good to bridge the gap between the small-scale stuff, which is passionate and powerful, and the large-scale stuff.

I will touch on the Grangemouth future industry board for a moment. It is important not to underestimate how difficult it is to get a conversation going between disparate groups around a shared future. To go back to Malcolm Bennie’s point, it takes a lot of time to get people to work together. As people are doing that, they tend to focus on what they know, which is the industry and the complex. However, there are a load of people—17,000-odd—living just adjacent to that, so it would be good to see more of a relationship between the two parts: the big and the small.

I know that the just transition team in the Scottish Government is trying to progress the just transition plan. One of the questions that the team asked us at the SFT was about what the links were between the big stuff and the small stuff—between community life, as Adam Gillies has laid out, and other bits. We have had a go at thinking about that, and we think that there are seven areas to consider.

First, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency is progressing a piece of work on what it calls a regulatory hub. That is about looking at aligning the regulatory environment around the

Health and Safety Executive, SEPA and NatureScot, and at how that all comes together so that it facilitates the transition to future industries but also protects and supports the community. That stuff is slightly invisible at one level, but it is really important with regard to the now, the next and the later. An explicit intent of the regulatory hub is to support all the work that Adam Gillies has talked about. The explicit intent is the important thing—it is not maybe, hopefully or supposedly, but explicitly, going to happen.

Secondly—as Adam has said, and the community action plan has highlighted—the issue is about not only reskilling but skills in general, and passion, which the community has. A key touch point is employability and enterprise with regard to women and families, existing businesses, supply chains and community wealth building.

The third element is active travel. Rail is absolutely a community ambition, but in the meantime, while the business case for that goes through and the Scottish transport appraisal guidance process is undertaken, which could take a number of years, we could be looking at improving the environment for walking and cycling; at the electric vehicle capacity; and at the integration of active travel with Falkirk Grahamston station, and down to the industrial cluster, to benefit the community.

The fourth aspect concerns the green port and the transition to future industries. Logistics and freight will be a key, massive issue. It is an issue now and it will be an issue later. There are huge opportunities there. How do we think about that in a co-ordinated way so that some of the hassle is taken away from the community and some of the efficiencies move into the cluster?

There is incredible skill in Grangemouth, at community level, to mobilise people in situations that may seem hopeless. There is incredible skill in industry to transition to huge and different futures. What if we shared those skills? What if we were able to take some of the skills from industry and start to apply them in looking at how we might develop an energy and heat network—not necessarily how we pay for it, but what we can do and the skills and potential that we can apply, and how we can test that.

The fifth aspect relates to the NPF implementation. The NPF is here, as Adam rightly said, so the question is no longer whether we need it. The question is, what are we going to do with it? That is a question for the industrial cluster and the flood scheme, and for the community. A shared interest between the different parts is the implementation of policy, not the construction of it.

The sixth aspect is the flood defence scheme, which is really interesting and relates to some of

the financial aspects that Malcolm Bennie laid out. It also invites some really difficult choices to be made. How, and whom, do we protect, and how does it all go forward? Within those choices, there are massive opportunities. For example, there are opportunities in data infrastructure to ensure that the flood scheme works, and in nature-based systems to ensure that support is provided. Those opportunities could flow into the community to enhance exactly the aspects that Adam Gillies has talked about.

Part of the response to Michelle Thomson's question is about us collectively trying to work out the different touch points at the different scales. Adam Gillies and his community council are right at the heart of it. They know what is going on in the community. The Grangemouth future industry board is trying to get that to work, and there is a bridge in between that we need to be targeted on and explicit about so that the benefits flow to the community and the transition happens up front.

That is the job of Government on co-ordination, it is the job of agencies on the implementation side and, fundamentally, it is the job of all of us to be accountable to, and to listen to and work with, the communities.

10:00

Michelle Thomson: That was a very fulsome answer.

I would like to hear from Malcolm Bennie, too. Feel free to comment on the GFIB as well, if you want to.

Malcolm Bennie: There is a bit of me that feels wrong answering the question, because Adam Gillies represents the community. In my opinion, it feels as though what we are hearing from the community is, "Can we see something change?" because, otherwise, it feels as though we are just hearing words. The two levers that we as a council can pull are the levers on town centre regeneration and housing, which are closely linked.

We need to recognise that Grangemouth town centre—I am talking about the shopping centre and the really small inner-ring approach—is failing and needs to be reborn. I want to get a master plan done for the Grangemouth town centre area that identifies where we can remove empty units and aged housing and replace them with new modern housing that meets the community's requirements.

From the surveys that we have done with residents, I have heard that they want more family accommodation in the area that allows people to stay and not just transition through Grangemouth to somewhere else, with a high turnover rate. We

need to create a sustainable neighbourhood, and I think that we could achieve that. Diarmaid Lawlor is leading some of that work through the £10 million greener Grangemouth activity. I will work with my colleagues in housing to see what we can do. I have information about some of the early housing projects, but they are not on a scale that would be significant enough to allow me to say to Adam Gillies, "Don't worry—it will be okay. In a few years, it will look different."

Members will be familiar with the fact that the council represents all sorts of communities in the Falkirk area. It is interesting that some communities feel that Grangemouth gets more than they do. Other communities in Falkirk would say, "Well, we're not getting a committee about us. We're not getting an industrial complex."

There is always a tension there, but I recognise the importance of the Grangemouth complex for the wider Falkirk area and Scotland plc. It is essential that the residents and communities get some sort of benefit from that. We have not touched on things like the impact that heavy goods vehicle drivers have on the community. Something has to happen that makes people feel as though they get something out of it.

To come back to the question, town centre regeneration and housing would be my two areas of focus, but I will also seek to work much more closely with Adam Gillies to ensure that those are the things that he and his communities want to see.

Michelle Thomson: There is a perception in Grangemouth, to which you have alluded, that the community bears the cost of the industry without getting the value of it. Some people hold the perception that the council does not give sufficient focus to that and that, inadvertently, its focus is on things that protect industry. They would argue that even the flood defences are about protecting industry rather than necessarily having the community at the heart of the project.

I have been aware of that perception since I was elected to represent the area. Has it changed? What active steps has the council taken to address it as part of the activities on a just transition? You are clearly aware of that perception.

Malcolm Bennie: Yes. Forgive me—I cannot remember whether this is mentioned in the community council's submission to the committee, but there is a narrative about how, 60 or 70 years ago, money was going directly from the Grangemouth complex into the local area. You need only look at the municipal investment in the town centre area and all the buildings that were created to see how the community benefited in those days whereas, now, in a larger council

environment, that sort of direct return does not exist. Therefore, it is not a perception. Anyone who has lived there for 50 years will know the difference between what happens now and what used to happen.

There is a lot of investment as part of the flood protection scheme that is not just at the seaport but which extends up the river into neighbourhoods. The scheme will address all sorts of issues beyond just business ones. However, it is all about perception and whether people feel that that would be happening if business was not there. I get that point.

On how we change the situation, Grangemouth is fortunate. I can list some of the ways in which it is. We know that Ineos will spend £1 billion on hydrogen transitioning. We have the growth deal. The green freeport announcement is really exciting. We are talking about £6 billion-worth of investment coming in. A lot of that will come to the Grangemouth area. There is no way that there will not be some spillover, although I accept that the fear is that a lot of the jobs that will be created will be for people who drive into Grangemouth, rather than for the local community.

One of the key workstreams in the green freeport bid is a skills development piece about creating virtual reality simulation training. It is absolutely dedicated to seeking to support people in deprived communities to get that training, so I feel really excited. However, it is a bit of a case of jam tomorrow for Adam Gillies to hear, "Don't worry—the green freeport's coming." There is a need to see change now.

I accept that the tax increment finance scheme will not transform communities, but the investment in infrastructure helps to make a sustainable place for business, which means that businesses do not leave Grangemouth, which helps to keep jobs in the local area as much as we can. The flood protection scheme will, we hope, give us a long-term future for the area. The GFIB should tie in lots of public sector organisations to deliver some sort of change.

Do I have a drawer with things in it that will make a difference for Grangemouth? I believe that there are things that will do that, but we need to stop it just being words and make something happen. We definitely can make a difference. I can go into more detail later on the growth deal, but there is a series of projects in it that are really exciting and that will make a difference.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): Good morning, panel. I will follow up on the points that you have made about the various initiatives that have taken place. I had a list before the meeting started, and I have just added to it. We have the green freeport, which Malcolm Bennie mentioned,

the local hydrogen action plan, the Falkirk growth deal, the United Kingdom Government's levelling up agenda, the shared prosperity fund and the Scottish Government's national strategy for economic transformation. You have just mentioned that you would like to see a master plan for the Grangemouth area. The letter that we got from the SFT this morning talked about the greener Grangemouth initiative.

There are a lot of initiatives. How can conflict between the various policy programmes and initiatives be properly managed to ensure that we have joined-up working towards our goal?

Malcolm Bennie: That is a good question. I would say this, because I am going to try to be positive, but there are really good linkages between the growth deal and the green freeport bid. Falkirk Council is the accountable body not only for the growth deal but for the green freeport bid, which involves a partnership between the City of Edinburgh Council, Fife Council and Falkirk Council. As the accountable body, Falkirk Council is the one that receives the money, needs to divvy it up, and runs the governance of the project.

We are in a really good position to align the two schemes. The key priorities of the two programmes are closely linked. They are about business, innovation, place making, and improvement in learning and training. I feel confident about that alignment.

The £1 billion investment by Ineos in the transitioning of the complex is not something that the council will have much—or any—say in. It is a green transition that fits—

Colin Smyth: How would that be managed if there was a potential conflict between what Ineos said and what the local council wanted to achieve?

Malcolm Bennie: I do not think that there is a conflict, as that investment is about investing in hydrogen and green energy. I will give examples from the growth deal. There are workstreams that relate to identifying incubator hubs for exciting new ways of using energy and exciting ways of utilising carbon to reduce carbon emissions. Ineos and the council are actually working towards the same end.

Ineos's announcement on going for a green transition was a really positive signal for Falkirk Council, as we have aspirations to see carbon reduction across the Falkirk area, and the biggest emitter in our area—and one of the biggest emitters in Scotland—is now going to go on the same journey. Therefore, I am confident that there is good alignment.

I hear your point about the fact that there are all sorts of different programmes and that it might be difficult for one person to stay on top of them or for

an organisation to keep track of which is the most important priority, but I am confident that everything fits together.

Colin Smyth: I am not going to suggest another committee or group, because you already have quite a lot of them—for example, you talked earlier about the future industry board—but is there a need for more co-ordination?

Malcolm Bennie: I can speak only for myself. I do not see that need. I probably should have said that Ineos is represented on the Falkirk growth deal board.

Colin Smyth: It is not on the Grangemouth future industry board, for example. Only public sector bodies are on that.

Malcolm Bennie: Sure. The growth deal is backed by £130 million of investment, and the green freeport will have £6 billion-worth of investment. Those are the areas that I would probably be drawn to. The GFIB is a vehicle by which we seek to ensure that we are all aware of the regulatory hub in Grangemouth and thinking about how to maximise its benefits. That is what it is for. As I have said, because there is no additional financial investment in the GFIB, I would be more drawn to the importance of the growth deal and the green freeport if I were ranking priorities in respect of what will change the lives of people in the Grangemouth area.

Colin Smyth: Diarmaid Lawlor touched on some of the initiatives. It looked like you were trying to co-ordinate all of that.

Diarmaid Lawlor: There is a lot of co-ordination. A lot of the public sector representatives who sit on the growth deal board also sit on the Grangemouth future industry board. The same people sit on both boards. We do not need new boards or groups.

There are three things that could help the alignment that Malcolm Bennie described. One is spending. With the growth deal and the greener Grangemouth initiative, there is an opportunity to get early spend to address some of the priorities that Adam Gillies set out. We could get things to happen now in the town centre or with housing and start to deliver on that.

The second thing is in the submission that we presented. In the greener Grangemouth work, we have been trying to set out six principles that can work across the various bits and pieces. Whether we are thinking about the Grangemouth future industry board, the green port or the TIF, six questions should be asked before something is done or people consult. What role is there for the community? How will community capacity be built? How will community wellbeing be enhanced? How will the local economy be transformed? How will

the environment be enhanced? In particular, how will the investment in infrastructure deliver inclusive growth?

10:15

One important thing about co-ordination is that there is a similar stickiness, if you like. There are some similar issues.

The last issue relates to measures. If we collectively keep ourselves accountable for what we are trying to do in Grangemouth and if all the various initiatives measure themselves in a similar way, that is a way of making sure that, whatever is done, it hits those things.

The three things that are useful are the spending now, the aligned principles and the measures.

There are co-ordination tools out there: the NPF and its implementation; the local development plan and its focus on delivery; and the growth deal and its focus on delivery at the strategic board, the local board and the individual projects.

All the ingredients are there. By using them, we can make sure that we hit the ground now in the community, that we line up the ducks around that, and that we measure ourselves and keep each other accountable. All of that should be done first, within the forums and structures that we have; then, if it turns out that there are stresses and strains within that, we should move things on, by all means. That is a way in which we can surface the conflicts. There are different groups in which we can start to surface those, test them out, and then bring them forward and say, "Look, we need to talk in a different way about how we resolve those issues."

Colin Smyth: I will bring in Adam Gillies to give a view on whether the community feels that it is involved in those initiatives, but maybe you can get your rebuttal in first, Diarmaid. How do you involve the community? I detect from the delivery of the action plan that there is a lot of frustration in the community that a lot of things are happening, but they are not benefiting the community. How are you bringing the community into that?

Diarmaid Lawlor: That is the fundamental nub of the issue. The greener Grangemouth project is unique in the deal in that it is entirely focused on the community. It is about putting community wellbeing into the heart of the just transition.

We have not presented the community of Grangemouth with four or five things that we are going to spend the money on. We have tried to engage with it on the back of the community action plan, to ask three questions: what should we spend; how should we work together—that becomes important not just in the planning but in

the doing; and how should we connect that with the wider bits?

Part of what we are trying to do in the greener Grangemouth project is to set up the idea of a mini programme, so to speak, that is focused on the community and builds on the work that Adam Gillies and Malcolm Bennie have talked about. From that, we will identify a long list and a short list of possibilities. We will then get into the targeting—we will do one thing, then wrap other things around that, then get people to wrap around even more.

At its heart, the greener Grangemouth project is a community partnership project. It is not about us—the SFT—telling the community what to do; it is about the SFT saying, “If this is what you want to do, we can help to make that happen.”

Colin Smyth: Adam Gillies, the greener Grangemouth project sounds like a great thing, with heavy community involvement. In what way could the community be better involved in some of that work?

Adam Gillies: A few committees have been mentioned. The non-industrial side of Grangemouth is not represented on those. That is a loss to what they are trying to deliver. I mean no disrespect. The consultation document can tell you everything that you want but, when it comes to discussing changes, only the people who live there can understand how those changes will affect them. What I am trying to say is that being involved in those committees and having those discussions is not about trying to stop development; it is about mitigating development so that it is more appealing to local people, if you like.

The community links report showed that there was a distrust between the council, industry and non-industry. Having those committees segregated from the community does not help.

Colin Smyth: How would you like that to change? Should community councils be on more of those committees, or is there a need for a structure that brings some of those different organisations and initiatives together with the community? How would you bring that together? How would you align the community with all the initiatives that are taking place?

Adam Gillies: You have alluded to the fact that there are a lot of committees. The community council is a group of 10 people, who all have their own full-time jobs, for example, so it is hard to commit to being on those committees. However, I believe that we should be given the option.

We have always believed that we should be in the room when decisions are being made for at least our opinion. We should have representation on anything that affects our community. Especially

when the permitted planning zone, which is in the port complex, is expanded once we have the green freeport, such decisions will be forced on us. We will not have a choice. We know that the planning system is not perfect and that it will be weakened in Grangemouth. That will be a disadvantage to the community. Therefore, wherever possible, we should be represented on committees to have those discussions.

I will not say that it has all been one sided. Through Falkirk Council, we have managed to have meetings indirectly with the GFIB in which we have seen what it has been discussing, but it would be much better to be in the room to give a community perspective on what it is discussing and how that affects the community, because neither industry nor the council has a full view. Having a position on such committees would be important. It would be beneficial for everybody.

Colin Smyth: I used to be a community councillor before I was a local councillor and before I was an MSP. It is a big commitment for you. I used to go to lots of organisations—you will know that there are loads. Is that asking too much of community council members? Is there another way, or should there be an open invitation for the community council to go to those different organisations?

Adam Gillies: I agree with what you say. We have discussed being probably the most consulted community in Scotland. We like to have that theme. It certainly feels like that. We cannot go to everything; we have to decide what is important. We have no choice on that. We do not have the resources to go to everything.

Colin Smyth: But the option should be there.

Adam Gillies: Yes, I believe so.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): We have covered a lot of ground already. I will follow up with you, Adam, on Colin Smyth's line of questioning.

Community councils come in all shapes and sizes. Some are really effective and some are not that effective. As you have said, if you were to be invited to every organisation—we have already had a long list of them—that would really stretch you. Colin Smyth and I have both been councillors. Surely it is the job of councillors to attend such bodies and to feed back to you if you cannot go along. Do you agree with that?

Adam Gillies: Of course councillors should attend such bodies: that is why they are elected. I agree with what you say in principle, but the details of such meetings should be shared openly, which is not always the case. We have some good councillors in Grangemouth who share some information with us, but it is not always open.

Graham Simpson: That is a fair point.

Diarmaid Lawlor mentioned the greener Grangemouth programme. I am still not clear what it is. Could you explain that?

Diarmaid Lawlor: Yes. It is a subset of the Falkirk growth deal and is a £10 million capital and £2 million revenue project. The purpose of it is to focus on community wellbeing and community partnership. Within it, there are three kinds of projects that the money can go towards. The first is town centre projects: that relates to Malcolm Bennie's point about regeneration.

Secondly, as the community action plan has highlighted, there are a number of areas of deprivation in the community where life is not as good as it could be or should be. They include Kersiebank, Bowhouse and the top of Carrongrange. Within those areas, some of the £10 million could be used to try to make life a little easier and to make opportunities more accessible. There is already an infrastructure of community facilities. How can we get that closer to being net zero? How can we bring more digital infrastructure into it? How can we connect it so that the skills programmes that Malcolm Bennie talked about as part of the green freeport bid are accessible in Kersiebank, Bowhouse and Carrongrange, rather than just in Falkirk or somewhere else, so that the youngsters in those areas are able to get into them?

Thirdly, the revenue side is entirely about net zero capacity building and investing in the community. There are a number of possibilities around that, including in skills and training. Investing in organisational capacity would address the kind of questions that have been laid out.

If we are looking at a more community-led future—some communities are great, but some need help—we will have the opportunity to invest over 10 years in strengthening the capability to lead and in sustainability, so that we are not investing in projects that have no chance of lasting for two years, five years or whatever. We are investing in the people, the stuff and the outcomes.

To bring all that together, there is a portfolio of projects that are trying to make a difference on the ground.

Graham Simpson: I guess that we are right at the start of that journey. Are we?

Diarmaid Lawlor: We are.

Graham Simpson: Has none of the projects been done?

Diarmaid Lawlor: No. That is an important point. Adam Gillies and Walter Inglis, from the community council, have been through many

consultations. There is a lot of stuff in many documents, so it is not that hard to find the information. Our job is to read it and distil it down to a long list of things that could be done, and then to work with the community to bring it down to a shortlist.

The business case process of the deal will move on in the summertime, when the UK and Scottish Governments expect to see some of the work being progressed. Our job is to push the OBC—outline business case—for the greener Grangemouth work, so that there is coherence and structure to it. That will allow the business case to be approved.

I will pick up on a previous line of questioning on councillors' representation and capacity. We in SFT also work in other parts of Scotland, one of which is the Borderlands. It has a place programme that is looking at what is needed in each town. That project is interesting because it is building the idea that there should be a community board, or a town team, that has representation across the area.

We were recently in Hawick, where there are around 83 community groups, including community councils and members. That is a huge amount, and each group might have four or however many people on it. What is amazing in that community is that somebody mapped and categorised all that and suggested how a representative board structure could work. That is an excellent way to understand the dynamic of the community and to build accountability from the ground up. Having a board structure such as a Grangemouth future community board would allow strategic interaction between community interests and political interests. There is learning that we can rob from other places and invest in Grangemouth.

Graham Simpson: That would be yet another committee.

Diarmaid Lawlor: The corollary of that is your point about people being time stretched. If the board is representative, the voices of the community will be represented and there will be feedback to the community, as opposed to there being demands on the community to be at every meeting and people being unable to attend. It is a way of getting the collective voice to work.

Graham Simpson: You said that the people on the future industry board are the same people who are on the growth deal board. Do we need a future industry board?

Diarmaid Lawlor: We do, because the growth deal has a particular agenda and set of agreements. The future industry board has similar people, but as with the Parliament's committees' work, one person will be doing different things with

different people for different reasons. The work of the future industry board is about convening people, shaping the trajectory and keeping people together, whereas the growth deal is about lining up the ducks for spending and investing. The work is slightly different, but there is an opportunity in having similar people who know the area and are able to move in and out of the various groups. The challenge is for those people to use their time efficiently and line up all the ducks from the different forums.

Graham Simpson: You will be pleased to know that there will be another report and another consultation—the Government's just transition plan, which has been mentioned. Is there a point to having a just transition plan? I address that question to Malcolm Bennie, because Diarmaid Lawlor has had a good run. What should be in such a plan? As Adam Gillies has said, it should not be just words. It will need to set out actions, projects and timescales. You have already mentioned that there are lots of ideas out there. However, for me, that plan should be about what we need, how much it will cost and how we get there. Is that how you see it?

10:30

Malcolm Bennie: The just transition plan should exist because, if it did not, we might not have those conversations, which are, as you have heard from Adam Gillies, absolutely essential in ensuring that we do not get drawn just to the significant industrial and economic benefits for the area. Similar sites across Scotland will need to go on the same journey and make sure that there is benefit for the local community. I therefore fully support the plan.

When it comes to what that final plan or strategy is going to include, I am not sure—I would need to see it. If the question was put to me about what I want to see for Grangemouth when it comes to a just transition, my answer would include that there should be a financial commitment to the Grangemouth flood protection scheme, some sort of financial or employee commitment to the GFIB and flexibility in Government for some of the schemes and funding that we are being given, such as the growth deal.

There should also be a tax increment finance scheme to allow us to flex and move with the changing economic situation when it comes to construction inflation. We should be able flex in relation to the question whether ideas are the right ideas—because, if people want to change horses in projects, a level of bureaucracy comes with that.

There should be targeted investment in employability and training schemes that are linked to green industry and—speaking personally—

there should be some sort of dedicated funding for social housing in those communities, because, at the moment, the unlocking of significant investment in social housing in Grangemouth is a barrier.

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I will pick up on something in the Scottish Futures Trust's written submission, which Malcolm Bennie also just mentioned—TIF. That was a real blast from the past. I remember when tax increment finance was extremely popular and was flavour of the month; everybody seemed to be reaching for it. Then, suddenly, it was less popular. I do not know whether it died out completely, but we do not hear of it any longer.

Diarmaid, the SFT mentions TIF in your written submission. Will you comment on how it fits in?

Diarmaid Lawlor: What is interesting about Grangemouth is that it is a jigsaw, if you like, of different pieces from different times. The tax increment finance work was about trying to get finance in to build infrastructure. That programme is still progressing.

The development of the TIF work across Scotland has included the growth accelerator model, which supports some work here in Edinburgh, and the green growth accelerator model for getting the finance to invest in new and different behaviours.

The TIF model still exists. Negotiations are ongoing with Falkirk Council and the Scottish Government. That is partly about looking at strategic infrastructure that facilitates industrial transition and at the other infrastructure needs in the area. I guess that the issue is about considering different mechanisms for the transition. TIF is one tool in the box that could bring in funding for infrastructure, but there will be others.

Colin Beattie: To be honest, I am not sure why TIF kind of went out of fashion. It just seemed to vanish from people's sight. Do you know why that happened?

Diarmaid Lawlor: I do not think that TIF vanished. There are a number of factors. There is a range of TIF projects across Scotland. Similar to why we need the growth board and the just transition board, TIF asks people to invest the time to make the business case and the partnerships work. All those mechanisms need time. Over the period, local authority and Government time is pressured, so time investment is one of the issues.

Secondly, it is important to look at the intent of models. The green growth accelerator is a good example because it has similar principles to TIF but migrates them to greener outcomes.

TIF is still there; it is still progressing and is still very much part of the infrastructure portfolio. There is still learning to be done about solving the issues and sticking points across the TIF project so that it can be improved.

Malcolm Bennie: I have worked in local government for 13 years, so I do not have as much experience as some people on the panel. Local authorities can be quite traditional beasts. We are used to getting capital from Government and to using revenue to raise capital. When TIF comes along, it is quite different and people wonder how it works. There is also a risk attached to it, because a council that does not generate the required rates revenue is still liable. Council officers have to have an appetite for risk if they are to go down that route because they are, in effect, advising the council to spend a lot of money on something that they cannot guarantee will deliver a return, which could have financial consequences for the council.

I do not know why other councils would not have used TIF, but I am an officer who is trying to execute a TIF scheme now. The tax increment finance meeting is a different space for us and we are having different conversations. We are challenging business-rates information and making projections about whether a site will become a hotel or will generate revenue. That makes people anxious and they want reassurance. If I was to make a broad generalisation, I would say that that is my interpretation of why TIF has not been grabbed at by other councils.

That is not to say that I do not think that TIF has merits; we are still pursuing TIF investment in Falkirk. The TIF has a lifespan of a fixed number of years that is set out in the contract between the council and the Scottish Government. Work needs to happen at pace and, because there has not been much pace since we signed the TIF agreement, we are losing some of the years in which we could have got revenue back. That means that the funding model does not look so generous now; when I make presentations to the council, it looks more marginal.

TIF is still a viable scheme and one that people are happy to consider if there is no alternative.

Colin Beattie: That is interesting.

Adam Gillies—to what extent have you been involved in TIF projects?

Adam Gillies: I was involved before I was a community councillor. I went to Michelle Thomson's predecessor's office because it frustrated me, as a member of the community, to see how other communities were using TIF.

That highlights the problem that we have had in the community. As Malcolm Bennie rightly said you need to follow the strategic transport appraisal guidance process in order to get a train station. TIF could have been used for that. Grangemouth does not just have industry and community, it also has retail, which has had no support whatsoever. I spoke about trying to implement a community action plan. That is no different to what is happening in our neighbouring town of Falkirk, where the council wants to move its headquarters into the town centre as a way of bringing people into the town centre.

Grangemouth is the same, except that we want to do that with 20,000 industrial employees. That would regenerate our town centre and bring footfall, which would then create jobs that would be more relevant to our community.

We have never had much to do with TIF—certainly not on the planning side. We were not allowed to be part of that discussion. I believe that it could have been used in ways that would have been more inclusive for the community.

Colin Beattie: That was just an aside based on something that I picked up from reading the submission.

The key thing that I want to ask about is local business, in the broadest sense. The committee has heard that uncertainty among employers is affecting investment decisions on infrastructure and training. Business likes certainty; business likes to know what the plan is and what is coming down the road. What are the major barriers to providing the certainty that businesses need in order to make investments?

Malcolm Bennie: My personal view is that we need a vision and narrative for what is happening in Grangemouth and what it is going to look like in five years' time. I do not have anything in my drawer at the moment that says, "This is how it's going to look", but I will get there. I will mobilise our council's team to ensure that, working with the community, we come up with a new Grangemouth, because I am not going to leave the town centre as it is. That town centre needs a committed action plan. Adam Gillies referred to the new Falkirk town hall and how we are transitioning to fix Falkirk's town centre. That was priority 1 in my in-tray on coming into the job, and we are getting really close to being able to do that. Grangemouth will be very high up on the list, in relation to fixing the town centre.

As you have heard from Adam Gillies, there is a lot of talk about what is happening. The housing is not right, the town centre is not quite right and the public transport does not feel right. What will change that? It is about saying that we will get, for example, £20 million of capital investment to do X,

Y and Z, and once the community has endorsed that we can move forward.

We have talked quite a lot about community involvement on boards. I totally get the point that is being made about not doing things to the community; however, structures are needed to generate ideas that come back to the community without it being involved in meetings every month. Often, such meetings involve detail that would not necessarily be accessible or allow the community to get what it wants. In my view, the community wants us to have heard what it has said in surveys and to have designed a proposed model, and for us to say, "Here it is: does it look like the sort of thing you're after?" The community can say that there is not enough social housing or that the transport network does not look right, and we can refine it then come back. That is the sort of relationship that I am looking to create. However, if that is not the one that Adam Gillies and Grangemouth residents want, I am happy to talk about that.

Colin Beattie: Clearly, the vision has to be a collective one that involves all stakeholders, but on whose desk does the responsibility for delivering it ultimately lie?

Malcolm Bennie: I would say that it sits with me, as the director of place for Falkirk Council, to come up with a placemaking solution for the Grangemouth area. As I said before, these are words, but we will do it. We will come up with that vision. We will have a model that tells us what it will cost to do it, and we will then work out how we will get the money. That might involve having discussions with the Scottish Government, trying to draw down some funding from the Forth green freeport investment or somehow trying to use some of the growth deal money. We will find a way to at least have a proposition that says, "If we want to fix the town centre and make things better for the community, this is what we will do and these are the costs that will be attached to that."

Colin Beattie: Adam, is it simply a lack of vision that is causing local businesses to be hesitant? Is that, in itself, an answer?

Adam Gillies: That is a difficult question to answer, to be honest. I wouldnae say that it is a lack of vision. There is definitely a divide between industry and the community, although I struggle to use those words, because I try to see both sides as the community—we are one Grangemouth.

I am not sure. I struggle to answer that question.

10:45

Diarmaid Lawlor: I think that there are visions and that bringing them together would be helpful.

In response to what you said about businesses liking certainty, I add that there are things that can help them—and are already helping them—in that regard. The first is early wins, which involves deploying some of the growth deal money quickly and purposefully so that people can see that there is stuff happening.

The second thing is demand signals. When Covid hit the economy, one of the bits of work that the SFT and others were involved in was work with the Construction Leadership Forum to reassure the sector that things were happening, things were coming and things were being planned. That generated a construction pipeline, which meant that there was visibility of the portfolio of different projects that were going on. A construction pipeline is a simple but important tool, because it shows people that there is a lot of stuff going on and it explains the entry points into that, but more important is that it shows what will happen next.

How can a business that is investing in something be confident that there will be something after that, and something after that? It is partly to do with third parties, additionality and opportunities, and that is why forums such as the Grangemouth future industry board are so important. They can say, "If we move in a certain direction on carbon capture and hydrogen, this is what the opportunities will look like." That means that businesses can plan for the future, see the opportunities right now and get reassurance on early wins.

The industrial and business structure at Grangemouth is quite interesting. There are a lot of deep relationships between small and medium-sized enterprises that have stayed in the area for a long time, and there are also big regional and national entities moving around the area. Many of the businesses have stayed there for a long time, and they are always watching, talking and moving around. That means that there is a good, deep base that will allow us to build on certainty, early wins and confidence, and then access future opportunities.

Colin Beattie: What more could or should be done by either the Scottish Government or the UK Government?

Malcolm Bennie: I am at risk of repeating myself, but I want to see financial commitment to the flood protection scheme. However, I appreciate that that is a huge piece of national infrastructure, and the Scottish Government needs to take the appropriate time to identify it and work through it.

There is potential for financial commitment to the GFIB and flexibilities on growth deal funding and TIF to help us to maximise the opportunities.

There could be targeted investment in employability and training schemes so that the opportunities that will come from the green industry transition can be maximised.

There could also be some dedicated funding for social housing in the Grangemouth area. If that money becomes available, we will be able to start putting some houses in place and improving the community, which will be an early win.

In mentioning those things, I feel that they sound like low aspirations, but they would make it feel like we are getting something really significant out of this.

Colin Beattie: Adam, is there more that the Scottish Government or the UK Government should do?

Adam Gillies: Yes. I will talk about them jointly, because I hold the council and the Scottish and UK Governments to be one. The communities that you all represent may be adjacent to wind farms. Touching on what Malcolm Bennie said, I note that a town such as Falkirk might look at Grangemouth and think, "Why is Grangemouth getting that money?" Every community that hosts a wind farm—which, size-wise, is nothing compared with what Grangemouth has—gets community funds, and I believe that there should be a community fund for Grangemouth. Our plan for a parking levy would create a fund of that type without us directly asking for it. We would look to have that fund managed by the community so that it is empowered.

That approach would help when there are issues in our community. For example, we have a problem with separating HGVs from non-industrial traffic, and there is an argument between Falkirk Council and the Scottish Government about who should pay for facilities for HGV drivers. At the moment, we are paying for them, because we are having to host them. However, the problem is not being solved—we are seeing an argument in the middle.

I would like there to be, first, a community fund solely for Grangemouth and, secondly, better partnership between the Scottish Government and Falkirk Council whereby we can solve problems rather than creating problems that the public in Grangemouth then has to deal with. That can be done through funding.

Diarmaid Lawlor: A lot is already happening and a lot of good, powerful work is already being done. Colin Beattie asked what more could be done. There is something to be done jointly by the UK and Scottish Governments around the just transition for communities. There is a piece of work to be done on accountability and how we can mobilise the totality of senior level leadership. That will involve the way that we structure business

cases and finance, as Malcolm Bennie said, around this strategically important geography for the UK and Scotland. Accountability is therefore the first issue.

The second issue is conditionality. It would be really interesting to look at that as we move across the landscape and the plethora of small and big funds. Adam Gillies and his colleagues will be trying to get money, which has all sorts of conditions. However, given that the area is so strategically important to Scotland's just transition and the lives of people in the community, how can we organise those funds so that they are all geared and moving in the same direction?

The third issue is co-ordination. Malcolm Bennie set out the commitment to the master plan, but that commitment and the responsibility that he has taken on in that regard require the input of other Government and non-Government agencies so that help and support at both the UK and Scottish Government levels can be brought in around it. Let us pile in and help.

Finally, there is the issue of capacity. Adam Gillies rightly highlighted that Grangemouth is the most consulted community in Scotland, and there are 10 people who are regularly doing more than their shift for the community. How can we invest in more capacity at the community level? How can the agencies invest? That is partly about taking responsibility for not asking the community questions that have been asked a million times before. It is partly about agencies saying, "Listen, why don't we join up on two or three things?" It is also partly about looking at how we can make the best use of third sector, community and other resources.

On the point about co-ordination, if the Government was looking more at accountability for the just transition, conditionality in joining up the funds and co-ordination of the various initiatives—to help, not to do—as well as continuing to ask how it can support the capacity, we would feel that it was not only Adam Gillies and Walter Inglis who were trying to solve it, but that there was a team Scotland and team UK approach. That would help with the industrial transition and it would help Malcolm Bennie with some of the difficulties and complexities of moving through this stuff. More important, probably, it would help the young people at Grangemouth high school and Carrongrange high school and the communities to know that there were things behind them.

Those four things would make a difference: accountability, conditionality, co-ordination and capacity.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): Good morning to you all. Thank you for joining us and for what you have said so far, which

has been really interesting. I want to tease out a couple of things that have come up already and take them off in slightly different directions. I am struck by the tension or disconnect that we have heard about between the different visions and definitions in industry and the community and the different parts of Grangemouth that we are talking about.

Malcolm, from the perspective of the growth deal or the GFIB—the professionalised structures and institutions of just transition strategy and delivery—is there perhaps too much focus on the process of transition compared with what we are talking about, which is a transition to justice? Does thinking about it in a different way allow us to talk about some of the things that Adam Gillies has raised—the gaps, failures and negative impacts that the community has felt?

Malcolm Bennie: I start by pointing out that it is the Falkirk growth deal. It is not just for Grangemouth.

The nature of the growth deal is that you put forward compelling business cases that will allow increased gross value added in your area. That spills into the fact that, typically, you will be thinking, “How can we create employment and investment?” Those things may not directly address some of the concerns that Adam Gillies has raised this morning, but it is not that growth deal investment is wrong. The growth deal investment will facilitate improved skills through training at Forth Valley College and thereby allow young people in the Falkirk area and Grangemouth to capitalise on the transition to hydrogen et cetera. As a result, they will have brighter futures. If we also bring in incubator hubs for those technologies, we can protect Falkirk’s position as a leading player in Scotland and indeed the UK with regard to green energy approaches.

The bit of the growth deal that really addresses—or should address—what Adam Gillies and Diarmaid Lawlor have talked about is the £10 million for the greener Grangemouth programme. I am absolutely delighted that £10 million is being dedicated to that but, as I have said to Diarmaid before, that sort of money does not get you a lot these days. We cannot go around saying that greener Grangemouth is going to fix things, because the fact is that I can barely build a road for £10 million. There has to be some expectation management in that respect. That is not to say that our aspirations with regard to what we need to do are diminished, but I think that that is the narrative that has been built around the growth deal.

Was your other question about the GFIB?

Maggie Chapman: I mentioned the GFIB, but the question was more about the broader picture. We focus so much on incubator hubs and the different elements of the industrial transition that I think we sometimes lose the actual vision, which is a transition to justice for everybody. Whether people work in the energy sector or in high street or corner shops, that transition should be for everybody, but I think that the just transition institutions sometimes miss that.

The economic metrics that you have talked about are really important and we need to track them, but this is also about the outcomes—for example, young people being able to do their highers where they live instead of being taxed elsewhere. I just do not think that we get there in our planning.

Malcolm Bennie: I agree. One element is that, typically, the funding that is available to local authorities comes with strings attached, and not as much funding is available for generic placemaking.

In effect, it feels as if what we are saying today is: “Do you know what we need? We need a lot of money to invest in social housing and create better neighbourhoods; we need improved investment in HGV truck parks where the vehicles can wait before doing their deliveries; and we need to improve the town centre environment so that people feel proud of where they live and get a sense of satisfaction from it.” The money for that probably needs to sit with the council, but—we are all familiar with this—council budgets are very stretched at the moment, which means that our ability to borrow off our own revenue budget is a challenge.

In any case, I do not want to make that argument until I have my list of the five things that we would definitely do—and what they would cost—and the community has said, “We love those—if you do them, they will make our lives loads better.” I can then go round with a begging bowl and ask how we can make them happen. Until people say, “No, you can’t have these things”, the responsibility sits with me.

I never want to say that it is someone else’s fault until we have created a vision, ensured that we have a plan in place and considered how to afford it. Although I have set out a rather bleak picture of public sector funding, if people come up with shovel-ready projects, money sometimes emerges that can be used to take up opportunities. It is about ensuring that people have a drawer full of five things that are needed and are ready to go if they can just receive the money. However, I do not have those five things yet. Until I do, I cannot say any more.

11:00

Maggie Chapman: This question might relate to what you said about creating a vision. In answer to the question about the definition of a just transition, you said that there needs to be good discussion and engagement with the community and that it is then your job to articulate what a just transition means back to the community. It struck me that that is the wrong way round. If there is genuine engagement, the community will know what it means and you will not need to articulate it back. Are we co-producing the definition of a just transition and the vision for Grangemouth? Do we need to refocus our thinking? It is not about doing something to communities; it is about facilitating communities to create their own vision that is then implemented.

Malcolm Bennie: I totally accept the point that you are making. I feel that “just transition” is an academic term to describe what we are talking about, and I do not think that communities would typically engage with those words. We have heard the community say, “Lots of things that happen at that complex affect us, but we don’t appear to be getting anything out of it. What are we getting out of it? It’s not fair that we have to put up with those things.”

If we go around talking about a just transition, I do not think that that term will resonate with people. However, we can work on the principle that we know that a just transition means that a certain thing should happen or that there needs to be some sort of benefit. That is the point that I am trying to make, but I totally hear what you are saying.

I am very aware of the amount of engagement that has been done with the community, and you can see people thinking, “And?”, so I do not want to do much more engagement. I want to say, “Here’s what we are going to do to help. Does that look right?” That is the level of engagement that I want.

We did a workshop with the public last week, and my sense was that it was well-received and a positive step forward. I do not mean that everything is now fixed, but that engagement was a positive one.

Diarmaid Lawlor: Adam Gillies was at the workshop, and it was a positive engagement. As you would expect, the good stuff and the challenges relating to Grangemouth were articulated.

There is an interesting flow in Maggie Chapman’s questions. For me, the flow is around outcomes, cash, tools and a plan. We have a pile of information. The national health service has gathered tonnes of information, there is lots of information in the community action plan and,

behind that plan, there is lots of evidence on certain performance indicators.

Through the greener Grangemouth project, we are trying to understand all that stuff. Yes, we have only £10 million, but we could choose not to understand that stuff and say, “Here’s a thing for £10 million—good luck.” The first step is to try to understand that stuff. We felt that that was important so that, when I am in Grangemouth library—as I was last week—I have at least half a clue about what has happened before. I should pay people respect by at least looking at what has been said before. Whether you are spending £10 million, £100 million or £1 billion, you should probably read what has been said before.

There are some patterns relating to the outcomes and targets that are needed. The greener Grangemouth project involves a small amount of cash, but that small amount of cash needs to link to the outcomes that have been set. Those outcomes determine what we would and would not spend the money on.

We are in a unique position. Often, a master plan needs to be created when people are deciding what to do, and then they need to hunt for money for that plan.

We are in the unusual position of having a small bag of cash before the master plan, which means that, if we drive it from an outcomes point of view, direct that £10 million purposefully and usefully and surround it with a bit of co-ordination and a pipeline of all of the rest of the projects, we have half a master plan with half a chance of getting done.

On the flow, it is interesting that, if justice is at the heart of the outcomes, the way we spend the £10 million has to help justice but not solve it. That has to help to attract and co-ordinate the rest of the funding, which then builds on it, which then starts to position a master plan that says what we need to do, what it will cost and who needs to do it. That means that we can have much stronger confidence in the plan rather than having a plan with hope.

It has been an interesting journey. Sometimes, people have been frustrated with us and asked us why we cannot just come up with the projects. Part of it is because so much has been said about the area that we need to understand it before we start telling. Who am I to tell Adam Gillies, “I think what you need is an X,” having never looked at it?

The flow of outcomes, cash, tools and plan is important for the greener Grangemouth programme, the Grangemouth future industries board and the green freeport. There is a lot there already. We do not need to engage everybody over and over on that. We need to engage people

on what we are going to do and where we are going to get the funding.

More engagement is needed, but the focus of that engagement is different with confidence.

Maggie Chapman: Colin Smyth picked up a point about trust and Diarmaid Lawlor has just talked about respecting the people of Grangemouth by finding out what has already gone before. Adam Gillies, you represent the community council and the wider community. Has the trust broken down between you, the corporations whose operations have had the negative impacts that you described and public agencies that have not listened and have watered down the plans? If there is a breakdown of that trust, can and should the community trust corporations and public bodies to get it right? What is fundamental to rebuilding and sustaining that trust for the next period of time, whether that is months, years or decades?

Adam Gillies: That is a lot of questions in one.

Maggie Chapman: Sorry. I am good at that.

Adam Gillies: I will answer that from the community action plan:

“Investigate ways to improve the relationship between local industry and the local community.”

That includes community members and is to be done by 2030. Yes, there is a breakdown of trust. There are no two ways about it. We absolutely need to solve that.

I have been pessimistic about Grangemouth in this meeting, but I think that it is a wonderful place. I run a group and have sat long enough saying that we do not get this, that and the next thing. We referred to the Zetland park regeneration project, which was a partnership with the council. I run the Inchyra park project, which is completely community based. There is also the gLitter team, which is going round Grangemouth. We have 1,000 trucks a day going through the town and the reality is that a lot of antisocial behaviour problems come with that—not with all of them—such as litter. We are picking up litter. We are changing our town.

If Falkirk Council, the Scottish Government or anyone else is no gaunnae change our town, we do it for ourselves for the benefit of our town. We dinnae have to accept the way that it is. I am hoping that local and central Government will get on board with that but, at the same time, I believe that we can do it for ourselves.

However, both sides have a responsibility for probably a generation of decline in our town. I am not taking political sides in saying that because it goes across all political divides. We have spoken in depth a few times about our belief that the

Grangemouth community is Scotland's hidden shame because of where we are, the importance to our economy and the community that we live in.

While we are talking about that, I want to jump back to a point that we spoke about when we were talking about TIF—I think—and how that would be engaged in different communities, and I will also cover a bit about what you spoke about in relation to not having the funding to do things.

It is important that the money is used for the community. I will give you an example: the tax increment finance scheme opened up better-flowing traffic from the motorways into Grangemouth, and now that traffic flows into Grangemouth, which—from my personal experience—means that the roads are so congested that it is unsafe for families to walk to school. When we go to the council and ask whether it can do something about that, it says that it cannot do anything because, for example, it cannot afford to as it does not have the funding—which it does not. It is the same when new houses are built; infrastructure is needed for that.

It is important that the infrastructure of Grangemouth is not built to the detriment of the area, and that can mean the wee things; it doesnae need to be the big things. I wanted to make that point because it has been nipping at me.

Maggie Chapman: No, that is helpful. We need to think about the potential negative consequences of good intentions somewhere else, and we do not always make those connections.

Finally, Adam, what would you need from us to support and facilitate capacity? There has been a lot of engagement, and there is obviously a lot of will to engage, contribute and make Grangemouth for you—the community—but what would make it a little bit easier for you, the others on the community council and others in the community to be part of all the discussions that we have talked about?

Adam Gillies: We have talked about short, medium and long-term plans; trust is an issue on those. We have also talked about small gains, which is where I will jump in. The £10 million that we discussed at the meeting we had last week is not ideal; ideally, we would have an open cheque book and we would do whatever we want to do in Grangemouth. The community council envisages that as seed funding that will allow us to access other funding elsewhere. That will not just be the Government's task, because we are planning it ourselves.

I am a wee bit lost, sorry. Can you ask your question again?

Maggie Chapman: What would help build the capacity of the community to continue with those discussions and with engagement, vision and processes—with being and creating the “just Grangemouth” that you want to be?

Adam Gillies: We need a vision of how it will work for everybody. I have seen things from the council and, although it is obviously at an early stage, there is a plan for a train station. For those of you who are not familiar with Grangemouth, we already have rail in Grangemouth; we used to have a railway station. Even beginning a Scottish transport appraisal guidance—STAG—report on something like that would help. A train station will not be delivered for five years, but a report would say that it is coming.

Maggie Chapman: It matters.

Adam Gillies: Yes. The community needs to buy into this in the short term. When we go away from every one of those meetings and, two years later, nothing has happened, it underlines what the community is already feeling. We need a short-term fix, so it would make a big difference if we had a commitment to a STAG report, and it would get more of the non-industrial side of the community on board. That is what I think that we need.

A lot of promises are made by the Scottish Government—I noted some of them down, about a freeport or a green port, however you want to put it—but industry says one thing, and we need feet held to the fire for promises that are made. That could be done through a constitution of trust for Grangemouth.

For example, I cannot remember the last time that there was a jobs fair in Grangemouth, so where is the commitment to that? Malcolm Bennie will look at that as a Falkirk-wide thing, but that involves jobs for the whole of Falkirk, whereas the community council is more local, and I have to look at local first; local people have to be first. For argument's sake, if we are talking about a constitution of trust, how about a promise that anybody who applies for a job from the FK3 postcode area will get an interview? There could be a commitment from employers that they will at least look at local employment and give consideration to local people. Wee things like that make a big difference.

Maggie Chapman: Thank you. Those are really interesting ideas. I could go on, but I will not.

The Convener: The witnesses have very generously given us more time than we anticipated, but there are a couple of members left who have questions, so I will hand over to Fiona Hyslop.

11:15

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): We think that Grangemouth is special and important. This is probably the first time that a parliamentary committee has had such a focus on one town. The just transition will have an impact on everyone in Scotland, but everybody automatically thinks about the north-east. However, we have decided to look at Grangemouth first. If we can learn lessons here, we can help the rest of Scotland.

Adam Gillies, I was very struck by your perspective. You spoke about the 20,000 additional jobs that we have been told will come with the freeport and the fact that you do not want those workers to drive in and drive out of the town but to stay, and that if they are going to travel in, you want them to have the necessary rail links—the public transport—which in and of itself is about town centre regeneration.

This committee has just done an inquiry into town centre regeneration, and one of the issues was about ensuring that it is community led—you have said that that is what you want—but also that there is revenue that provides resource, as in people, to help you to do what you do. Do you have access to community development workers or people to whom the community council can say, “This is what we want done” or “Can you look at these reports?” which you are getting from left, right and centre? Is there anything like that just now?

Adam Gillies: We have support from Falkirk Council, whether that is on sports hubs, the social side of it or education, and we obviously have food banks. We are offered support through development for us on the different things that we do day to day to improve as a community council.

Fiona Hyslop: I was also very struck by what was said about spending the £10 million quickly. That is the capital funding, but there is also £2 million revenue funding, so it would be interesting to know what is happening with the revenue funding, because from our last inquiry, we know that capital might be easier to come by but that the revenue that is needed to sustain the people to staff this is not there.

Perhaps Michelle Thomson can help me on this—or perhaps the witnesses can. Is there a Grangemouth business improvement district—a BID—or something similar in that area? I represent the Linlithgow constituency next door, where they have brought together community interests, through the community development trust, and business. There is a levy collected for that, which helps to employ staff to do this kind of work.

Diarmaid, I think that you said that you were thinking about looking at Hawick or different areas

in the Borderlands. It is about how you build in people support for the decision makers, which should be the community. Is that the sort of thing that you were thinking about?

Diarmaid Lawlor: Yes, absolutely—100 per cent. If SFT is taking some responsibility for the town centre work, as you have laid out, it is our job to work with Adam Gillies to say, “Here are some things that we think will definitely work for the future.” Underpinning that are investment, support skills, organisational capacity skills and the sustainability and business bits. That is where the revenue funding is important. We need to work with Adam and colleagues to ask what the best way to use that funding is and what the cash flow should be across the 10 years. It could move in different ways over that time. For example, it could be used to create a surge and then scaled down as organisations start to feel more responsible and capable.

I will pick up on Adam’s point. There are already supports in place. The community team in Grangemouth is fantastic and is doing lots of great work. However, if the green port is offering little bits and pieces of revenue and the Grangemouth future industry board is offering bits and pieces of revenue, our thinking is, “Why don’t we just create a pot, pile it into the pot and use it to get behind Adam Gillies, Walter Inglis and other folk?”

Part of the greener Grangemouth work is then to ask what it would be for, so that we can pile it in—

Fiona Hyslop: Adam, does that make sense? Is that what you are looking for?

Adam Gillies: Yes, absolutely.

Fiona Hyslop: I am very struck by the fact that you are the person who is talking about the strategic aspects and are also the person who is talking about the non-industrial future industries side—the existing businesses that can grow with that income coming, we hope, from those 20,000 additional workers.

How do we mobilise the—dare I say it?—non-industrial site aspects of Grangemouth to get connected? When we talk about community, we are not talking only about communities of individuals but local businesses. What is your view on how that can best be done?

Adam Gillies: When Government discusses economic development, it never discusses the retail side of it. We would like a parking levy to be introduced. That would have a huge impact on what we could do as a community. It would make everything sustainable. We dinnae want to spend and run, and say, “It looks alright there,” and then go. What we do needs to be sustainable.

There are two sides to that. You couldnae implement a parking levy without proper public

transport, which we do not have at the moment. We have buses and that is it. Most of our public transport comes fae outside the district, so we would need more than just buses. That would mean that the people who didnae want to be filtered through the town to go round the industrial sites would pay a parking levy charge at work, or the business would pay it, depending on how it was structured. The people who come into the town would spend money in the town, which would regenerate the retail side economically.

From a community point of view, which is the other side of this, we could fund a free bus service round the town, which would benefit everybody. The wealth of the town would flow around the town and create jobs, and the economic development would spread across all areas of the town.

Fiona Hyslop: On housing, one issue about the plant is that some of the workers could go anywhere internationally and get paid. You want them to live and spend money in Grangemouth, so what is needed is not just social housing but any type of housing that attracts people to stay and spend money in the town. Do you see that as part of keeping the skill base that we know will be needed for the just transition?

Adam Gillies: One hundred per cent. All our social housing was built in the 1970s. It is seen as a place about which someone might say, “If I need somewhere to live, I will apply for Grangemouth and get a flat, and that’ll do me until I go somewhere else.” You cannot build a sustainable community on that.

Excuse me if I am wrong, but I think that 30-odd per cent of the council’s flatted stock is in Grangemouth. [*Interruption.*] Sorry—I put Malcolm Bennie on the spot there. It is certainly a high percentage compared with the district.

Fiona Hyslop: It is quite high.

Adam Gillies: As I say, there needs to be an appetite to change that. In the past, we have had to ask, “Where do we put the people who are in flats?” New houses get built, but why can we not take people out of the flats and put them in new builds, take the flats down, build new houses and start the rotation again? We cannae do that, because we need those flats now. There is always a reason no tae do it—there needs to be an appetite to change that.

Let us deliver for Grangemouth at all levels—let us change what it is. We dinnae just need us three sitting here saying that; we need people at every level to say that.

Fiona Hyslop: Finally, Malcolm Bennie, Falkirk Council is not only Falkirk; it also covers Grangemouth. Nobody has mentioned Bo’ness, so we better mention Bo’ness. The Falkirk growth

deal and the green freeport bid cover wider areas, but the Grangemouth future industry board speaks for itself—it is about future industries in Grangemouth, not the wider area.

On your point about being a director of place, the other committee that I sit on—the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee—has just produced a report on local government partners, and one of its recommendations is that place-based solutions matter, as they are how you can pull everything together.

We are behind that agenda—not only for Falkirk town but for Grangemouth, too. How do we prioritise Grangemouth strategically? Strategic housing provision is key to this. Is the big-picture stuff of potentially using district heating—and possibly hydrogen; who knows?—where you want to get to in relation to a place-based solution for Grangemouth?

Malcolm Bennie: The place-based solution for Grangemouth is about creating a sustainable 20-minute neighbourhood that is a nice place to live, where people can get the transport links that they want, and about making people feel happy about where they live. That is what I am trying to create.

Having this discussion with the committee has made it clear to me that we need to enhance the narrative of Grangemouth having the burden of having the industrial complex so close to it, so there needs to be a quid pro quo. If I went to parts of Falkirk, I do not think that they would see that sense. The narrative is more like, “They get the Kelpies, they get all the jobs”. I do not mean to say that people do not get it at all; I mean more that every community has its own little view. Collectively, we need to make a much stronger impact. There are some really poor outcomes and burdens on people that are caused by that industrial complex, which we need to fix. That is why we need that greater focus on Grangemouth and greater solutions.

We talk about business. I have not said this before, but a lot of the rates that are collected from Grangemouth go to the Scottish Government, and a discussion might need to be had about some sort of reallocation of those rates on a very small scale. Even on a tiny scale, there could be some sort of benefit for the Grangemouth area. The problem that we have as a council is that we cannot easily grab some of the benefits that the industry creates and report them back to the Grangemouth area.

I am writing down notes about the STAG report. If we are talking about that, maybe that is a space that we need to get in to. There is no way that we, as a council, will be able to fund a train station or make Network Rail and ScotRail support one. That will have to be a massive national discussion.

However, if we have a stronger narrative around a just transition being required for the communities at Grangemouth, maybe we will have a better chance of getting there.

Fiona Hyslop: We have heard about “greener Grangemouth”, but I think that you have just come up with a new one with “greater solutions Grangemouth”, which also sounds a bit bigger and more strategic.

I will ask about one of the things that we have concerns about. Some of the growth deals have been in place for some time, but yours is more recent. It might not be reflective of that net zero drive as it was originally thought of when it was first established. We are not unpicking growth deals, because they were very carefully put together, but you talked about the need for flexibility. It would be very helpful if you could explain what that might look like, particularly if we are looking at the just transition and net zero. If you cannot do that just now, maybe you could come back to the committee on that question, as that would be helpful.

I do not know whether Diarmaid Lawlor has any comments on that.

Malcolm Bennie: I am happy to pick up on some of that.

The growth deal that we have for Falkirk includes an investment in the form of the £10 million for the greener Grangemouth programme that we have talked about at length. There is also £30 million towards innovation projects linked to new technologies. For example, there is a project for carbon utilisation, a project for biofuel and a project for preparation of strategic sites, which is the preparation of land for inward investment. In addition, there is a major investment in a skills transition centre housed at Forth Valley College to offer incubator and accelerator facilities and create a green curriculum and training opportunities to make sure that there is a workforce of young people ready to take advantage of jobs that are created. That speaks to a net zero aspiration.

On flexibilities, some of those ideas come from discussions that were had in 2015, which led to a submission, which led to a heads of terms award of money. We are now trying to work down into the detail. In doing that, we have 10 projects. Sometimes we might say, “Do you know what, because of construction inflation and changing circumstances in the economy, some of those don’t actually look like they’re going to make it”. That is okay, because not everything always has to be how it was conceived four or five years ago. The flexibilities would be around having a pragmatic conversation that says, “Could we maybe accept that those two don’t look like they’re going to make it in the way that we thought they

would, and could we quickly reallocate the money to these other projects that have emerged, or to existing projects that we think will make a difference but now need a bit of extra funding because of inflation?”

I would not want to portray the UK and Scottish Governments as being resistant to that sort of change—after all, this discussion is happening across Scotland—but my feeling is that we need some pace. This is all about having quick conversations, presenting information and seeing whether we can move at pace to a new zone without taking a long time over talking about flexibility and so on.

I totally get that the UK and Scottish Governments are giving us money and that you want to make sure that we are spending it wisely and not just changing things, but what I am talking about is the need for flexibility and a pragmatic approach.

11:30

Fiona Hyslop: We are the Parliament, so we can make these points to the Government, which might be helpful. What we are trying to do in this inquiry is to find what would be the most helpful thing and make recommendations to the Government to inform the just transition plan for Grangemouth. This is your opportunity to make that pitch.

Do we have time to hear from Diarmaid Lawlor, convener?

The Convener: If he is brief.

Diarmaid Lawlor: Sure. On the issue of flexibility, one of the key aspects of all the growth deals is the investment in innovation. However, innovation is not a linear process; as Malcolm Bennie has laid out, the deal was constructed a number of years ago. We have now moved into a different space, and the partners involved, the methods required and the shape of innovation itself might—indeed, will—change. There might be risks involved in that, so we need flexibility not just on how the outcome is achieved but, in particular, on how it is communicated. After all, because things seem to have moved on or have changed from what had previously been said, that does not mean that the outcome is not going to happen.

Secondly—and to pick up Ms Hyslop’s point about housing—I would just say that the advantage of the deal is that it gives a 10-year horizon. Grangemouth has the skeleton of an outstanding 20-minute neighbourhood; you can see, for example, how the active travel and the green space could connect on. You can also see how, if some of the industrial spaces around the eastern edge of the town were to shift and some

brownfield sites were to open up, there could be a supply of different land with different amenities. It is important to build on the foundations that are there, but we also have to try to co-ordinate a number of the different housing investments so that you can see these things happening.

My final point is about how the idea of the town itself is communicated. I have picked up on the issues of outcomes, flexibility and innovation, but I think that it is really important that the way in which the idea of Grangemouth is communicated focuses not just on the industrial complex or the deprivation. Any such communication must pick up on some of the positivity and energy that Adam Gillies and colleagues have shown and the story of the future and where we are heading. An ask that I would make, therefore, is that we are all kept accountable for not communicating the idea of Grangemouth as the nexus of problems and that we start communicating its potential and driving that forward.

Fiona Hyslop: Feel free to use the phrase “greater solutions Grangemouth”.

Diarmaid Lawlor: Will do. [*Laughter.*]

Fiona Hyslop: With that, I will pass you back to the convener.

The Convener: I find it interesting where the conversation has ended up. During the evidence sessions, I have found myself reflecting on the phrase “just transition for Grangemouth” that we have been talking about and how it suggests a shift from somewhere that is already positive and viable. I know that what we are talking about here is the industrial complex making the shift to net zero, but as we have heard from Adam Gillies and as his submission shows—indeed, Malcolm Bennie talked about this, too—there are high levels of poor health and low employment in the area. In some ways, Grangemouth is still living with the consequences of its industrial heritage from longer ago.

I was just thinking about the draft plan that the Government is putting together and which we are expecting towards the end of spring. Malcolm Bennie was, I think, heading in this direction when he talked about the need to think about not just the industrial base but the broader community; in some ways, such an approach starts from a completely different place from the industrial base, with different challenges being faced. I suppose that it all comes back to one’s interpretation of “just transition”. Do you think that the Government’s draft plan will take a broader view, and do you think that that is something that the committee should be emphasising to the minister?

Malcolm Bennie: I have to be honest—I do not have any detailed insight into the plan that might come forward. The £10 million allocation to the

greener Grangemouth programme shows that the Scottish Government has a keen understanding of the need to support that aspect, but we have talked at length today about the fact that this is no £10 million fix. It will need a pretty significant fix, and I do not know the extent to which the report that will come forward will address those aspects. After all, there is a fundamental need to ensure that Scotland's economy—or these industrial complexes—transition successfully, and we cannot lose sight of that, because it will have a huge and significant strategic impact on Scotland's future as a country. I hope, though, that some of the discussion that we have today will resonate and find its way into the report.

The Convener: My last question is for Adam Gillies, but first I must thank everyone for taking part this morning. In a few weeks, we will have the minister in. What is the key thing that you think we have to tell him, as the Scottish Government's representative, about Grangemouth's future and what needs to happen there?

Adam Gillies: Grangemouth's transition needs to be inclusive. This is an opportunity to evolve not just industry but the community, and I think that the best way of stating that is to talk about levelling up Grangemouth's non-industrial community. That is a key message. We need to transition the industry—we are absolutely 100 per cent behind that—but we are also trying to look at the benefits that can be funnelled through to the other side of Grangemouth to bring the town up to what it should be, which is an example of a place where someone in Scotland would want to work, live and be part of a 20-minute neighbourhood.

The Convener: That is great. I thank all the witnesses for all the time that they have given us this morning, and we will now move into private session.

11:36

Meeting continued in private until 11:50.

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