OFFICIAL REPORT
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Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 18 November 2025

Session 6

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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Tuesday 18 November 2025

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NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

34th Meeting 2025, Session 6

CONVENER

*Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
*Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)
*Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con)
*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
*Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Richard Millar (Climate Change Committee)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Peter McGrath

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Tuesday 18 November 2025

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:15]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Edward Mountain): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the 34th meeting in 2025 of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee. We have received apologies from Bob Doris, who is attending another committee meeting to move amendments.

Under agenda item 1, we must decide whether to take in private item 5, which is consideration of today's evidence from the Climate Change Committee, and item 6, which is consideration of our work programme. Do we agree to take those items in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change

09:15

The Convener: Our second item of business is an evidence session with the Climate Change Committee. Today's session will focus on adaptation to climate change and the CCC's view on progress on adaptation. I welcome Richard Millar, the head of adaptation at the Climate Change Committee. Thank you for attending the meeting. I offer you the chance to make some brief introductory remarks. No politician who has given introductory remarks has ever been able to keep them brief, but let us see how you get on.

Richard Millar (Climate Change Committee): Thank you very much for the invitation to give evidence to the committee. I am the head of adaptation at the Climate Change Committee, which is the public body that was set up to provide advice to Governments around the United Kingdom on reducing emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change.

My opening remarks will focus on what we know about the effects of climate change and how we should be thinking about planning for those effects in the future. The starting point is that we are increasingly clear, based on the evidence here and now, that climate change is having impacts and affecting societies globally, in Scotland and across the wider UK.

The world is about 1.3°C warmer than it was in pre-industrial times and is warming by about 0.25°C per decade. All of that warming is associated with the influence of humans in increasing the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. That means that, globally, we will reach the temperature of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in the early 2030s—within the next decade. The impacts that we are seeing to date—for example, extreme weather—are indicative of what we might expect to see in the future. The plans that we have in place, including the current Scottish national adaptation plan and other plans around the country, will either prepare or not prepare us for the temperature reaching 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and continuing to rise, as a result of climate change.

What does that mean in relation to the impacts in Scotland? Flood risk will continue to grow. About another 100,000 properties might be at risk, beyond those that are at risk today, by the middle of the century. There will be an increased risk of drought, particularly in the eastern part of the country, as we get hotter and drier summers to match wetter and warmer winters—we will have too much water at some points in the year and too

little at other points. Under all futures, the sea level around the coasts of the country will keep rising for decades, if not centuries, to come. For example, we might expect a rise of 15cm or so in Edinburgh by the middle of the century. There will also be an increased risk of wildfire. A good example of that is that the first mega wildfire recorded in the entire UK was in Scotland earlier this year.

We need to reduce emissions. If the world reduces its emissions, that will help to reduce the levels of climate change in the second half of this century, but we know that, almost irrespective of how quickly the world reduces its emissions, there will be an inevitable period of climate change through to about the middle of this century. We need to plan and prepare for that today through proactive and prudent adaptation planning.

Our role is to set out what we think "good" can look like and to provide independent scrutiny of the different adaptation plans from Governments around the country. For us to move beyond where we are now on adaptation, we need a clearer sense of what we are seeking to achieve: what does "good" look like in relation to adaptation? All Governments—those in the UK and those around the world—are struggling with that, but we increasingly need to set out clearer, specific and measurable ambitions for what we are seeking to achieve, so that Governments can hold themselves to account and the public can have accountability in relation to what is expected from Governments and wider society. What does climate resilience mean? Does it mean that we can accept an increased risk of flooding, for example, or are we saying that we need to at least hold the line and that we should not let the flood risk escalate beyond the level that it is at today?

The Climate Change Committee's role is to provide evidence on these matters. We provide a scrutiny role, but we also provide evidence on the risks and opportunities of climate change for the country and, increasingly, on what can be done. The package of work that we are focusing on at the moment, which we will publish in May next year, will provide an updated view on the risks and opportunities of climate change for Scotland, but crucially, for the first time, we will also provide an evidence base for what we think can be done. What does effective adaptation look like in key areas where it is needed? What objectives and targets might be able to turn the evidence on adaptation into quantified national ambitions, so that we can move forward and have a more comprehensive and strategic approach to adaptation that can make a difference for people on the ground?

The Convener: Thanks for that opening statement. I will ask a starter question, which is, I guess, an easy one. You have suggested to the UK Government that, by the end of this century, climate change will have outstripped the goals of the Paris agreement and that a 4°C rise is probably more likely. What has made you make that assessment? What is driving that?

Richard Millar: You are right—in October, we provided advice to Emma Hardy, the UK Government minister in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with responsibility for adaptation, on an effective planning assumption for adaptation. We considered the likely futures in relation to global emissions and the climate change that we expect. Our assumption is that we should plan for what we expect to be the most likely outcome, but we should also consider plausible worst-case scenarios.

In relation to where the world is going, the 30th United Nations climate change conference of the parties is taking place in Brazil right now—it is an annual conference—and the pledges from countries around the world suggest that global emissions will hold roughly at current levels. The climate consequence of that is that there will be continued warming, with the temperature rise above pre-industrial levels approaching 1.5°C in the 2030s and continuing to 2°C by 2050. The further out we go, the harder it gets to project with certainty, but, if there were no significant increases in ambition, we might be looking at 2°C to 3°C of global warming being realised by the end of this century. That trajectory is our credible best estimate of where the world might be going, so we have set out what prudent planning should look like in Scotland and in the UK more broadly to prepare for climate risks.

However, it is possible that the world could warm more quickly than that. If there was regression in global ambitions to reduce emissions or if the climate response turned out to be more severe, with warming taking place more rapidly than we expect under our central assumption, it would certainly be possible that global temperatures could reach about 2.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the middle of the century and in the region of 4°C above those levels by the end of the century. As well as considering prudent planning for that central assumption, we should be mindful of the longer-term investments that might be needed if climate change is more severe or if it continues significantly in the second half of the century. When people are making investment decisions about towns and other physical assets that will not move, they should be thinking about those kinds of things now in relation to the setting of national adaptation plans or adaptation plans for individual sectors or organisations.

The Convener: It appears to me that you are saying that a 4°C rise by the end of the century is possible but that a 3°C rise is more likely. Is that what you are saying?

Richard Millar: That is right. Our central expectation is that, if the world does not increase its current ambitions, a 2°C rise will be reached in the middle of the century and a rise of between 2°C and 3°C will be reached by the end of the century. However, it is possible that the rise could be higher.

It is also still possible that we increase global ambitions and keep to the long-term temperature goal under the Paris agreement: holding the temperature well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. It is right that Governments in Scotland and the rest of the UK do their bit to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and help the world to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in pursuit of that goal. Prudent planning on the resilience side means thinking about what we expect to happen, based on where we are going right now, as well as pursuing the higher ambition of keeping to lower levels of warming.

The Convener: As far as reducing global emissions is concerned, there are much bigger players in the world than the United Kingdom. We have seen a bit of a step change in what China is trying to achieve. What changes, such as those in China, have we seen in the past year?

Richard Millar: On what is happening globally, the story of the past decade has been about changes in technologies and in the costs of those technologies, which have made a real difference to the curve that sets out where the world is going. If we were having this conversation a decade or so ago, we could have credibly been talking about a 4°C rise by the end of the century being our best estimate for the most likely outcome. The changes in technologies, particularly those that have resulted in the cost of renewable energy coming down, have bent the curve away from what had been expected. Obviously, those changes have not yet bent the curve far enough to reach the goal that Governments set in the Paris agreement of holding the increase to well below 2°C, but they have made a real difference in shifting the central expectation down towards a rise of between 2°C and 3°C by the end of the century.

Governments have ambitious commitments in aggregate. If all the current targets for 2030 that Governments have set under the Paris agreement are met, and if all the subsequent net zero targets for 2060 that lots of countries, including China, have made are met, the ambition of keeping warming below 2°C is credible. The ambitions are increasingly in the right place in aggregate; the challenge is delivering reductions in emissions.

Pivoting to climate resilience, I think that the challenge is articulating our ambition and what we are doing to deliver it. That is a global challenge as well as a domestic one. The Paris agreement has been a lot fuzzier in what it has meant for climate resilience and adaptations, but, at the COP30 meetings in Brazil, people are discussing how to measure the global goal on adaptations and improve resilience so that we have a better international framework that sets out what climate resilience means and how quickly the world—including Scotland and the rest of the UK—is moving towards that.

The Convener: You have said that ambition is one thing and that the reducing costs of some of the technology mean that it is more likely that we will meet our ambition, but the costs at ground level in people's houses remain stubbornly high, so it is difficult for people to meet those costs. Will that be a challenge? At the latest COP, it was said that, if we do not take everyone with us, we will never succeed. Do you want to elaborate on that?

Richard Millar: Our advice certainly matches the sentiment that people need to come with us on the transition, which will extend over multiple decades. We need to have credible targets, to know how they can be delivered and to work out how that can be done equitably for the different parts of society that need to contribute.

We know that some bits of the transition are harder than others. In Scotland and in the rest of the UK, we have made a lot of good progress on some of the easier bits, for want of a better word—they were not easy at the time. We have made some big changes to our electricity system, for example, and we need to find ways to roll out continued decarbonisation in relation to people's homes, agriculture and how we use our land.

A key next step involves doing all that in a way that is consistent with building climate resilience. That applies particularly to the land sector. We are trying to increase the amount of carbon that is stored in landscapes, but we will deliver the decarbonisation that we are seeking only if we use the right trees in the right places—for example, trees that are consistent with the climate that we expect to have in decades to come and that will not be exposed to the risks of pests and diseases that there might be. If we do not get that right, we will lose the benefits of those trees for nature, for people and for decarbonisation.

09:30

The Convener: As you know, a lot of the air-source heat pumps that are needed are driven by electricity, and my concern is that the price of electricity remains stubbornly high. It might cost someone £17,000 to have a heat pump installed in

their house, and they might still have massive electricity bills. Is that a stumbling block?

Richard Millar: Electricity prices are key to the transition. In our previous package of advice that set out pathways for the UK's seventh carbon budget and the carbon budgets in Scotland, our main recommendation was to make electricity cheaper for that reason. We said that the challenges relating to the legacy costs of electricity should be considered and that some of those costs could be rebalanced across gas and electricity in order to deal with that exact issue. We know that, increasingly, the efficient thing to do with most systems, including heat and transport systems, is to electrify, but that needs to be done in parallel with ensuring that electricity costs are cheap for people.

The Convener: That is everyone's aim, but those costs remain stubbornly high for most people.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The goal of the Paris agreement is to keep well below 2°C, and even then there will be a significant global impact. Quite frankly, I am horrified at what you are saying about 3°C, and even the prospect of 4°C. It is easy for these numbers to slip off the tongue, but can you say in a nutshell what 4°C would mean globally?

Richard Millar: Yes, 4°C globally is a big change. It sounds small—all of these numbers sound small—

Mark Ruskell: It is a big change.

Richard Millar: It is a big change. A change that big is on the same scale as the change between the current climate and, say, the last ice age, although that is obviously in the other direction. That indicates how big a change to the global climate system something like 4°C would be. When we were in the last ice age, a lot of where we are now was covered in ice sheets and so on. We are talking about a change that is similar to that magnitude, but in a warmer direction.

It is challenging to give a level of precision about what would happen, but we know that many of the things that we are already seeing will continue to change and get more extreme as we go towards ever higher levels of warming. Those are things such as the intensity and frequency of heatwaves and the risk of wetter winters that we are already seeing in Scotland. The sea level rise will ultimately be coloured a lot by the level of warming that we reach in terms of how much of the ice caps ultimately melt and whether a really long-term rise, which could be multiple metres, is realised.

I think that 4°C is where we would see some of those really big changes That obviously puts the risk of fundamental tipping points appearing in the global climate system at quite a high level—things like the total collapse of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation, which is part of the system that brings us the gulf stream. The heat in the gulf stream keeps—

Mark Ruskell: What would that mean for the UK?

Richard Millar: If that happens, that would potentially mean a lot colder temperatures than we have ever been used to, so we are talking about fundamental changes in even the sign of climate change if that occurs. The risk increases as we go to the higher levels of warming, but there are also risks that could happen at lower levels. Part of prudent adaptation planning is trying to get a much better understanding of how you monitor some of those changes in the global climate system so that we can have a better preparedness for the more discontinuous changes that we might see.

Mark Ruskell: You used quite unemotional language there, but if anybody sits back and thinks about what that would actually mean for people, nature and the entire global community, they will realise that it is a vast impact.

It is interesting that the CCC has moved away from a tightly constrained discussion about 2°C and 1.5°C and towards starting to think about tipping points. I guess that your advice is that policy makers should start thinking about the world that we would live in post a tipping point such as the collapse of the north Atlantic conveyor and a completely fundamental shift in our climate, which would effectively be unprecedented.

Richard Millar: I think we need to consider those tipping points for planning, but the things that are the most motivating are the ones in the centre of the distribution, for want of a better word—the stuff that we are seeing increasingly already and we know will happen. We saw the warmest year on record in 2022 in Scotland, with temperatures reaching nearly 35°C and the previous record being broken by about 2°C. We know that, even over the next decade or so, the chance of seeing temperatures as high as that, and higher, is significant. Across the whole of the UK, we saw 40°C reached for the first time in 2022 and, according to the latest science, in the next decade there is about a 50:50 chance that we will see that again.

We are not prepared for those kinds of impacts now. The increasingly hot summers, with the drought risk that those bring, and the wetter winters with increasing rainfall are the things that we need to get on with first; we need to prepare and reduce the impacts that we are seeing on

people and ecosystems today. That will make the most difference to people here and now.

Mark Ruskell: I can see that you are trying to continue to keep us motivated so that we do not catastrophise and ask, "What is the point because we cannot make any progress?" The change is coming anyway as we edge towards 1.5°C and beyond.

As policy makers, how should we be looking at, for example, flood defences and investment in Scottish Water over the next 10, 20 or 30 years? What scenario should we be preparing for at this point? Is it about saying that we think that the change will be about 1.6°C or 1.7°C and therefore we should be upgrading our flood mitigation measures along that line, or should we be looking at potentially far greater increases? How do you pitch that? There is an immediate investment programme—I think that the one for Scottish Water will be for the next five years—but how should policy makers and investors look at the longer-term investment in infrastructure, bearing in mind what might come? It would be irresponsible not to consider that outcome.

Richard Millar: Indeed. That is right. Investing in adaptation has to grapple with the uncertainty about exactly what level of warming will happen, but it cannot be defeated by it.

We can learn a lot from different examples where investment has been made to deal with such uncertainties. You can do that in two different ways, which are ultimately at the edges of the spectrum. You can do very precautionary investment, looking at some of the largest-change scenarios and almost baking in a level of anticipation of much higher impacts in the future. To take an historical example, look at how we built our sewers in the Victorian era—you can see a lot of that precautionary approach in the planning there. People thought that we would need a much bigger system in the future, even if they did not need it then, so built that in at the start and made the investment that was needed to do that. That is one approach, which obviously requires mobilising more resources in the immediate term to pay off down the line.

The other way to deal with this is to take a more pragmatic, flexible planning approach, thinking about investments that will make a real difference now in building flood defences but building them in a way that would allow you to extend them, to improve them and to make them more effective as and when the time comes—if the time comes for that. You see examples of how you can do that increasingly around the UK. In the Thames estuary, the Thames barrier plan has that baked in to some extent. We have a barrier now and there is a process at least to try to work out when we will make the decision on what else we need to do—if we need a new barrier, what is a sensible time to invest in that? Approaching adaptation pragmatically in a flexible way is the other way to grapple with this.

Mark Ruskell: Are some of those infrastructure solutions scalable? You mentioned the Thames barrier. Did we have a 3°C or 4°C world in mind when options were being looked at for that? Could future investment in the next five to 10 years be scaled up in the decades ahead to meet the needs of a 3°C or 4°C warming world, or do you reach a point where you say, "Okay, we are just going to have to think again"?

Richard Millar: That is certainly the philosophy of those approaches—anticipating what would happen if we reached a certain level of change. Would we be able to adapt the asset, such as the flood defence, or adapt what we are doing for urban drainage in towns to deal with the change, or at some level would we have to make a fundamentally different decision about how to protect places? Places at the coast are often some of the hardest examples here, as we know that the sea level rise will continue for decades. Trying to work through the options and when you might just change your approach is part of planning.

Our real advice is that that has to be done almost through an asset-by-asset, place-by-place approach, but using the principle of considering planning and taking action now for the kind of climate that we will see globally of 2°C above pre-industrial levels by the middle of the century, and considering how you would respond and change your actions in the higher warming world towards 4°C.

Mark Ruskell: Do you think that the Scottish Government's current infrastructure investment plan recognises that scenario of 3°C or 4°C? Is that baked into it?

Richard Millar: In Scotland and the UK we have relatively good access to information on climate projections. There are elements that can always be improved, but many of the climate projections that we are using in looking at flood risk are roughly consistent with that world of global temperatures reaching about 2°C above pre-industrial levels by the middle of the century, with the additional 100,000 or so homes that we might expect to be addressing.

Mark Ruskell: But not 3°C?

Richard Millar: Not 3°C, but over the period through the next few decades to the middle of the century the difference between 2°C and 3°C is less pronounced. It is really in the second half of the century that that starts to spread out. If you are focusing on what you can do over the next few decades, there is quite a consensus among the scenarios of what the change means in terms of

the hazards that we would expect through to around the middle of the century. It is useful to think about an inevitable period of climate change in all worlds through to around the middle of the century and to have some real certainty about what that might mean and, therefore, be able to bank that and take some action based on it.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I will build on Mark Ruskell's questions. Will you give further examples of the more significant impacts of climate change that we expect to see in Scotland over the next 10, 20 and 50 years, particularly in the context of infrastructure and infrastructure planning?

Richard Millar: Absolutely. Over the next few decades, we expect a continuation of what we are already starting to see in Scotland, and we can talk robustly about some of those changes. We have had warmer decades: the decade of 2010 to 2019 was around 0.7°C warmer than the baseline from which we used to measure our climate. That change has happened in people's lifetimes.

We also know about the impact of climate change on extreme weather over that same period. Winters have become wetter in Scotland. Their wetness has increased by around 19 per cent; that is the average for the 2010 to 2019 decade. If we take that right up to date to the decade that ended in 2024, winters are around 25 per cent wetter. The average wetness of winters has shifted quite significantly within a few decades, which, again, is happening in people's lifetimes.

We are also experiencing more intense rainfall, which brings infrastructure risks. An example of that is the Carmont derailment in 2020. Earlier this year, a study came out from academics at the University of Edinburgh looking at the attribution of such rainfall to the derailment. It found a robust link between the effects of climate change on the atmosphere globally and the intensity of the rainfall that contributed to the derailment.

09:45

We expect those trends to continue over the next couple of decades. There will be a continued shift to wetter and warmer winters, and drier summers, which will raise the drought risk, particularly in the eastern part of the country. Advisory warnings about the persistent lack of rainfall are in place right now in some parts of Scotland due to the lack of rainfall since the end of 2024. The risk of dry summers and the risk of an occasional dry winter raises the risk of drought, and we are increasingly having to grapple with that.

The other thing is the impact of storms that bring some of the intense rainfall that I was just talking about. We know the effect of those storms. In 2023, storm Babet left 30,000 homes without power for a while, and there was significant infrastructure disruption on trunk roads and school closures.

Looking at the recent past gives us a pretty good guide to the direction of the change. We know that every degree of warming—in addition to the current 1.3°C increase in world temperature—will lead to a continual shift in the average climate conditions in Scotland. We need to plan now for the changes that we know are pretty inevitable and we will see in coming decades.

Monica Lennon: Thank you for that comprehensive answer. We know that there is a risk of increased flooding, wildfires and droughts because of climate change, and you have described the way in which the weather is changing. Through national planning framework 4, the current and future impacts of climate change must be taken into account in local development plans, so that is a job for our planning authorities.

In your earlier response to Mark Ruskell, you described the need for a place-based approach. Which areas are least prepared? That might be certain sectors or geographical parts of Scotland. We also know that we need to review agricultural practices and infrastructure planning. Are there any comments that you want to make on that?

Richard Millar: In broad terms, Scotland's adaptation planning is similar to that in the other parts of the UK, in that progress is being made. We are getting better across the board. There is variation in different areas, but, in general, we are getting a lot better at considering climate change when making plans in key sectors.

The big challenge that persists—it is common globally and across all parts of the UK—is finding evidence of plans being delivered on the ground that will make a difference to the risks that we face.

Our most recent assessment of progress in Scotland, and in all the progress reports that we have made across the other parts of the UK, is that there is an implementation gap. There is a gap between following best practice when considering climate changes and understanding what those mean and driving action on the ground.

Community preparedness and response is just one of the 33 areas where we need to increase resilience that we looked at in our last progress report. We saw unambiguous evidence—there were clear indicators—that things were moving in the right direction there. However, in many areas, the trends are much more mixed, and the challenge is turning planning into delivery on the ground.

Monica Lennon: I wanted to ask questions about the different impacts at the different levels of temperature increases, but Mark Ruskell has covered that.

On the modelling, the evidence and the climate science, you have given a fairly favourable answer in relation to some of the work that is taking place across the UK, including in Scotland. That is reassuring on the one hand. However, on the other hand, anyone who follows the news will see examples of local authorities no longer having flood risk committees. Clearly, at a policy level, there is a push for more development to happen, particularly for house building, because we know that we need sufficient homes for everyone in the country.

How can we ensure that decisions remain robust, evidence based and are transparent, while meeting community needs and delivering the right development in the right places? If we are going to build in an area where there is a higher risk of flooding, for example, proper mitigation must be built into that.

I do not want you to provide a particular example or authority, but people talk about such issues, because they see these events happen and they worry about how they will insure their home or their business in future. On a technical level, how can we ensure that front-line decision makers have access to the best possible data?

Richard Millar: That is a really good question that gets to the heart of the challenge. The CCC's long-standing view has been that we must start by setting out a much more specific and quantitative framework on what we are seeking to achieve on climate resilience in the round at national level. That then needs to flow through to the lower levels of delivery, with clarity on what the goals are. It must also help to mobilise the right actions and the right resources to make them happen.

We are much less developed in setting targets for what climate change adaptation means than we are on the net zero side. The plan in Scotland has goal statements, which are decent statements about what we are trying to achieve, but the challenge is turning those into measurable, specific and operational framed statements that can drive change. To paraphrase someone who once described it to me, when we set targets in adaptation, we are doing the equivalent of saying that we will reduce some amount of carbon by some date by some measure. In other words, we are not specific, time bound and quantitative about what we are seeking to achieve.

The CCC believes that we must set lines in the sand on what we are seeking to achieve, then turn that into a specific goal. Doing that for climate change adaptation will always be more complicated than doing so for net zero. We cannot simply use one metric; we must identify a few key, specific and quantitative goals that can then get the whole framework to flow off the back of it. That means working out what would be the most effective way to do what we are trying to achieve nationally, where we could spend that resource and what we need to do to put in place the enabling factors that would allow local authorities, the public, businesses and households to do their bit. That is what we would really like to see.

The evidence that we are assessing and pulling together in our next well-adapted UK report, which we will publish in May next year, will be our contribution to setting out what we think some of the evidence on that can be. We hope that that will enable those next steps to be taken in setting out more specific, actionable objectives and targets for adaptation around the country to enable that much-needed step change in delivery to finally take place.

Monica Lennon: That is really helpful, and I am thinking about some of the skills challenges around that. Are there international examples of climate adaptation targets that the committee could look at?

Richard Millar: There are, yes. As I mentioned earlier, this is a challenge that all countries in the world are grappling with. I do not think that any similar countries to Scotland and the United Kingdom have got it right yet, but there is a lot that we can learn from efforts elsewhere. Examples that we have looked at recently include the German climate-adaptation strategy, which sets out ministry-by-ministry targets around what it is seeking to achieve and measures towards that. In Scotland, we have the statements on what we are trying to achieve and we have some indicators in that regard, but we do not have a measure of what level in which indicator is good and what success looks like. In Germany, they are trying to take some more steps towards that.

The other place that has done a lot on that recently is Canada. It has a national adaptation strategy that sets out goals and intermediate steps towards what it is trying to achieve by 2050. It has specific measurable goals for what should have happened by certain dates, such as seeking to avoid any heat-related deaths in heat waves by a given year. We can learn from some of those international examples.

There are areas where measures around resilience have been implemented well for some time. The classic example is the delta programme in the Netherlands, which has quite a clear articulation of what the level of resilience is in relation to one-in-X-year coastal flooding events, and there is an associated fund at an appropriate level to provide defences against such events.

There is also a clear expectation that, if a home owner or a business wants a higher level of protection than that, they have a responsibility to provide those additional protections.

Monica Lennon: I suppose that funding is key. I will hand back to the convener.

The Convener: There are a few supplementary questions on this subject. I will go to the deputy convener first, followed by Kevin Stewart, then me.

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): Good morning. Sticking with the theme of infrastructure investment, there is anxiety about the cost of investment that is needed to meet our climate change targets. You heard earlier about the cost of things such as heat pumps and so on. There is a suggestion that we should just ditch the 2045 and 2050 net zero targets but still try to make some progress in tackling climate change.

Is it fair to say that there is a direct correlation between the degree of global warming or climate change and the amount of investment that we must make in adaptation as a result? If so, to what extent do you think that there is the risk that, if we ditch those national targets, we will simply push the costs on to investment in climate adaptation, which we will need to do more of?

Richard Millar: There is definitely a relation between those two things. Ultimately, we know from the science that getting to near net zero globally is what is needed to stop the planet warming. Unless the world gets close to net zero, global temperatures will keep rising. As we have just discussed, we can robustly link every additional 0.1°C increase in global warming to changes in hazards that we see here at home with the increasingly wet winters, rising seas and changing drought and heat risks.

Unless the world gets to net zero, we will keep chasing an ever-moving target for what the climate looks like. That will require more and more investment on the resilience side if we are going to deal with it. Reducing emissions and adapting to climate change are two sides of the same coin in that they are both necessary and complementary in a rounded response to climate change.

Trying to get emissions towards net zero and helping the world to do that in order, ultimately, to stop climate change here at home is one part of the contribution that we need to be making. The other side involves recognising that, even in the most optimistic scenarios, it will take at least several decades for the world to get to net zero, and the planet will keep warming and the climate will keep changing until that time. Therefore, we also know that we will have to grapple with an inevitable period of warming, and we need to plan for that now.

Investing in adaptation requires some up-front resources to build the flood defences and infrastructure that will be necessary to deal with the future climate. However, if those investments are done right—if we make wise investments on the resilience side and do them in an effective way today—they will save money, because they reduce the cost of the impacts to society, businesses, home owners and the public purse.

10:00

Michael Matheson: So, delaying net zero involves a cost from an adaptation perspective, as investment would have to go into infrastructure.

Richard Millar: Achieving net zero will help to reduce the amount of money that needs to be spent on adaptation investment, but we know that it will not reduce it to nothing. Even if we achieved net zero tomorrow, we would still need to invest in our resilience in relation to weather extremes. We have already seen change, and we know that further change will happen over the decades to at least the middle of the century.

Michael Matheson: As you say, there is a need to invest in infrastructure to meet the changes in our climate that we are experiencing. Given the capital investment profile of the Scottish and UK Governments and their infrastructure investment planning, do you see the scale of investment that is necessary to ensure that we have the right infrastructure in place to deal with the climate challenges that we face?

Richard Millar: There are two aspects to that. One is that our understanding of what we actually spend on climate resilience is quite low. We do not track that as a standard activity very well across either public spend or the spend in the wider economy. Understanding what we are spending today would help us be able to say much more robustly exactly what needs to happen to meet the requirements in future.

The other aspect is that the evidence on adaptation action suggests that, if you think about how to deal with climate change when you are designing infrastructure and putting it in the ground at the outset—particularly in relation to big infrastructure investment programmes—the costs will be much lower than if you have to install measures to deal with it later down the line. Therefore, we should incorporate climate resilience into our investment decisions in an effective way. For example, if we build homes in an area of flood risk, we should ensure that they come with the protections that are needed, so that we do not just lock in new homes that will get flooded, costing home owners money down the line. It is a lot cheaper to put those measures in up front than it is to retrofit the properties later. That is

a common message across all areas of infrastructure investment. Thinking about ways to keep the investment costs as low and focused as we can means thinking about climate change up front instead of waiting and trying to fix the holes when they appear.

Michael Matheson: It feels to me that, by and large, a lot of infrastructure investment that takes place to deal with some of these challenges happens because of incidents occurring—we see a flood, so we put in flood-mitigation measures to deal with it.

You mentioned that we do not track that type of investment. The CCC gives independent advice to the Scottish and UK Governments. Are you able to quantify exactly how much either of those Governments is spending on climate adaptation specifically?

Richard Millar: There are bits that we know much better than others. Spending on flood defences is a good example of an area that we know that is strongly connected to adaptation, and there is high transparency around what those budgets are across the country. Other bits are a lot harder. A good example is some of the stuff in the land sector, where you might be doing something on farmed land or restoring peatland in a way that has multiple benefits. Some of those benefits will be for the resilience of the farm, but some will be for the ecosystem and nature. There is an accounting challenge—quite a boring processy one—at the heart of this that we need to probably make some more progress on before we can say exactly what the spend is in total across the piece.

When we produced a report on the investment that the UK needed to make for climate resilience, based on all the evidence that we could pull together, we estimated that dealing with the climate risks that were summarised in the most recent climate change risk assessment, which was from 2021, would require investment in the order of £5 billion to £10 billion across the UK.

Finally, I think that the issue fundamentally comes back to the point that I mentioned earlier: what is our ambition? Without a clearly articulated ambition for what we are trying to achieve on resilience, it is difficult to say exactly what the right level of investment is that is needed to meet it. For example, 300,000 homes in Scotland are at risk of flooding today, and that might rise by another 100,000 by 2050. What is our ambition? Is it to just hold the line? Would success look like keeping the flood risk in 2050 at about today's levels? That could be the answer, but what are we saying to the 300,000 households that are at risk today? Would good adaptation not involve dealing with some of that and pushing that number down to a much lower level?

Ultimately, it is for Governments to make a decision on that, based on the various costs and benefits involved. However, there must be a consideration of what people expect from things such as flood protection. Is it just holding the line or is it an improved state of resilience? Only by answering that question and defining the goal can we take the next steps towards telling you more clearly how much investment you will need to mobilise to meet it.

Michael Matheson: You mentioned the 2021 adaptation risk report and the figure of £5 billion to £10 billion. Is that an annual figure or is that figure over a five-year period, which is a period that a lot of capital investment programmes use?

Richard Millar: That is an estimate of the annual figure that would be needed across the entire UK for investment in climate resilience to deal with the climate risks that were set out in the report, and it is a full-society figure. Some of those challenges will be directly dealt with by Governments through public funding—flood defences are one example of that—but there are also large elements that businesses and home owners will have to invest in themselves. The figure incorporates all of that spending.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Good morning. Many of the issues that we have discussed today have been at a pretty high level. We do not do enough portraying them in relation to what happens in folk's day-to-day lives. For example, someone who lives next to the River Dee in Aberdeen will have seen quite clearly, this year, a level of water scarcity that has not happened for some time. Equally, someone who lives elsewhere near the Dee might have been affected by flooding in recent times. I am keen to know how the Climate Change Committee feels about getting messaging out at local level to persuade folk that our net zero targets are the right ones and to recognise that resilience planning and investment in infrastructure are required.

Richard Millar: As you said, those issues resonate with people so much more when they can relate to them through an example that they, or people they know, have experienced. I think that everyone does that.

The advantage of the climate resilience aspect of our work is that we do not need to tell people why they should care about these things. They already care about not having their homes flooded, about the health system being able to work and their being able to access it, and about hospitals not being flooded or overheating as has happened in other parts of the country. Lived experiences really tell on that aspect.

One piece of work that will feed into our next set of advice, which will be issued in May, relates to our convening a citizens panel to ask people to consider that question and to talk about their views and experiences and, therefore, their perspectives on what might be done. What has really come through from that is that people know about the issues but are really surprised when they get into the detail on the impacts. They find it quite full on to hear about the level of impacts. We highlight that although getting to global net zero would prevent the problems from getting worse, it would not mean that our climate would go back to what it was 20 or 30 years ago. The conditions that we have today are ones that we will have forever, even if we were to stop emitting tomorrow. People find that idea quite powerful. There is a strong sense that they want something to be done, but they also want it to be done well. Those are some of the key messages that we are taking from that work.

Coupled with that is a sense of vulnerable people being considered a priority. Those who are particularly exposed to the climate impacts of flooding, heat or drought are priorities for what our adaptations should seek to do to make risk-reduction action as effective as possible.

Kevin Stewart: You have talked about houses that are at risk of flooding. Over the years, it has frustrated me greatly to see a housing development being called, for example, "The Meadows", but then people are surprised that it is suddenly considered prone to flooding when, to be frank, its historical name should have told us something. Ms Lennon picked up on that in her earlier questioning. As we move forward, do decision makers need to take cognisance of what insurance companies say about possibly imposing higher premiums—or even not insuring properties—in such areas?

Richard Millar: Insurance is an area that highlights the challenge in this space. We have taken the decision to have a flood reinsurance scheme through Flood Re that socialises some of those costs. All my answers on this aspect will tie back to what we are seeking to do. We took the decision to put Flood Re in place in parts of the country where that would allow homes in flood risk areas to continue to be insurable. That was based on the premise that we were already grappling with a situation whereby we had a certain level of flood risk and a certain number of properties thought to be at risk. However, we are now dealing with the climate challenge, which will increase the number of homes that are at risk. If keeping to a good position looks like simply holding the line that we are on today, how will we deal with those properties? Will we keep running a flood reinsurance scheme in the future, or not?

The insurance situation really crystallises some of those challenges. Right now, someone who is buying or selling a home in those areas might, rightly, ask themselves, "Would a person buying this property from me, whenever I might choose to sell it, be able to get flood insurance? What could that mean for my prospects of selling it?" It is a good example of how forward thinking on the issue can map back to what it means for people, and the value of their homes, today.

Kevin Stewart: Thank you. My final question will be brief, convener. Does there need to be holistic resilience investment in resources for infrastructure, so that we do not do something in one area that might have a major impact on others downstream—for example, flood prevention measures?

Richard Millar: Flooding is an area that is just fundamentally catchment based—what happens in the upper part of a catchment will affect what happens in the flood risk downstream, which often means areas in our towns and cities. That is just how it works—that is the scale of the system—and therefore we need to plan for and deal with that and consider how we respond to it. As you say, it is a question of working holistically across catchments to find the most effective way to reduce risk and to make interventions where they will be most effective, which might not always be at the site where the impact is felt. Joining things up will be key to making our approach work and to preparing properly, particularly for flood risk.

10:15

The Convener: Before I ask my own question, I remind members that I have a farming business in Speyside and have an interest in the River Spey.

You have talked about new infrastructure and what we need to do to plan for the future. Surely we need to look back at the old infrastructure as well. Kevin Stewart has just mentioned water shortages on the Dee, which raises an interesting point. This year, the River Spey was at a level where no distillery below the Carron bridge could abstract any water from it and they all shut down, which had a major economic impact on local communities. At the same time, water was being abstracted from the headwaters of the Spey to go down to the Lochy to turn electricity generators, and also down to the Tay to help with the water shortage there, all while we in Speyside were suffering.

Is looking back at the old projects that were set up in the 1950s—which might have seemed right at that time, when there were more sustainable harvests, but are not now—as important as looking at shiny new infrastructure projects, to ensure that everyone has what they need?

Richard Millar: We have talked a decent bit about new infrastructure, but existing infrastructure is the next level of challenge up. We know that that stuff exists: it is on the ground, people are using it and there are stakeholders in it. Trying to deal with that is harder, but it needs to be done. For instance, our transport network exists where it exists. Most of it will stay there and will be in the places where people are. Figuring out how we retrofit those assets to improve resilience will be a key part of the challenge.

The example that you mentioned, convener, is another that shows the need for joining up work across various areas to figure out people's priorities through Governments and through the structures that exist there.

I will give an international example. In regions of the Algarve in Portugal, the authorities say, "Okay, we experience droughts, but our economic value is in our golf courses", so that sector is prioritised for access to abstraction of water, even in times of drought. They have discussed the areas that they value and have identified their priorities to enable them to come to that perspective.

Increasingly, we will have to tackle that kind of stuff, particularly on the water issue. We will have to ask ourselves what the priority ranking of various water uses should be, as well as to keep water in the environment for nature in times of drought.

The Convener: Water is so fundamental to everything that we do that putting a value on it is difficult. Even back in the 1980s, when I was a young soldier, I was told that most future wars would be fought over water, and that, if we did not get our approach to water management right, it would be a serious problem, especially with such high and low levels happening in the same year.

I will hand over to Mark Ruskell, who will ask our next questions.

Mark Ruskell: I want to stay on flooding and on the investment issue. We have had evidence from Audit Scotland that the costs of the major flood management schemes—the concrete schemes, I guess you could call them—have trebled over the past decade. Bearing in mind what you said earlier about the potential impacts, in particular if we start looking at going beyond an increase of 2°C, is that balance right at the moment? Is there a need to think again about preventative measures, nature-based solutions and catchment management?

At the moment, it feels as though a blend of solutions emerges. We try not to build on the carses and the meadows if we can, although housing developments still happen. There is a nod to nature-based solutions within catchment management, but it never feels as though they become a major part of our approach to flood mitigation. Given the spiralling costs, what do the future options look like?

Richard Millar: The answer to that is probably some form of "All of the above". Answers will vary locally as well, as we try to abstract what would be the right situation for a certain catchment or even a certain bit of river.

As I said, when we engage with people on these issues as part of our evidence gathering, they tell us that they want things to be effective. That is the key factor that should drive how we choose options. Some nature-based options can be effective, but they also currently suffer from the lack of a quantified evidence base that can say how effective they might be, what the cost benefit ratios could be and how they might stack up against other options.

Therefore, our priority is building out a greater evidence base. That is starting to occur through projects that use nature-based solutions. We will be able to understand the benefits in terms of reduced risk, but also the wider benefits to health or nature that they can bring. The more that we can have a level playing field across the different adaptation options, the more power we will create to enable us to find the right option in the right place—which will be the most effective, make the biggest difference and use the money that we invest in it most effectively to get outcomes for people, which include the reduction in flooding that they want to see.

Mark Ruskell: Is it a concern that the baseline keeps shifting, though? For example, the flood defence scheme that was built in Brechin was originally designed to deal with a one-in-50-years event. Now the figure has changed to a one-in-20-years event. Is there not an issue there with the assessment of risk changing and that what we would design for a relatively commonplace event is now being blown out of the water, quite literally?

Richard Millar: One of the challenges of dealing with a changing climate is that all the statistics change over time. We must not invest based on the weather and the climate of the past decade, because we know that they will be different in the future. Our approach must be forward looking and consider the one-in-20-years event that might happen in the 2030s or even the 2050s. We must ask, "What is our credible estimate of that for planning and investing to those levels of resilience instead of what we have seen in the past?" One of the simple things that we do is recognise that the past is no longer a good guide to what we can expect. We know that that is very true of climate change matters. Instead, we must look forward and anticipate.

To return to the points made at the start of our discussion, we must do that in an increasingly

flexible way. We know that we will continue to learn more about exactly how our climate is changing in a particular region—for example, the statistics for rainfall in one part of the country versus those in another—as we move forward. Therefore, there is a need to design these things in such a way that they could be adjusted and scaled as information emerges. For instance, we must consider whether we can build a flood defence in such a way that we could later add height to the barriers. We could make other interventions to mitigate the risk that what we think the one-in-20-years event in the next decade will be could be an underestimate of what we will actually see.

Mark Ruskell: So the approach is very much about creating the right foundation for adaptation now—in the next decade or two—and then being able to build on that, rather than say, "Okay. This community is unliveable. We need to abandon it" or, for instance, in a coastal community, "We cannot build our way out of this. We cannot adapt".

Richard Millar: Yes. It is about the process of working out the cost-effective interventions—what we might term the low-hanging fruit—that can be made right now, which will make a difference today and in the next few years, and then investing into exploring, "What could we do in the future if we saw this change? What would be our response?" It is about designing the things that we do on the ground now in a way that is cognisant of that, so we are not locking in—or out—our ability to take steps that could be necessary in some future scenarios.

The Convener: Douglas Lumsden has some questions next.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): Would the amount that we need to spend on adaptation change significantly if Scotland reached net zero sooner than 2045? If Scotland reached net zero tomorrow, for example, would the amount that we have to spend change significantly, or is it pegged on global emissions?

Richard Millar: It is ultimately pegged on global emissions; the climate and the weather that we see in Scotland are controlled by the future of global emissions. The contributions that we make in the UK and in Scotland in reducing emissions are about how it affects the global pathways. How fast the world starts to reduce emissions and eventually gets to net zero will be what sets the ultimate level of climate change that we have to deal with in this country.

Douglas Lumsden: You mentioned near the start something that I have never actually heard before. You spoke about the risks and opportunities around climate change. I have never heard opportunities being mentioned before. What are those opportunities?

Richard Millar: Changing weather conditions will in many ways drive risks, and that is certainly the strongest message that comes through from the risk assessments that have been done in the past and the one that we are currently working on. Most of this is about risk.

There are areas where there are potential opportunities. The changing climate conditions can make certain higher value agricultural products more viable than they might have been previously. The classic example of that is sparkling wine in the south of England. The climate conditions there are now similar to those in the Champagne region a few decades ago and so there is increasing potential for that high-value product.

However, when we think about the nature side of it in particular, the nature that we have is the stuff that has dealt with the previous climate. The transition and the changes are happening so fast that opportunities on the natural side are often very limited or, in many cases, there are none.

Douglas Lumsden: Beyond Scotland, how might impacts on climate change globally affect life in Scotland? I am thinking about such issues as supply chains and food security.

Richard Millar: Climate change is happening globally. We have obviously talked a lot about the changes that are happening here, but changes are happening all over the world, and our economies are fundamentally interconnected with other parts of the world.

In the UK as a whole, roughly half of the food that we consume comes from overseas. Therefore, what is happening with climate change in some of the key producer regions that we import food from—for example, some of the weather extremes that are happening in those regions—can be as important to the prices and the availability of food as what is happening here at home with domestic agriculture, certainly for some kinds of food that people see on the shelves in their local shop or supermarket.

There have been examples of extreme weather in parts of Spain, where we get a lot of our fresh fruit from, leading to a temporary lack of certain kinds of products on the shelves, so the food system is one example of how climate change can affect life in Scotland.

Another example is finance. Finance is inherently a global system with connections between the big centres—Edinburgh is the second biggest centre in the country for finance. We are exposed at some level to impacts on other financial centres. If a big hurricane hits Miami and affects US markets, for example, some of that

impact will come to us through the interconnection of the global finance system.

Ultimately, Scotland and the UK need to do the bits that we can, where we have the levers, to help improve our domestic resilience. However, without increasing resilience globally, we cannot be fully adapted to a changing climate.

Douglas Lumsden: In Scotland, should we be looking to produce more of our own food? I am not talking about sparkling wine at this point, but should we be trying to produce much more of what we need locally as opposed to having to import it?

Richard Millar: What we do on food is a good example of where businesses will be best placed to work out what to do in their supply chains. They know their supply chains better than others do. Diverse supply chains are generally considered to be part of resilience. A concentration from one region puts all your eggs in one basket, so to speak, and we know that there have been big agricultural impacts at home from the changing climate, too.

Looking at the range of options that businesses have for their supply chain resilience is the right approach. The Government's role is often about making sure that as much pragmatic, good information is available as possible to enable businesses to make the right decisions about what they think is needed along their supply chains, as opposed to necessarily thinking that more domestic production will increase resilience.

Some of the food supply chains have been through quite a stress test recently with the pandemic and how they responded to that. Obviously, we have seen some shortages in relation to that. However, overall, the system performed relatively well in response to that. It was quite a different kind of shock than climate change would be, but there are definitely learnings from that on what worked and what did not in terms of food system resilience that we can apply to climate resilience.

10:30

The Convener: I have a final easy question to end the session with. Scotland has kept its ambition for net zero for 2045, but it has lowered its ambition for interim emission reductions. Are you happy with that and are we doing enough?

Richard Millar: We gave our advice at the start of this year on the decarbonisation trajectory for targets in the new carbon budgets for Scotland. We think that the targets that we have set out are proportionate and can be achieved in a way that is beneficial to the people of Scotland and the climate outcomes that we are seeking to reach. A trajectory that goes as fast as credibly possible in a way that is pragmatic and cognisant of the technologies and the choices that are needed to achieve it is what has underpinned our advice on that.

The Convener: That is a bit of a politician's answer. Will the carbon budgets that we were given as a Parliament make the 2045 target achievable or do they mean that we are skating on thin ice?

Richard Millar: I think that they can make it achievable in the steps down from where we are today on a trajectory that goes on the path to 2045. All our advice is given on the path of what we think is the right way based on the costs and the technologies to ultimately achieve that 2045 target at the end point.

The Convener: Of course, the danger in saying that you have the last question is that a committee member can then ask to come in. Mark Ruskell, I will give way to you as long as it is a brief question.

Mark Ruskell: You inspired me, convener. Richard Millar, the CCC puts forward different pathways. You have a balanced pathway and a high ambition pathway. Given what you have said about 3°C and 4°C, should we not be going for the high ambition pathway? Given the threats that you have outlined today, the tipping points and the catastrophic impacts of potentially going above 2°C, should we not be going for a higher ambition rather than balancing things out?

Richard Millar: If the trajectory that Scotland has set on the decarbonisation side is delivered, I think that it will make a difference for the ambition around what the world is doing. If countries such as Scotland and the wider UK deliver their decarbonisation targets, they can show that it is possible to sustain these reductions and continue to be able to deliver them. Setting targets that are pragmatic, ambitious but credible is the thing that resonates internationally. A trajectory that delivers on what has been set out is showing people that it can be done at a time when, in some parts of the world, people are thinking, "Do we keep to our commitments that are not as ambitious as are being set in Scotland or the UK?" I think that making sure that we set credible targets and deliver on them is the greatest contribution that we can make to nudging the global emissions towards that increase in ambition that might keep the world more aligned to the well-below 2°C goal. That is what will ultimately bring back benefits in terms of the lower levels of climate change that we ultimately have to prepare for and be resilient to at home.

The Convener: Mark Ruskell got the last question. There are no further questions. Thank you very much for offering to come this morning to

answer questions as we build up to our scrutiny of the draft climate change plan that has been laid.

I will suspend the meeting until 10:50. I ask committee members to be back here at 10:45, because there is a matter that I would like to address before we go into public session. Thank you.

10:34

Meeting suspended.

11:00

On resuming—

Subordinate Legislation

The Convener: We are starting the next item slightly later than I anticipated, so I apologise to anyone who has been kept waiting.

Our third item of business is consideration of two statutory instruments, both of which are laid under the negative procedure, which means that they will come into force unless the Parliament agrees to a motion to annul them. No motions to annul have been lodged. The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee has made no comment on either instrument. I will seek views on each of them in turn.

Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes (Amendment) (No 2) Order 2025 (SI 2025/1101)

The Convener: Unless anyone else has any comments on the order, I will make a general comment. Although I have no problem with the order, it would be helpful to know the Government's position on it and whether, by extending the trading scheme for a further period—which will allow motor manufacturers to trade off progress against the current targets to allow them to achieve their future emissions targets—that will affect progress on electric vehicles.

In general, I agree with the order, so unless the committee has a reason to do otherwise, I propose to write to the Government and ask it to explain that, but then to make no other comment. Are we happy to do that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Motor Vehicles (Competitions and Trials) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2025 (SSI 2025/300)

The Convener: As no one has any comments on the instrument, does the committee agree that it does not wish to make any recommendations on it?

Members *indicated agreement.*

GB Biocidal Products (Amendment) Regulations 2025

The Convener: The fourth agenda item is consideration of two consent notifications relating to proposed UK statutory instruments. The first is on biocidal products. Under the GB Biocidal Products Regulation, companies must obtain authorisation from the Health and Safety

Executive to market biocidal products. Biocidal products are substances or mixtures that are designed to control harmful organisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, insects or rodents.

The amendment regulations relate not to the substance of that regulation but to a data protection aspect in it, as outlined in the clerk's paper. The committee's role is to decide whether it agrees with the Scottish Government about the proposed change. We can express a view both on whether we agree in principle to the UK Government legislating in the area and on whether we agree with the specific manner in which it proposes to do so.

If we are content for consent to be given, I will write to the Scottish Government accordingly. In writing to the Scottish Government, we of course have the option to draw matters to the Government's attention, pose questions or ask to be kept updated on particular matters. If the committee is not content with the proposal, it might make one or several recommendations, as outlined in the clerk's note.

I do not see anyone who wants to express a view, so I will move to the substantive question. Is the committee content that the provision that is set out in the notification should be made in the proposed UK statutory instrument?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We will write to the Scottish Government to that effect.

Control of Mercury (Amendment) Regulations 2025

The Convener: We move on to the second consent notification relating to a proposed UK statutory instrument. The UK SI would add a number of mercury-added products—so-called MAPs—to an effectively banned list. The UK and Scottish Governments consider that doing that fulfils our international obligations on mercury.

As before, the committee's role is to decide whether it agrees with the Scottish Government about that. We can express a view both on whether we agree in principle to the UK Government legislating in the area and on whether we agree to the specific manner in which it proposes to do so. If we are content for consent to be given, I will write accordingly to the Scottish Government. We have options to draw matters to the attention of the Scottish Government if we want to do so. If the committee is not content, we can make one of the recommendations as outlined in the clerk's note.

Does any member have a view on the issue?

Mark Ruskell: I am content that the instrument would align us with some of the international conventions on mercury, which are about protecting human health and the environment. However, I would like the UK Government to go further and align with the European Union, particularly on areas such as the use of mercury, amalgam in dentistry and sodium lights, and a range of other areas. It would be useful to get the Scottish Government's view on whether it wants to work towards alignment with the EU in relation to mercury-added products. If so, I would like to know how it is working on a four-nations basis with ministers from across the UK to achieve that, and by when.

The Convener: It appears to me that the simple answer is that we write—well, I will ask the question, to be totally correct.

Is the committee content that the provision that is set out in the notification should be made in the proposed UK statutory instrument?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: It would be helpful to write a letter to the Government on the issues that Mark Ruskell has raised. Technically, I should seek the committee's permission to sign off that letter on its behalf as a result of our discussion. Are members happy with that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: We will write to the Government on the effect of the instruments.

We now move into private session.

11:06

Meeting continued in private until 12:28.

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