



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Tuesday 19 September 2017

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Tuesday 19 September 2017

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ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND REFORM COMMITTEE
23rd Meeting 2017, Session 5

CONVENER

*Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*John Scott (Ayr) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)
*Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
*Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
*Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
*Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)
*Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
*Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)
*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
*David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Victoria Barby (Scottish Parliament)
Sir Paul Grice (Scottish Parliament)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Lynn Tullis

LOCATION

The Adam Smith Room (CR5)

Scottish Parliament

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Tuesday 19 September 2017

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Graeme Dey): Good morning and welcome to the 23rd meeting in 2017 of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee. I remind everyone present to switch off mobile phones and other electronic devices as they may affect the broadcasting system.

Under the first item on the agenda, the committee is to decide whether to take items 3, 4, 5 and 6 in private. Are we agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Scottish Parliament

Environmental Performance

10:00

The Convener: The second item of business on our agenda is to hear evidence on the Scottish Parliament's environmental performance. We are joined by Sir Paul Grice, the chief executive of the Scottish Parliament, and Victoria Barby, the environmental manager.

As you would expect, members have a series of questions, and I will kick them off.

Sir Paul, the Scottish Parliament has failed to meet its targets on reducing its carbon footprint, electricity use and waste generation for 2016-17. Why is that?

Sir Paul Grice (Scottish Parliament): First, thank you for the opportunity to come to give evidence today. We appreciate the support, encouragement and challenge of the committee in hitting our targets.

You are right. In a sense, our electricity use is related to a deliberate decision that we took to look at the energy mix. We have far exceeded our gas target—use is down by about 24 per cent against a 15 per cent reduction target. However, we found that the price of that reduction was that a lot of people were using electric heaters across the campus. Therefore, we have tried to adopt a more sophisticated approach to our building management system. Victoria Barby is much more expert and can give you more detail but, broadly, we are trying to keep the campus at a more even temperature. The approach to heating is little and often, which means that we do not have to invest a lot of energy in heating spaces up from cold.

We are optimistic and I would certainly hope that, when we are before you next year, we will be able to report a significant improvement in reducing our electricity consumption. That is one area that we are looking at.

Waste continues to be a challenge for us. We do very well at recycling and sending things off to composting—the figures there are very encouraging—but we are struggling to reduce the amount of waste itself. There are a number of initiatives. Convener, you encouraged an initiative around engaging with members to encourage a reduction in the amount of paper that is sent in to us. That has had a degree of success, although it might be something that we could return to, with some help from the committee to encourage more members to take part.

We are also working with a couple of suppliers. We found the two that bring in the most cardboard

packaging—which, in essence, we then recycle for them for free. Therefore, we are looking further up the supply chain to see whether we can work with those particular suppliers to reduce the amount of packaging. Of course, there are the famous cardboard cups for coffee, which we are also looking at.

We have a number of issues, therefore. I am optimistic on electricity use—I would be very disappointed if, next year, I was not able to report a significant improvement to the committee. We have some ideas on waste, but I think that, realistically, reducing the quantum will remain a challenge—although, as I say, we do very well on the amount that we actually recycle.

The Convener: Okay. Perhaps I owe you something of an apology around my quest to look at the amount of paper that comes in, because I seem to recall that you were the subject of criticism from within the MSP cohort for some of the measures that you took. Nevertheless, they were welcome.

Business travel performance is markedly worse. Is that because we have a problem or are you simply capturing that better?

Paul Grice: It is very much the latter, convener. Looking at so-called scope 3 emissions is new territory for us. As you know, we published a travel plan, which is about travelling here in Edinburgh and business travel. We wanted to capture an honest baseline. What you see in relation to business travel performance has a lot to do with the fact that we are recording it much better. As we go forward having established a more credible baseline, I hope to report improvements on that.

For example, we now have an electric car in the basement car park, which I know a number of members have used. I have used it in place of a taxi or other means of travel, for example. There is much more encouragement for members and staff on business trips to use the train not the plane. There is also an active travel to work plan, whether people cycle, walk or use the bus. On all of those, I am optimistic. The data that you have seen does look alarming but, as you said, it has to do with the measurement of the baseline. I hope that, going forward, we can put ourselves in a position to give you a credible and candid assessment of how we are performing against that baseline.

The Convener: We do not measure the travel of witnesses to parliamentary committees, do we?

Paul Grice: I look to your clerks on that one, but I suspect that we do not do that. However, we could do and I am keen to make our policy as comprehensive as we can, so I would be happy to look at that. I know that the clerks engage with committees well ahead, looking at the various

other needs that they might have to address here in the Parliament—for example, for people with disabilities. It would be perfectly reasonable to encourage clerks to engage with witnesses to advise them on their travel and, in so doing, we would be able to capture information. I am more than happy to take that forward with the committee office.

The Convener: Of course, we can also encourage witnesses to give evidence by alternative means that do not involve travel, wherever that is possible.

Paul Grice: That allows me, if I may, to commend a committee. As you know, this committee would normally meet in committee room 1, but the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee is, as we speak, in that room taking evidence from a witness by videoconference. I think that it was Kate Forbes who asked me about office-to-office engagement, which I hope we have enabled by rolling out the Skype product. There is certainly a trend of committees taking more evidence by videolink. That has been a real innovation and I hope that we can do more of it.

The Convener: Apart from that, what other measures is the Parliament taking to ensure that it gets back on track in some areas?

Paul Grice: There are a range of things; there is no one magic answer. We have continued to invest in technology. Most visibly, members will see that we replaced the chamber lighting over the summer, which has a considerable benefit in that there is at least a 50 per cent reduction in the electricity used and the benefit might be better than that as we come to understand the system more. Certainly, the figure now is 22kWh compared with 42kWh for the old system. The new system also has much more flexibility because it has different modes. I hope that, as we get a better understanding of the system, we can improve further. We also continue to put in a lot of physical measures, such as secondary glazing in Queensberry house.

Behaviour is the key thing, however. I was interested to sit in on the committee's previous evidence session and hear the number of questions and witnesses who talked about behavioural change. Such change is just an ongoing job for us, encouraging us to think about how we travel and how we use resources such as paper. There is nothing wrong in what we do; it is just about thinking about the cost of the resources that we use—across a whole suite of things.

What is really encouraging is the real change that I have sensed among members and staff over the past few years. The view now among both MSPs and staff is that the environment matters,

and there is not resistance to but interest in new ideas in that regard. That change has definitely happened in recent times. The challenge for us is to come up with imaginative and user-friendly ideas to keep pushing that behavioural change forward.

The Convener: Thank you for that. We move on to energy use, and John Scott has a question.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Just to pick up on the convener's last question, I think that we are very happy with the new lighting in the chamber—I certainly am. Do you have similar plans to address energy use related to committee lighting?

Paul Grice: We do not have immediate plans to adopt the same approach as in the chamber, which was partly driven by obsolescence—we had been cannibalising the system for quite some time. The new chamber lighting was a major investment, and we will not repeat that for the time being. I am not sure whether we have already done this, but we might look at the bulbs in committee rooms and other intermediate ways in which to deliver some savings. I suspect that, in time, we will move to a different lighting system for committee rooms, but we have no current plans for that. It would be wise to see how the chamber system performs for a year or so, which would give us some good data that would inform the business case for new committee lighting.

The Convener: Richard Lyle has a supplementary question on lighting.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): In certain parts of the building, the light comes on when someone walks into the room. Is the intention to have such lighting in meeting rooms? All too often, people leave the light on in the meeting room next to my office. It annoys me intensely and I continually switch it off. Are you looking at having lighting in meeting rooms that goes off when no one is there?

Paul Grice: You are right that, in a number of places around the campus, we have motion sensors that turn the lights on and off. I am happy to look, with colleagues, at whether such lighting could be used in other areas. That investment would, in itself, have a cost.

The cheapest solution is for the last person to leave a room to hit the light switch, and my preference would be to continue to encourage people to turn the lights off. However, I am more than happy to see, with my facilities management colleagues, whether there are other rooms in the campus where motion sensors would work. Most of us have got into the habit of turning the lights off when we leave a room, and that is the cheapest way to achieve what you want.

Richard Lyle: I have one more question if you do not mind, convener. I understand that we need lighting for the television cameras to see where we are, but at the moment I have two spotlights shining right in my eyes, and there are seven lights in the room that I think are totally useless. If they could be turned off, that would save a wee bit of electricity.

Paul Grice: I have often engaged with my broadcasting colleagues on the level of lighting in the chamber but, over the years, I have come to respect their professional expertise in ensuring that we have lighting that is appropriate.

A great number of people engage with the Parliament through YouTube and social media and the quality of the broadcast is really important. We have to strike a compromise between this being a working meeting and the room being, in a sense, a studio in which we need a good quality of light. I often ask my broadcasting colleagues about lighting levels—they will back me up on that—but I have learned that they use the minimum lighting necessary to ensure a good, well-lit production. As you witnessed just before the meeting during your Facebook live session, that is really important for thousands of people these days.

Please always feel free to ask my broadcasting colleagues whether any particular light needs to be focused on you. However, the lights are not redundant—they are all part of getting the light levels right.

Richard Lyle: Thank you.

John Scott: Sir Paul, you nonetheless raise an interesting point about broadcasting. In this room, we are keeping out the daylight that would be pouring in—you will see the blinds right behind you—and relighting the room to accommodate broadcasting, which cannot be energy efficient. We do exactly the same in the debating chamber and have done so for many years—we keep the daylight out and relight the chamber, which is not energy efficient in my view.

Paul Grice: You and I know from your time as the Deputy Presiding Officer that we are very much on the same side. You know of my battle to keep the blinds up as long as possible, and I assure you that I have continued that into the current session.

The truth is that the great majority of the people who witness the proceedings of this institution do so via broadcast, even with the chamber full, so it is really important to have a high-quality product. People expect that these days, whether on Facebook or in the clips used by news organisations. I am with you on the issue, as you know, but I think that we should respect our colleagues in broadcasting, who are trying to make the best-quality product.

You are absolutely right that there is a trade-off. There is no question but that the rooms are better lit than they would be if we were not broadcasting the meetings. Nevertheless, broadcasting, in its various forms, is the way in which we reach the greatest number of citizens, and most of us would feel that that is an important objective.

John Scott: Okay. Let us move on to the draft climate change plan, which suggests that emissions from public sector buildings will need to be near zero by 2032, with low-carbon heat meeting 64 per cent of building heat demand by 2020 and 65 per cent by 2025. Are you confident that, in line with the draft climate change plan, emissions from this building will be near zero by 2032? How do you hope to achieve that?

10:15

Paul Grice: Yes, I am confident of that for a number of reasons, the first of which is the fantastic support that we have had from the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and this committee. Above all, I receive very strong encouragement and support for the necessary investment and behavioural change, which is why I am optimistic.

That said, the phrase “low-hanging fruit” is overused, but it is fair to say that we have done a lot of the more obvious things and that, if we want to hit the targets, we will now have to consider quite substantial investment in energy production and other things. David Stewart, a colleague on the corporate body, could speak on that. Just a couple of weeks ago, we had a good session with the corporate body on this very issue, particularly on energy. For example, we could do more with thoughtful investment in energy production.

I repeat the point that I made earlier: we have crossed a threshold in relation to behaviour. Nowadays, no one asks me why we are doing this; they are just interested in what we are doing. Not everyone agrees on the actions that we need to take to change behaviour, but we have passed the point of people asking whether they are necessary, and that will only gain momentum. I took a lot of encouragement from the committee's earlier session. We will continue to change our behaviour; we will travel differently; and we will continue to invest in technologies.

It is important that this institution leads the way. We cannot reasonably expect other people to change the way in which they operate if we cannot say that we are doing the same. I am optimistic, but this is a necessity. We have to show the way and we have to aim to hit the targets.

John Scott: Thank you, but will you be more specific? Obviously, we will not bind you to anything, but what sort of things do you

envisage—solar panels or heat-source pumps, for example?

Paul Grice: On the basis of excellent advice from Victoria Barby, we feel that the most promising technology in terms of payback is photovoltaic cells. As you know, we have solar panels on Queensberry house that warm up the water. However, because we are successful in having low water usage, that technology has turned out not to be the right one for us. The corporate body has asked us to come back with a business case for photovoltaic cells.

For the medium term, common local heating systems offer a lot of really quite exciting possibilities, although the lead on that is more likely to come from the local authority. The corporate body encouraged us to engage in dialogue with the City of Edinburgh Council, given that there are a number of major users in this part of the city. I know of some exciting projects elsewhere in the country and in other countries. That kind of project is more for the medium term, but one can see patterns of energy use that are spread across a number of users.

Those are two specific ideas. We agreed to look at ground-source heating, but we feel that the technology on that is not sufficiently mature at this point, so the corporate body agreed that we would look at it again in a few years' time. We are looking at all these things. What we do depends partly on how fast the technology moves on, but the thing that you could expect to see first is the installation of photovoltaic panels somewhere on the campus, provided that we can persuade the corporate body that that represents good value for money.

The Convener: David Stewart has a supplementary on that. If you do replace the solar panels, what will you do with them?

Paul Grice: That is a good question, convener. In line with our policy, the first thing that we would do is to consider whether we could reuse or recycle them. The technology is perfectly good, but it works best with very high water use and it turns out that we do not use much hot water, which is a good thing. There are establishments not too far from here, such as hotels and others, that might have high water use. I would hope that the first thing that we would do is to see whether we could find another use for the panels. I would be very disappointed if they had to be sent off for recycling. If we end up replacing the current panels, we would certainly look to see whether we could find a productive use for them as a first course of action.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): John Scott has stolen some of my thunder on solar panels, but I want to make a brief point. It is

clear that the technology has changed dramatically and solar panels now are much more efficient than they were in the past. The other issue is that feed-in tariffs are still available from the United Kingdom Government. Companies such as Tesla are producing state-of-the-art solar panel tiles. Would you consider utilising the top of the MSP block for that purpose? I am conscious that you would still require planning permission and that there might be some visual issues around the implementation of solar panels. Will you say a bit more about that?

Paul Grice: You are right to say that technology is moving all the time. With fast-moving technology there is always a judgment to be made: at what point do we stop the roundabout and buy something? You will know from the good discussion that I think we had at the corporate body that we feel that now would be a good time to make the investment in photovoltaic panels, if we are going to make it.

Planning is an issue. We will begin informal engagement with the City of Edinburgh Council, which I very much hope will be accommodating about putting panels on roofscapes. We have panels on the Queensberry house roof. I very much hope that we can persuade the council; we aim to work with it over the design and exact location, so I hope that the local authority will support giving us planning permission to install a reasonably substantial quantity of photovoltaic panels, which—to go back to the convener's point—would help us, in the medium term, to hit our targets on energy consumption.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The footprint of the Parliament is greater than just the Holyrood campus; there must be at least 120, if not 125, constituency offices, depending on whether Lothians members have offices. How are energy use and transport issues in relation to constituency offices factored into your plans?

Paul Grice: That is a good point. We do not measure that at present and I think that there are just over 100 offices. Again, I would be happy to look at the issue, but we would need the active co-operation of members. I am always conscious of the need to strike a balance and to respect members, who should be free to run their local offices in the way that they think is best, given that they know what their constituents need, so I am always nervous about extending too far. However, if there are areas on which we can help members and guide them on good practice—the travel plan certainly covers that—I am more than happy to look into them. I will look into the situation and come back to the committee. Indeed, I will take the committee's guidance and advice as to what

members would like. I want to work with members; it is not about imposing things from here.

You make a fair point. We have a lot of small offices, all of which have a footprint. It is an area that I am interested in, but I very much want to work with members of the Parliament and to take their ideas on board. I would be more than happy to come back to the committee on the matter.

Mark Ruskell: I would find that useful. We have had security advice and a budget is available for security improvements for constituency offices, but we have had no advice on energy efficiency or indeed on how to make a more pleasant working environment for staff. My office is a wee bit draughty; it is an old, privately rented office. Such advice might be useful.

Travel planning could be extended, too. There is travel to the Parliament and our constituency offices, as well as business travel. If tools are available in that regard, it would be useful to have them. Ultimately, that will improve the experience of people who work for the Parliament and for MSPs.

Paul Grice: I will be happy to consider that. Victoria Barby has just told me that we offer members advice in that regard—clearly, we have not disseminated that successfully. I am more than happy to take a fresh look at what we currently do and at whether we could communicate better, as it is clear that we have not entirely succeeded.

I am also happy to take up your wider challenge, but I would like to use this committee and the corporate body to ensure that we strike the right balance. We will get a lot further if members feel that we are offering welcome and helpful advice rather than that I am trying to impose something from Holyrood. I am more than happy to look at the matter and perhaps to write back to the convener. We can pick it up from there.

John Scott: I quite often leave the building between 9 and 10 o'clock at night, and every time I do that I close windows along the corridor that I inhabit, because the energy loss through open windows must be significant. I presume that that is replicated on other floors, with a lot of energy loss. Could we encourage members to close windows when they leave for the day?

The Convener: And indeed to switch off lights in their offices.

Paul Grice: Given that both you and Mr Lyle have raised the issue, I will think about the best way to try to encourage that. By the way, I am sure that the situation exists not just in the members' block but across the campus. It comes back to behavioural change. You make fair points and I think that people are receptive. It is just about reminding people in a way that encourages

them to do it. I will take this meeting as a reminder to find a way to reissue guidance or to find other ways of encouraging people.

The Convener: Thank you for that. Let us look at transport. David Stewart has some questions.

David Stewart: Quite a few of the questions on transport have already been covered, so I will be brief. Earlier, we discussed videoconferencing. In other organisations, such as the University of the Highlands and Islands, in my patch, videoconferencing is the norm—it does more VC than all the other universities in the UK put together.

You talked earlier about behavioural change. I have been on a number of committees in my time in the Parliament and I always have a slight sense that there is a reluctance to use videoconferencing because it is outwith the norm. Can we change the mindset so that videoconferencing is seen as the norm—for witnesses, for example? There are excellent facilities in committee room 1 as well as the mobile facilities.

Paul Grice: I think that we could do more. The convener helped us with an event that we did earlier in the year to brief clerks. That was a starting point for committees. I think that we have seen videoconferencing being taken up and we will continue that.

Against that, I would make two points. First, we have seen that there is still something very powerful about evidence from face-to-face contact. Secondly, my understanding from many years is that many, many witnesses want to come and see their members of Parliament face to face. We need to recognise that that is a human thing and that, even with the best, most sophisticated video technology—I am an avid user of videoconferencing—it is hard to replicate what we are doing today; it is just to do with how we communicate as people. We need to respect that and I would always absolutely want to back any committee that felt that face-to-face was the way to do things. Of course, that might mean the committee travelling out to people. Sometimes, that can have benefits for getting witnesses.

However, I agree with your fundamental point and that we, as officials, need to continue to develop and maintain the technology. We have got past the point where we all worried that it would break. It is pretty reliable these days and there is a lot more of it. I think that we could and should do more but, as I said, I am slightly cautious about saying that it should be the default position, partly because I think that both members and witnesses would prefer, if they can, to be face to face, and I think that we should respect that.

David Stewart: Okay. Thank you.

The Convener: Thank you for that. Let us move on to procurement, with questions from Finlay Carson.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Good morning. This time last year, Victoria, you stated that you had started to measure the environmental impact that the supply chain was bringing—we touched on that earlier. What progress has the Parliament made on the circular economy and your approach to purchasing decisions? Will you give us some examples from the past 12 months?

Sir Paul, you mentioned scope 3 emissions. Has the Parliament made any progress on being able to measure scope 3 emissions that are associated with procurement?

Victoria Barby (Scottish Parliament): I guess that a good example of an area in which we have made more progress than in other areas is our furniture procurement. Previously, we would purchase furniture and then dispose of it once it was at the end of its life or offices were being reconfigured. The new contract with our furniture supplier involves an element of repair and reuse of that furniture so that instead of furniture being disposed of at the end of its life, it will hopefully be repaired or refurbished and brought back into the Parliament or sold on or given to other organisations that can make use of it.

It has taken quite a long time to get that contract in place, but we hope that it will be the first of many similar contracts and processes whereby we can look at more of a circular economy model through our procurement.

Paul Grice: I am afraid that I will need to look to Victoria Barby on the measurement of scope 3 emissions through procurement and where we have got to on that.

Victoria Barby: Again, it is quite a challenge, because we have to wait until contracts are up for renewal before we can specify that we need the contractor to provide us with data on scope 3 emissions. Progress has been slow, but we are definitely looking to build that into contract specifications in future, so that we can start collecting the data. Once we have the data, we can do more with it and work through different options.

10:30

Finlay Carson: Another issue came to mind when we were talking about active travel. Currently, the cycle-to-work scheme allows people to buy their bikes only from Halfords, which does not always suit those in rural communities. I had to drive to Halfords to get my bike and I had to take it back there for servicing. When you look at

suppliers, do you consider the impact on members while they are working not in Parliament but in their constituencies?

Paul Grice: That has happened partly because we have piggybacked on the Scottish Government scheme. Is that right, Victoria? I think that using Halfords is built into that.

Victoria Barby: Yes. Mr Carson will be pleased to know that the new scheme does not cover just Halfords, so it will be available to a lot more organisations—small and medium-sized enterprise bike companies as well—which will be good. He might like to come along to the travel fair on Friday, in the car park, when we will have lots of information about sustainable travel and bikes.

Finlay Carson: I can go on my electric bike.

Paul Grice: A discounted service will be available at the fair. It will cost £15 to get a bike serviced, so that is a little plug for anyone who fancies that. A really top team of mechanics will be in. Anyone who can get their bike here on Friday should take advantage of that.

The Convener: Sir Paul, last week, Parliament had a debate on Scotland's food and drink sector and our ambitions to grow it, in which members—myself included—extolled the virtues of Scottish produce. To what extent do we, as an institution, promote and use Scottish products, with the obvious food miles and climate change impacts that that has? One example that comes to mind is that, in Parliament, we appear to source tea from London when, in fact, we have a number of tea suppliers closer at hand.

Paul Grice: That is a fair point. I have looked specifically into Brodies, which is an obvious example. The problem is that it could not guarantee that its tea would be fair trade, which is one of our underpinning principles. If the likes of Brodies could guarantee that its tea was from fair trade sources, I would be delighted for us to look at stocking it.

The idea is good and, more generally, I assure the committee that we are seized of it. As far as possible, we like to use Scottish and local produce, for lots of reasons—for environmental reasons and to be absolutely consistent with economic and other factors. It was interesting to look into the issue at the committee's request, for which I am grateful, and it shows us that there are other things to balance up. That covers that specific point.

There are all sorts of other products for which Scotland is famous—such as beer—and we aim to look at them. I am genuinely always open to ideas. Members have fantastic intelligence from their constituencies that we do not always have. I encourage any member who feels that there is a

local producer, product or something else that is interesting in their constituency to get in touch, please. We cannot always use those things, but we will always look seriously at doing so.

Many of the great products and ideas that can be seen in the Parliament originated with a member saying, "Do you know that there is a producer in my area?" or, as the convener has done, with someone challenging us on issues. Even if we cannot solve issues now, we will not lose sight of the idea. I ask the committee to encourage members in that. Even if we like ideas, members have much better knowledge about what is happening locally. We will always look seriously at any proposition from a member—whether it is about a permanent product or showcasing things for a period to give producers publicity and generate interest.

I looked specifically at tea and I was interested to discover the fair trade issue. The supplier may be able to address it, in which case we would be delighted to look at stocking a famous Scottish brand here in the Parliament.

Finlay Carson: We heard in the pre-meeting session about how there might be some desire to introduce a charge on disposable cups. How successful has the Parliament's campaign to reduce the use of paper cups been? If, in your opinion, it has not gone far enough, would you consider more of a stick approach to stop members and staff using such cups?

Paul Grice: I have never used a stick with members. [*Laughter.*] That does not usually work out well for me.

Paper cup usage has gone down from 93,000 to 76,000 year on year, which is a reduction of about 18 per cent. That is encouraging, but it is still an awful lot of disposable cups. The best way to reduce use is to continue our approach. Reusable cups are more common now; I have changed and found a decent reusable cup, and everyone has their own preference. Members and staff can all exemplify behaviour change, and more senior colleagues, such as me, have a particular responsibility to show it. The voluntary fine has raised about £150, which we gave to Holyrood primary school to purchase bee-friendly plants. That has had a definite benefit.

I would not like to make the approach more formal. My strong sense is that we have momentum and that we will achieve more by continuing to give encouragement. I do not want the issue to seem onerous; encouragement is far more likely to persuade people. However, when I am before you next year, I hope that we will have continued the reduction and got the figure of 76,000 cups down—I should have said that they are compostable, which is positive. As was said at

the pre-meeting session, there is almost no need to have a throwaway cup in this place; we ought to be able to get usage down to a very low amount. We have made good progress, but we have more to do. I prefer to continue to try to persuade people, rather than wave a stick at them.

Victoria Barby: I would wave the stick.

Paul Grice: Victoria Barby would take a different approach.

The Convener: Your hand may be forced further down the line by Government action.

Paul Grice: That situation would be different. If that were to be the decision across the country, we would respect that. I think that members can see that we are making good progress from a high start. If the 18 per cent year-on-year reduction continues, we will be able to look back in two or three years with some pride that we have changed behaviour.

Mark Ruskell: I go back to issues that relate to the food supply chain, such as reducing food miles and encouraging more local procurement. A lot of those objectives are wrapped up in the food for life programme. I have asked the corporate body previously about progress towards achieving the silver standard, which ramps up the amount of local produce that is sold. How close is the Parliament to achieving that standard?

Victoria Barby: We are looking at a slightly different tack. We have the Carbon Trust triple standard for energy, water and waste, and the Carbon Trust is now releasing a new standard—I think that it is called the green kitchen standard—in conjunction with the Soil Association. We are working with them to try to align all our certifications through the same body. Instead of going for the Soil Association silver standard, we will go for the green kitchen standard, which incorporates local and organic produce, the energy efficiency of food cooking and the procurement of food through transport.

Paul Grice: Convener, would it be helpful to come back to members with more detail to wrap up some of the points that colleagues, including you and Mr Ruskell, have raised about the supply chain, especially for food? I would be more than happy to write in more detail about where we are and where we think we will go, to give the committee a better sense of the issues, some of which are technical. The supply chain and procurement involve limitations on what we can do.

The Convener: That would be useful.

John Scott: Could the contract with Sodexo have written into it the provision that we would prefer Scottish food to be showcased, wherever

possible? I declare an interest as a Scottish food producer.

Paul Grice: I think that such a clause is in the contract. As the convener has agreed to my offer to write to members, I will check that out and give a detailed answer.

The Convener: Could we extend that proposal to drink?

Paul Grice: Of course.

The Convener: Scotland has a burgeoning reputation for craft gins and vodkas. Is there anything to prevent our having a gin of the month, a vodka of the month or whatever in the bar? I drink neither, so I do not have to declare an interest.

Paul Grice: It is a good point. That is an important part of the Scottish economy, and the bar certainly stocks Scottish beers and gins. You are right in saying that we could probably do more to promote them. It is a good idea and I am happy to come back to you on that point, too.

The Convener: Thank you. We will move on to pension fund investment, which Claudia Beamish will ask about.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Sir Paul, last year, you stated that the pension trustees have “a strong legal duty”. I recognise that and we all respect that. However, transparency is always of great value in relation to finance. This is an ethical issue for me, for many others in the Parliament and for the public sector more widely, and people look to us as leaders—I hope.

Some opportunities to invest in low-carbon technologies are no longer regarded by some as high risk, despite more traditional views, and over the past year, you may have had dialogue with the corporate body about investigating models of change in the public sector. It would be most helpful if you could let us know whether further consideration has been given, over the past year, to divestment from high-carbon stocks and possibly to investment in local low-carbon schemes such as those that you highlighted in relation to the Parliament and local authorities.

Paul Grice: I recognise this as a concern for many members. After my previous appearance at the committee, I wrote to the chair of the pension fund trustees to pass on your concerns.

It is difficult for me to say more, for the simple reason that the issue is not the corporate body's responsibility. The members of the corporate body are not the fund trustees—David Stewart will be more expert than me on the subject, having been a trustee. The corporate body, which I represent, is the de facto employer because there are no

employers—members of Parliament are office holders, not employees—and for pension purposes it acts as the employer and makes the contributions. In a legal sense, that is our only interest in the pension, which is entirely a matter for the pension fund's trustees. That is why I wrote to the chair of the pension fund trustees to pass on your concerns.

I agree that it is important to have the dialogue that you talk about. I am not in the habit of coming to a committee and saying, "It's not an issue for me," but it is literally not an issue for me or the corporate body; it is the subject of a dialogue to have with the pension fund trustees. Nevertheless, I take an interest as the representative of the employer.

As the committee knows—I briefed you on this when I previously appeared before the committee—we are part of a Baillie Gifford managed fund. The scheme is fairly small and, at the moment, it is the trustees' judgment that it is not yet feasible for us to have an independent pension fund. Although a choice can be made about which fund to be part of, being part of a managed fund means accepting the investment decisions that the fund makes.

I recognise your point as a key issue, and I understand it at a personal level, but the dialogue must be with the pension fund trustees. The corporate body's duty is to represent your best interests as the proxy for your employer by making adequate contributions to ensure that the pension fund remains viable.

Beyond that, the issue—which I recognise—of what the fund invests in is a matter for the fund trustees. I am certain that they would be willing to engage in a dialogue with you because, as you rightly say, openness is key, whatever decisions are made. I know all the trustees, and I do not imagine that any of them would not be willing to engage in a dialogue and explain to you how they see the fund developing over future years. As the fund continues to grow, it may reach a point at which it is feasible for us to have an independent fund, in which case members would have more latitude to say what it should invest in.

Claudia Beamish: Thank you. Those are helpful comments for the committee to consider if we decide to pursue the matter.

10:45

Richard Lyle: First, I will say that since coming to this place I have been thoroughly delighted by the way in which I have been treated by staff and by how they carry out their duties—in particular, by you and your office. That has to be put on the record.

During the week there has been comment about the Westminster renovation, but also regarding the adaptation and resilience of this building. Will it last 40 years, 100 years or how long? In September 2016, Victoria Barby referred to the document, "Five steps to managing your climate risks—A guide for public bodies in Scotland". Can she remind the committee what the five steps were and tell us what progress the Parliament has made on developing an adaptation plan and increasing its resilience to the impacts of climate change? Also, how long will the building last? We, as individuals, may not be around by then, but how long will it last? As far as I am concerned it is a lovely, iconic and futuristic building. How are you managing it?

Victoria Barby: The five steps to climate change adaptation recommended by adaptation Scotland are:

"Getting started ... Understand the impacts of climate change ... Identify and prioritise actions ... Take action ... Monitor, review and evaluate".

We have undertaken the first two of those steps.

We held a workshop with adaptation Scotland in 2016 and followed that up by identifying and prioritising all the actions that we can take around adaptation. One of those steps was to provide some guidance for local offices about what they can do. My colleague from the Scottish Parliament information centre, who is sitting at the back, is helping us to develop those plans for local offices.

You will be pleased to know that this building is still relatively new and does not need a lot of work to adapt to climate change. Hopefully—touch wood—the roof tiles are not going to blow off and we are not going to be flooded anytime soon. We are working through the adaptation plan set out by adaptation Scotland in order to make sure that the building is here for many years to come.

Paul Grice: I am glad that Richard Lyle raised the point about life expectancy. It is really important to draw a distinction between accounting practice and lifespan. There is a standard accounting practice that covers the period in which we essentially have to depreciate the value and look at lifespan, which is what was reported. Our absolute expectation is that this building, which was built with a lifespan of at least 100 years, will last that long and way beyond.

The basic infrastructure should pretty much last in perpetuity. Of course, over the decades one has to look at windows and plant, but I can give an absolute assurance that there is a huge distinction between what was reported—which was simply what was in our accounts, for which we are bound by standard accounting practices—and our expectation that this building will last far longer. I hope that that is a helpful reassurance.

Richard Lyle: It is. One thing that I have felt over the years is the quality; staff enjoy coming to work and they look after the building. One of the first questions that I asked when I came here was about the wooden spars, and I was reminded that those are louvres, not spars. They are currently being upgraded, painted and so on. What is the current cost of looking after the building and what is the projected cost over the years?

Paul Grice: Under the guidance of our excellent head of facilities, we adopted a 25-year rolling maintenance plan from the day that we moved in. His very strong advice was that we should not make the mistake that some building owners have made of taking a holiday for a few years because their building was new. Colleagues, including Mr Scott and others who have been members of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, will remember that. We began investing in the building almost from day 1, especially by maintaining the external wood. We live in a wonderful but pretty tough climate, so we have continued to invest in that. I think that that investment has paid dividends. If we genuinely want this place not just to be standing in 200 years' time but to look fantastic, we have a responsibility as the current guardians of the institution to invest in it, and I believe very strongly in that.

I will need to write to you with the exact amount that we spend on maintenance. I will be revising that for my appearance before the Finance and Constitution Committee in a little time, but I can easily check that and drop you a note on that point via the clerks. However, I reassure you that we have always had terrific support from successive corporate bodies for maintaining a sensible level of investment so that we do not face a huge problem in five or 10 years' time. I hope that, well after I have moved on, the Parliament will continue that policy.

Richard Lyle: Thank you.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Finlay Carson mentioned coffee cups. The UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee is holding an inquiry into the use of disposable packaging such as coffee cups and plastic bottles. Are you comparing our progress with that of other Parliaments across Europe or the UK Parliament and other devolved assemblies? My point is about whether we are doing better.

Paul Grice: It is a really good question. It is hard to do formal benchmarking. Everyone seems to have different baselines and different approaches, so it is hard to produce a numeric comparison. For example, our colleagues in Wales, who we often benchmark with, have a different baseline. I think that it is 2008-09, whereas ours is 2005-06.

That said, the short answer is yes—we do. Wherever we see another Parliament, whether it is in Wales or Germany, or colleagues in the UK, doing something interesting and better we are absolutely happy to take on people's ideas. That applies at all levels. Victoria Barby is in contact with her colleagues, and contact with clerks of various committees is a good way to get intelligence. I have regular and frequent dialogue with my colleagues from Northern Ireland, Wales and Westminster. In fact, I will be meeting two of my colleagues in a couple of weeks' time, and I will happily specifically put the subject on the agenda to make sure that we are not missing ideas.

It is pleasing to note that other Parliaments have adopted some of our ideas. I believe that the Australian Parliament cited this Parliament as the inspiration for starting beehives. It is nice to think that we are getting some recognition.

However, you make a really important point. If something works in another Parliament, why would it not work here? That is my starting position. We are very open to other people's good ideas. I will take up your specific point. When my two colleagues from Wales and Northern Ireland are here in a couple of weeks' time, I will put that on the agenda and make sure that we are not missing any ideas that they are pursuing.

Emma Harper: Okay—thank you.

The Convener: It was useful to explore that. Let us look forward to future targets, with questions from Kate Forbes.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): A number of these points have already been mentioned but, as you look ahead, what are the big-ticket investment items that the Parliament is likely to have to consider in order to achieve the future emission reduction targets?

Paul Grice: For me, the big one is around energy—both energy usage and energy production. It is hugely important that we hit the demanding targets, as we cannot credibly ask other people to hit them if we do not. We have a role not just as an institution in our own right but as an exemplar, and we have to be prepared. As I said, I have had very strong encouragement on that from Mr Stewart and his colleagues on the corporate body. That is what you should expect to see. We just need to be prepared as an institution to try out some ideas.

An area that is not about a single big investment but which I think will take a lot of behavioural and other change is the scope 3 stuff. Procurement is not easy. It is complex and it involves contractual and legal issues. I would regard that as a big-ticket item of a different type, and we need to continue to really work hard on it. The encouraging thing, to

pick up a point that was raised by the convener and others, is that what we are trying to achieve is something that people want. They want locally sourced, high-quality products, so we are going with the grain. The challenging area is supply chains. I had not realised until I looked into it just how complex supply chains are. We need to get a better understanding in order to work on that.

Another item is travel. Travel is a big contributor overall and because we did not measure it previously, it may have been off the radar. Now that we have begun to measure it, at least we have sight of that. Given that hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals take decisions on travel, the challenge is about finding ways to persuade them. Again, perhaps the committee could lend its considerable weight to that. That is going into the area of behavioural change. We can make things easy—we have invested hugely in cycling and in other facilities to make that easier and we have electric car charging points. That is all fine—we can make all those investments—but at the end of the day all of us, including me, have to change our behaviour. Travel is a big-ticket item in terms of behaviour.

Those would be the three big-ticket items. If we can crack all those, I would be very optimistic that we can be at the leading edge of this, which is where I think we should be.

Kate Forbes: In the climate change bill proposals, the Scottish Government is considering revising its 2020 reduction target to 56 per cent compared to 1990 levels. Does the Scottish Parliament anticipate revising its 2020 targets?

Paul Grice: If the Government were to change its target, I think that we would want to do that. There might be a sharp intake of breath from colleagues elsewhere in the organisation, so I will put a little caveat in there. That proposal has just been announced recently so we have not had a chance to look at it carefully. However, I think that the Parliament and you as members would want this institution to be one that we can be proud of and where our targets will stand up with others that are being set. If the Government changes its target, my starting point would be to ask how we can change to achieve that. I do not know enough to say categorically that we could achieve it. Again, next time that we give evidence to you, I would be more than happy to give you a firmer answer, but that would certainly be my aspiration.

Kate Forbes: Great. My last comment is that since I was elected, the technology available has done wonderful things to enable us to connect to the Highlands and Islands. We could go further, but the technology—mobiles, Surface devices or whatever—has been really helpful.

The Convener: On that note, we should wrap up this session. I thank Paul Grice and Victoria Barby for their time today—the session has been incredibly useful. You have undertaken to write to us about a number of items. We welcome that but we also look forward to continuing engagement with the Parliament on the issues that we have discussed today. They do not just have to be wrapped up in an annual session. If there are any developments along the lines that we have covered, it would be useful for the Parliament to continue to keep us apprised of any progress or otherwise.

Paul Grice: We will happily do that and I genuinely thank the committee for its challenge and its encouragement. I am very happy to keep you apprised of progress and of course we would be happy to come back before the committee at any time, if that would be useful.

The Convener: Thank you.

At its next meeting on 26 September, the committee will take evidence from the Crown Estate Scotland. It will also initially consider petition PE1636, which calls for all single-use drinks cups to be 100 per cent biodegradable.

As agreed, we now move into private session. I ask that the public gallery be cleared, as the public part of the meeting is closed.

10:58

Meeting continued in private until 12:48.

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