



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Wednesday 27 January 2021

Session 5



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RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

3rd Meeting 2021, Session 5

CONVENER

*Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con)
*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
*Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
*Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)
*Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
*Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)
*Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD)
*Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab)
*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Professor Jillian Anable (University of Leeds)
Fergus Ewing (Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism)
Mark Gaynor (Rail Delivery Group)
Derek Halden (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport)
Colin Howden (Transform Scotland)
Andy Jefferson (Sustainable Aviation)
John Lauder (Sustrans Scotland)
Mags Simpson (Logistics UK)
Kirsty Slee (Scottish Government)
Ewan Wallace (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland)
Paul White (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

Virtual Meeting

Scottish Parliament

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Wednesday 27 January 2021

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:30]

Climate Change Plan

The Convener (Edward Mountain): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee's third meeting in 2021. I ask everyone to make sure that their mobile phones are in silent mode, and I remind everyone that the meeting will be conducted in virtual format.

The first item on the agenda is an evidence session on the Scottish Government's "Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero", with witnesses from across the transport sector. This session forms part of a series of evidence sessions that the committee is having to inform our response to the update of the climate change plan.

I welcome all our witnesses to the meeting. We have Paul White, who is the director of the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK Scotland; Ewan Wallace, who is the chair of the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland; Colin Howden, who is the director of Transform Scotland; Mark Gaynor, who is the head of railway strategy at the Rail Delivery Group; Andy Jefferson, who is the programme director at Sustainable Aviation; Mags Simpson, who is the head of policy for Scotland and northern England at Logistics UK; John Lauder, who is a deputy chief executive officer and the executive director for Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland at Sustrans; Professor Jillian Anable, who is a professor of transport and energy at the University of Leeds; and Derek Halden, who is the policy lead in Scotland for the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

Before we move on to questions, do any committee members have any interests to declare in relation to transport? I believe that Stewart Stevenson does.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I declare that I am the honorary president of the Scottish Association for Public Transport, the honorary vice-president of Railfuture and co-chair of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on aviation.

The Convener: Thank you. Given the size of the witness panel, it will not be possible for every witness to answer every question. Committee members will try to direct their questions to the person whom they would like to answer them. If another witness would like to come in, type R in the chat room and I will do my best to bring you in, although I will not be able to do that all the time.

John Finnie has the first question.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Good morning. I direct the first question to Professor Jillian Anable. How confident are you that the policies and proposals that are set out in the climate change plan update will achieve the expected emissions reductions, particularly given that transport emissions are at the same level as they were in 1990?

Professor Jillian Anable (University of Leeds): Good morning, to you all.

Unfortunately, I am not entirely confident about that. The aspirations and targets are good and sound in and of themselves, but the detail of how, for example, the 20 per cent reduction target will be delivered and, indeed, what it means are not well defined.

I can explain that. The detail of what needs to be done is not in the plan. Most specifically, climate change plans—over and over since the 1990s—have included some good plans and proposals and, eventually, investments in alternative forms of transport to the passenger car, but they have not had in conjunction with that policies to dissuade people from using the car. Investing in alternatives to the car is not the same as dissuading people from using the car; hence, the modal shift benefits have not materialised. That is one of the reasons for the failure so far.

As it stands, there is not enough in the plan to indicate how people will be dissuaded from using the car. That means that we must talk about the costs of motoring and how we will counter the fact that motoring costs have been reducing—particularly in relation to public transport costs—and will continue to reduce, because of electric motoring.

It also means that we must talk about how we will reallocate road space in order that we end up with a net reduction in road space, which will also be given over to alternative modes. We see very clearly from evidence around the world that reduction in car travel has not happened anywhere without people also being dissuaded from using cars, through such mechanisms.

Colin Howden (Transform Scotland): I agree with Jillian Anable's comments about the lack of detail in the plan. When we looked at the plan that was approved in 2010, the Scottish Parliament

information centre flagged up that there was not enough detail in the plan to carry out sufficient scrutiny. We have gone no further forward with the climate change plan update.

There is also a need for more urgency on a number of measures, including the managed motorways commitment that was made in the 2019 programme for government announcement. There has been zero progress on that in the intervening 15 months. There has also been insufficient investment in some measures; I flag up active travel, which I am sure John Lauder would like to talk more about later.

I also agree with Jillian Anable about the lack of demand-management measures. I see no prospect that the 20 per cent traffic reduction target will be met without measures to dissuade unnecessary car use. We are not talking about all car use; we are talking about short car trips in cities and longer car trips for which there are good rail or coach services to which people could consider switching.

Although it is not picked out in the plan, the Government also has a continuing bias towards high-carbon capital expenditure plans, such as for new road building. There are a number of reasons why that is not a good idea in relation to climate change benefits and perspectives and equalities. However, fundamentally, it is about the opportunity cost. If all the money continues to go into building new roads, will funding be available to provide opportunities for people to shift to the sustainable transport modes—walking, cycling and public transport?

Therefore, although there are many good things in the plan, we need more detail and urgency, and we definitely need the Government to come forward with demand management proposals. We also need a review of high-carbon capital expenditure.

The Convener: I spoke to committee members before the meeting to say that short answers are really good answers. I know that witnesses want to get their points across; I promise to bring you all in.

Derek Halden (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport): I will give a quick answer. Colin Howden and Jillian Anable have explained the importance of demand management.

The key part of demand management is to ensure that it is aligned with the needs of businesses. We are asking people in businesses to make really tough choices about their lives, but the plan currently offers no real help with that. All the commitments under the “other” section in the CCPU say bland things such as “we will encourage” businesses, or “a working group will

be set up” to discuss how to do that. However, there is no plan for how to align the real-life decisions that people in businesses will have to make.

People will have to make tough choices that might cost businesses a bit more or change people’s lives. That is the difficult bit, and I agree with Colin Howden and Jillian Anable that we will not even get close to the 20 per cent reduction target if we do not plan to address the difficult bit. Indeed, it does not look as though there has been any real thought-through construction of how that 20 per cent reduction target could be achieved. The Government does not actually know how and whether it will achieve it.

We should bear it in mind that £9 in every £10 that are spent on transport is spent by businesses and people, and not by the Government. We need not consider 80:20 rules but, instead, use 90:10—we need to realise that we need to influence the people who are spending 90 per cent, and not look at the 10 per cent that there is so much detail about and that the Government will spend.

John Finnie: I am following your instructions explicitly convener. I could speak to the witnesses all day long, because they have given very interesting replies.

If I may, I will ask one more question and will direct it to John Lauder. It is about transport emissions and the targets that are set out in the plan. The plan is reliant on widespread uptake of ultra-low emission cars, goods vehicles, buses and rail rolling stock during the next few years. How likely is it that that will happen, given the slow uptake of such vehicles?

John Lauder (Sustrans Scotland): Thank you for the question, Mr Finnie. It is very unlikely that there will be quick uptake. The magic bullet that people are hoping for with electric vehicles will not be realised, because it does not matter what fuel is used to power a car; the reality is that emissions will continue to rise in the short term. I say that because the biggest uptake in new car sales in Scotland has been in sport utility vehicles—21.4 per cent, or three times their share a decade earlier, of new car sales are now SUVs. They emit way more carbon than cars—20 per cent more. It does not seem at all likely that that will be tackled.

Building on what Jillian, Colin and Derek have said, I say that there is no coherent plan for the hard stuff that needs to be led politically, which means making it more difficult for people to drive short distances. Thirty-three per cent of trips by car in Scotland are 5km—3 miles—or less. Unless we use fuel taxation, road closures, road pricing, parking controls and speed limits we will not begin to tackle that.

That is hard because—as Derek indicated—it is a difficult life change for many people, and politically it will be unpopular. The political dimension and leadership have been lacking in relation to those hard decisions. Only Glasgow and Edinburgh, at local authority level, have really coherent strategies to persuade people not to drive, and sometimes to make it more difficult for them to drive. However, the experience in Europe is that that is what has to be done. We must have push and pull. As politically unpopular and ticklish as that is, it is the only way to begin to tackle the growing and continued dependence on the private motor car.

The Convener: Would Ewan Wallace like to come in? I do not want to pre-empt you.

I do, actually. Ewan Wallace.

Ewan Wallace (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland): Thanks very much, convener. I was thinking about whether to put in a request to speak. The society includes 32 local authorities and seven regional transport partnerships; putting strategies and policies into practice is very much part of the day job across local authorities.

I echo everything that colleagues have said about the depth of very complex interrelated policies. So, how do we make those happen? I have a glass-half-full view, because across the 32 authorities and seven regional transport partnerships I see good progress in consideration of how we can start to make that happen through the types of policies that we should develop. A lot of them have been around for some time, so perhaps we just need to give them more teeth. However, the conversations will be difficult.

09:45

It is good to see what Edinburgh and Glasgow have done. All the other Scottish cities will look with interest at that and at how to take it through the formal processes while making clear the benefits. All my colleagues have spoken about the benefits of that behaviour change for organisations, society and individuals.

As individual organisations, we also have to look at how we might change the way in which we deliver services and what we use to deliver services by thinking about the types of vehicles that are available to be deployed and reducing the amount of travel that we have to do—including through the use of technology, as we are doing now. There are lots of good examples of that, so we look forward to working with all partners and the Scottish Government to make that a reality. Progress has been patchy, but we have something to grab hold of and to focus on as a wider sector.

John Finnie: I have a brief supplementary question for Mr Wallace, which is not meant to be disparaging. I am seeking a comment. It has been suggested to me that many professionals in the field identify themselves as road engineers, and that a lot of innovation in design and structure is new to them. Do you have a view on that? It is a comment, not a criticism. I just want to understand whether teaching of engineering is changing in light of other changes.

Ewan Wallace: Yes—I totally understand how it might look like that. So much of the work of the society is about looking after the road network and road maintenance. The number of new roads that have been built across the 32 local authorities is probably not massive. In the society, we have always called ourselves chief officers for transportation, and we always try to look at things in the round. We want to ensure that we are technically very competent to look after what we have.

The seven regional transport partnerships are very active in looking at how we change behaviours and at our policies. I can understand the perception that it is about roads engineering. That is where I started as a professional, but I have covered the whole gamut of transport with regard to what has to be done on the ground, and with regard to what we have to change in our policies and strategies. I am sure that the society would be delighted to have a conversation with any committee member about its work and the things that we need to look at.

The Convener: Derek Halden will come in now.

Derek Halden: The point about skills was one of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport's core asks. We are the body that represents the largest number of transport and logistics professionals in the UK. When we refer to the skills and training that are required, we are referring to everybody from the roads engineer in a local authority to the petrol station attendant who needs to learn about hydrogen and electricity microgeneration. The skills agenda is completely missing from the update, but it is perhaps the most important issue. From our perspective, it is hugely important—let us log that point and start investing in skills.

The Convener: Peter Chapman has the next questions.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con): Why has there been no significant modal shift from travel by car to walking, cycling or public transport over the past decade? Is it because the Scottish Government is investing in the wrong things or pursuing ineffective policy approaches?

Colin Howden: I want to reflect on the first report on proposals and policies—"Low Carbon

Scotland: Meeting the Emissions Reduction Targets 2010-2022", which was the first climate change plan, published in 2011. It set out targets for decarbonising cars, which does not answer your question, but it also set out targets for cycling to have a mode share of 10 per cent and for a lot of investment in workplace travel planning and personalised travel planning. None of those three targets—in fact, none of the four targets, if we include the car decarbonisation target—was met over the past decade. There is a history of failure against those commitments, which makes us worried about the commitments that are being made in the new plan, 10 years on.

However, there are ancillary factors. There is no price incentivisation for people to switch to public transport. The RAC Foundation has said that, over the past 10 years, the price of bus travel has gone up by 80 per cent while the price of motoring has gone up by 13 per cent and the cost of living has gone up by 29 per cent. That means that motoring has become cheaper, on average, over the past 10 years, while bus and rail have become substantially more expensive. There is no price incentivisation, on average, for people to choose to move across to public transport.

Secondly, I highlight the disproportionate capital expenditure on new roads, which are high-carbon infrastructure. Transport Scotland reported that the length of motorways in Scotland more than doubled between 1990 and 2017, from 300km to more than 600km. I can think of only very small additions to the rail network, such as the Airdrie to Bathgate line and the Borders line. The high-quality segregated cycle routes that are needed to drive a move to cycling have not been implemented.

We have a complex mix of failed commitments from 10 years ago, prices not favouring a move to public transport, and capital investment having gone into the wrong things.

Peter Chapman: My next question is about transport priorities such as the significant expansion of trunk road capacity. Do you believe that that is compatible with meeting our emissions reduction targets? I think that you have basically answered that and you do not believe that it is. For instance, there are plans right now to dual the A9 and the A96. As an expert in the field, do you feel that that represents money well spent?

Colin Howden: No. We think that it should be spent on sustainable transport. There is an opportunity cost, in that money that is spent on roads is not available to be spent on walking, cycling and public transport.

There is no really good data on the climate impacts of the Scottish road-building programme in the round. However, English research by the

Transport for Quality of Life consultancy—I gather that Professor Anable was a contributor to that—has said, among other things, that the English road-building programme would negate 80 per cent of the climate emission benefits of the move to electric vehicles. On the one hand, the Government is doing things to reduce emissions, such as bringing in electric vehicles, but on the other, the construction of roads is generating more traffic.

Peter Chapman: I ask Jillian Anable to comment. She might want to add something about the building of trunk roads, but I also ask her to respond to my initial question, which was about why we have not moved from cars to walking, cycling or public transport. It looks as if there has been a total failure to achieve that over the past 10 years.

Professor Anable: I will not repeat what I said initially about needing both carrots and sticks. We have invested in alternatives, but we have failed to discourage car use at the same time. We have not improved the balance of modal share.

Colin Howden outlined a series of failures including the increased cost of using public transport vis-à-vis the real reduction in motoring costs. That is key. Other failures include a lack of investment in 5G networks; a lack of appreciation of the role of virtual travel through teleworking and online shopping and what it means for what we need to invest in on the public side, with remote access working and remote working hubs; not understanding what it will really take to electrify the fleet and consolidate freight deliveries with investment from the public side; and a lack of appreciation of smart ticketing, e-healthcare and model for the assessment of telemedicine platforms. Those are all things that we have talked about but failed to invest in.

When we take the system as a whole and look at the mode share—the proportion of trips taken and mileage completed by car versus the proportions by other modes—we fail to look at the right things. We focus on the short journeys. We focus on shifting from car journeys to alternative modes in local urban areas, but the majority of the miles are undertaken in trips that are more than 15 miles in length. We keep saying that a huge proportion of trips—50 per cent—can be undertaken by walking and cycling, but the majority of the miles cannot be undertaken by walking and cycling.

Despite that, we do not invest in long-distance travel by investing in rail networks, coach networks and longer-distance buses. We are also not thinking about how to reduce journey lengths through introducing concerted land-use planning, considering where we are building houses or

putting services back into areas where they have been stripped out.

In summary, our focus on improving small pockets of centralised, urban alternatives to the car through active travel and bus networks is way too narrow. The majority of the problem is all the car use on much more distributed and longer-distance journeys, which represents the majority of travel. That is where the failure is.

The Convener: I will bring in John Lauder and then go back to Peter Chapman.

John Lauder: I will try to add value given what Jillian Anable has said. She is right from a policy perspective—we have focused a lot of policy on short trips. However, I would have liked her to say that we have not invested in tackling either the short trips or the longer car trips in order to move them to active modes.

As someone who holds significant funding on behalf of Transport Scotland and distributes it in grants to local authorities, in the main, for projects to build infrastructure for walking and cycling, my particular frustration is that all the infrastructure that we and our stakeholder partners build is used—the uptake is positive—but the work is patchy, as Ewan Wallace said. We do not have coherent networks in our towns, cities or rural areas that are safe and that attract people to take the option not to use their car.

We have also lost sight of the one third of people in Scotland who do not have access to a car. They get a really raw deal out of Transport Scotland. An awful lot of time is spent planning for the two thirds of people who own cars. That is an aside, I suppose.

It is a question of funding priorities, political leadership and having a coherent plan. Right now, I really do not see where the work that my team does fits into a national plan. We are part of a national transport strategy, and the delivery plan for that strategy has been written. However, it is really hard for me to say where we lock into a plan to help to deliver a reduction in carbon.

We and our partners are doing our best, but I am not sure that everything is as coherent and joined up as it needs to be if we are serious about reducing emissions in the transport sector.

Peter Chapman: I have one more question, which is for Ewan Wallace in particular. What action would you like the Scottish Government to take to support the development of a properly integrated transport system? I am thinking in particular of the integration of ticketing, timetabling and real-time information between bus, rail and ferry, and how they work to support walking and cycling at either end of integrated journeys.

10:00

Ewan Wallace: Thank you, Mr Chapman—that is a nice easy question for me to try to deal with. Our society's members are involved in all those different elements. I suspect that CPT colleagues might want to come in and give their views, as well.

There are gaps in how we deliver on a lot of those things at the moment, particularly on revenue support and how that is allocated in relation to the types of passenger transport system that are available across Scotland. The industry has come through a very difficult period and it has been supported through that to make sure that it is still there at the other end of the pandemic.

Lots of planning was going on between local authorities and the Scottish Government around what the future role of public transport might look like. If we go back 18 months, a significant amount of work had been done in relation to both infrastructure and considering how we provide revenue support, which falls predominantly to individual local authorities. It is about the value of the investment that we get and whether we will get the modal shift that an earlier question focused on. That comes down to the cost-of-living elements that colleagues have commented on.

From a local government perspective, we are looking for a different model for allocating the public funding that is available to support the different types of passenger transport network. As John Lauder said, it is also about developing local transport plans that link all the different modes, particularly on a regional basis. Although I do not think that any of those act against one other, we do not necessarily get the best use of the money that is available if we do not align when we develop those specific plans.

I am certain that Paul White from CPT will have strong views on that as well.

Peter Chapman: I invite Paul to come in—

The Convener: Hold on, Peter. I am absolutely sure that Paul wants to come in, but I would like to bring in Mike Rumbles, because he has questions on a subject that I hope will bring Paul in. I will then go back to Peter and then to Maureen, as they both have follow-up questions.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): I am pleased to ask my questions now rather than later, because they focus on bus transport. We have heard that the cost of bus travel has gone up significantly in relative terms and that bus patronage has been in long-term decline. I want to ask about how we reverse the problem with bus patronage. Is the Scottish Government doing enough? What specifically does it need to do that it is not doing?

During the previous few years of devolution, things started off well. We have the free bus pass for the over-60s, for example, which works well. However, that is just one initiative. What else could the Scottish Government be doing to transform bus use, especially post-pandemic? The pandemic has, of course, taken people off the buses completely. What practical measures could and should the Scottish Government take post-Covid to dramatically increase bus patronage? Those questions are for Paul White in particular.

Paul White (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK): Bus patronage has been declining for decades, in essence since the rise of the private motor car. It has been a long-term problem and we have commissioned research on it at various junctures. Our most recent research on the decline in bus patronage, which is from around 2017, picked out some key factors. Among those are cheap car use and ownership, which have already been touched upon, and societal changes including the rise of online shopping and home working and fewer journeys being taken to the high street.

The main factor is congestion—the fact that bus reliability and punctuality is impacted by ever-worsening congestion. That leads to increases in operational costs, which in turn lead to the increases in fares that we have seen to cover that.

What can the Government do, in practical terms? We have witnessed the launch of the £500 million bus partnership fund to look at infrastructure improvements for bus transport. It is essential that we deliver that effectively in partnership with the local authorities.

As Professor Anable and others have touched on, we also need to take some tough decisions on how to discourage car journeys and use. Some of the excellent work that Sustrans has done through the spaces for people programme has demonstrated for the first time, I would say—there has certainly been an increase—local authorities' willingness to consider road space allocation and the removal of car parking spaces in town centres. That is something that our members have historically struggled to get on the table when we have looked at forming partnerships with local authorities. There is delivery of the bus partnership fund and work to look at how we can use the stick to discourage people from using cars.

Mike Rumbles: I am well aware of all the negative things that can be done—the stick, to use the phrase that you used, Paul—but I am more interested in positive encouragement and reinforcement. That works, whereas a negative approach tends not to.

We have taken small steps, such as the over-60s bus pass. What about radical, positive

solutions to make bus transport easy for everyone? I am not advocating free bus transport, but I ask the question: would that be a feasible way to proceed so that we could see a step change? I am not convinced that beating people over the head with a stick and restricting them is the way to go. There might be a need to do some of that, but what about positive reinforcement?

Paul White: There are certainly two sides to it. We are looking at the positive side in engaging with local authorities through the formation of bus service improvement partnerships. Nothing is off the table in the work that is going on in Glasgow. We are considering what can be done in terms of limiting fares and introducing multi-operator smart ticketing. All those things are worth encouraging. We will deliver the free travel for under-19s scheme later in 2021.

We need to make public transport as easy to use as possible. I would like to see more done to build on traveline, which is the Traffic Scotland journey planning tool, so that people can look at their door-to-door journeys, link in walking, cycling and all modes of public transport, and be able to purchase their tickets from that site. That project is under way.

I agree that we need to take a series of small steps involving concessionary ticketing and making ticketing easier, as well as doing what has been mentioned and making our communications join up with the Government's as we come out of Covid-19 in order to get people back on the buses and reach the pre-Covid patronage level, never mind increasing it beyond that, which is our goal.

The Convener: I will bring in Jillian Anable. I am not sure whether she wants to comment on persuasion or punishment in relation to bus transport.

Professor Anable: I will throw a bit of a list at you, because the improvements that we can make for travel are not unknown. There are examples of the things that we can do. The problem is that they involve a different regulatory structure, finance mechanism and scale of geography for planning bus services.

We need regional transport bodies, as has been mentioned, and integration across modes. We need minimum service levels for different-sized places, so that places with a certain population have a minimum number of services per hour and per day, 24 hours a day and seven days a week—the timetable should cover evenings and weekends. We see that in places such as the Zurich regional authority, which are held up as places where things are done well. The minimum standards that are required are set in legislation. We also need smart ticketing, as has been mentioned.

In places where public transport has been made free, such as Dunkirk and other places around the world, there has been an increase in bus patronage but not necessarily a reduction in car transport, so I am afraid that I do need to make the point about the sticks and the carrots.

The Convener: I think that Peter Chapman has a follow-up question.

Peter Chapman: Would anyone else like to comment on an integrated ticketing system for public transport? Part of the solution to Mike Rumbles's point is about how we make it much easier and slicker for people to use public transport and how we encourage more folk to ditch the car. The ticketing system is part of the answer. Do any witnesses have anything to add on that issue? If not, I would prefer to move on.

The Convener: Please do not do that to me, Peter, because everyone will want to come in—it will be an uncontrollable opening of the floodgates.

Mark Gaynor has not had the chance to say anything yet, so I will bring him in.

Mark Gaynor (Rail Delivery Group): Good morning. On ticketing, one of the challenges is that we use a complex and out-of-date fares system on the railways. That means that, at times, someone who buys a ticket is not sure whether they are getting the best-value fare for the journey that they want to make.

As an organisation, we have, for some time, been pressing for fundamental fares reform that would simplify the fares system and make it more transparent. Operators should be given more flexibility, so that they can adapt fares to reflect how people want to travel and work. They should be able to provide fares that ensure that we make best use of capacity on the railway, so that we make use of capacity throughout the day and do not have everyone crammed in during peak hours. That would help with the modal shift, as we have discussed, and it would give people the confidence that they were getting good value for their train fare.

The Convener: The deputy convener, Maureen Watt, has a follow-up question that links to that.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): It seems to me that what has been said in relation to densely populated urban areas would further disadvantage people in rural areas. The suggestion seems to be that we do not want people in rural areas to have decent roads to get them to their work, and that we should discourage car use in places where there are no rail or bus services. We have talked about electric cars; surely people should be allowed to use them on decent roads.

We have passed legislation on low-emission zones, which have not been mentioned. We need to increase the use of park-and-ride schemes, especially when low-emission zones are created. The witnesses are looking at the issue very much from an urban perspective. What has been said would disadvantage people who live in rural areas and keep them at an economic disadvantage. Do the witnesses want everybody to move into urban settings? What difference would use of LEZs make to getting the modal shift in urban areas?

The Convener: We will go to Colin Howden first, and then to Derek Halden for a view on logistics. If anyone else wants to come in, they can let me know. Colin, would you like to start off—briefly, please—on Maureen Watt's question?

10:15

Colin Howden: I will try to be brief, convener.

We have not led any evidence on low-emission zones in our written submission, primarily because we see them as a policy intervention that is designed to reduce air pollution rather than address climate change. We are certainly in favour of implementing LEZs—both the City of Edinburgh Council and Glasgow City Council are members of Transform Scotland, and we support them on that. We are happy to promote the zones, but we do not have detailed evidence on them to lead at the committee today.

On the rural issue, I hear what Maureen Watt says about the availability of public transport in rural areas in comparison with urban areas. However, I would say that all the road-traffic demand management measures that we would advocate, such as local road-user charging schemes under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001, workplace parking levy schemes under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and perhaps retail parking levies in the future, would largely affect urban areas. There may even be price benefits for rural travel from such schemes, if we can focus the pricing of transport on areas that are more congested and polluted.

The Convener: Before we move on, I have a comment to make. The nearest bus that passes by my house is 8 miles away in one direction and 15 miles away in the other—I am sure that I am no different from many rural people in that regard. The initial part of the journey therefore involves a long walk, often on a cold and wet night when you cannot see your hand in front of your face.

We will go to Derek Halden, and then come back to anyone else who wants to come in—I see that Jillian Anable wants to come in afterwards.

Derek Halden: I would like to come back on some of the points that have been made about the

Government needing to use a stick. My usual response to that is that brave politicians usually become unemployed fairly quickly when they start dealing with transport issues. To go back to my first point, we are talking about people's lifestyles, which is not just a rural-versus-urban question. Urban areas are very diverse too. We need to think about how we plan. Top-down delivery is a very blunt instrument, whereas bottom-up delivery works, if the money can be distributed in a better way to enable that delivery to happen in a more diverse way.

Among CILT's members, the fastest-growing transport operator at present is probably Amazon. One of the reasons why Amazon is growing so fast is that it has focused on people and on how it can give them a door-to-door transport service that is as effective as possible. It is not only the unsustainable approaches that can grow quickly—sustainable approaches can do the same.

My point is, can we start to deliver the money? Bus is a really good example. Concessionary travel is effectively an urban-centric bus investment policy—

The Convener: I am sorry—I gave you a warning in the chat box. I want you to concentrate on LEZs. If all the witnesses review everything that has been said previously, we will never get to the next question.

Derek Halden: Sorry, convener—I certainly wanted to come back to LEZs. Colin Howden made the point that LEZs are predominantly about air quality, but we can use them to decarbonise our bus industry. We are now at the point at which the whole-life cost of an electric bus is lower than it is for a diesel bus, so we could gain a productivity benefit for the Scottish economy by having a 100 per cent electric vehicle fleet.

Last year, the Scottish Government said that the ultra-low-carbon bus investment scheme could perhaps be stopped, because of the point about whole-life cost. However, the position is actually the reverse—we need to put a lot more money into that area. LEZs are one of the tools that could help to push and encourage bus operators to prioritise the rate at which they move on that issue, but that requires a lot more support from the Scottish Government. It was great to see last week's announcement of a further round of ultra-low-carbon investment, because that is the sort of thing that we need. We need both the push and the shove, in ways that make the industry, from Amazon to First Bus, change.

Professor Anable: On the rural/urban issue, it will not be possible to reach a 20 per cent reduction target everywhere, but that means that there are places that must reach more than 20 per cent, and you should bear that in mind.

We are not saying that the car must disappear—of course not. The car is very much part of the solution. In rural areas, it is possible to structure the charges—road-use charging, say—so that they are price neutral for people who live in rural areas and commute into urban areas by car and pay for parking, petrol, petrol duty and so on.

With any of the mechanisms that we talk about, there are ways and means of considering different groups in society and different locations and adjusting the policies and pricing mechanisms and so on to ensure that certain people are not disbenefited.

Low-emission zones are quite a weak mechanism, because they are targeted at air pollution, and it has been decided that most of the LEZs in England and Scotland will not act on cars mainly; rather, they are about improving bus technology. That is very important but, to refer back to an earlier comment, we should remember the rate at which people are taking on high-polluting cars. For every one electric vehicle that is sold at the moment, about 20 SUVs are sold. We are locking in a lot of fossil fuels past 2030.

If the low-emission zones do not really target higher-carbon-emitting cars and start to discourage them from being sold, we have absolutely no hope of meeting our carbon commitment targets from transport. That is because of SUVs alone. That has been highlighted by the International Energy Agency: at a global level, SUVs were the only thing to have contributed to carbon emission increases globally last year, and that is also happening nationally.

Paul White: The low-emission zones that are currently in place or that will be introduced in the coming couple of years set initial targets for buses, related to the Euro standard of buses. On the point about using that as a tool towards bus decarbonisation, Derek Halden mentioned whole-life costs, and there remains a huge difference between the up-front capital costs of a zero-emission bus and those of a Euro VI diesel bus. Given the tight turnaround to reaching 100 per cent targets for buses of Euro VI standard or above, it becomes difficult to see how it is possible to move the fleet towards zero emissions according to the timescale that has been set. The work of the bus decarbonisation task force and the targets in the climate change plan for the majority of buses to be zero emission from 2024 provide the ways of delivering that path or transition to zero emissions, rather than using the low-emission zones, which generate a huge cost for operators over a very short timescale.

The Convener: That point has been fairly comprehensively covered; are you happy with that answer, Maureen?

Maureen Watt: Yes, but I would just mention that Aberdeen is managing to roll out its hydrogen buses, and we heard last week about the problem with SUVs. Charging or imposing road tax for them is not within our gift. We must have decent roads for people to use if we want to make use of road-charging policies. The dualling of main roads is still required, especially in the south-west of Scotland. I find this deeply frustrating.

Ewan Wallace is in a rural area. Here in the north-east, we need to have people using park and ride in order to take cars out of the city centre of Aberdeen and achieve the reduction in emissions. Surely we can get some of the shift that our witnesses are discussing in that way, together with charges for workplace car parking.

The Convener: I will let Professor Anable give a brief answer to that. I think that Maureen Watt is insinuating that doing more in the cities will allow people to move around more. Will you comment briefly on that, Professor Anable, before we go on to the next question?

Professor Anable: When we look at the travel patterns, we see a lot of travel from rural areas into urban areas. Although parking charges are important, and low-emission zones, if they had teeth and charged according to the carbon footprint of any journey, including those of cars, would be important, they would also hit people who travel in from rural areas in quite a blunt fashion. However, a pay-per-use mechanism on those roads would mean that you could adjust charges according to which roads are being used at which times and by which vehicle. In that way, we can improve the fairness of the mechanisms. Charging in town centres is quite a blunt instrument.

As I said earlier, an awful lot of journeys are not in and out of urban areas. We have free parking at retail centres on the outskirts of towns, in our tourism spots, and so on, and they generate the majority of the carbon. Commuting accounts for only 15 to 18 per cent of the carbon from travel. Most of it comes from travelling for leisure and shopping, so the charges need to be made on use and not on the destination.

The Convener: The next questions are from Stewart Stevenson.

Stewart Stevenson: I have used the time to do a couple of interesting things. I have discovered that, in the past seven years, I have done the same number of miles in my car as I did in my first full year as a parliamentarian. In the interim period, I transferred from using my car all the time to travelling by train and, to some extent, by bus. If a busy MSP can do it, others can also do it.

The issue of 20 per cent reduction in car usage has been covered exhaustively but the one thing

that I have not heard yet is the policies that the Scottish Government could introduce that would make a real difference. I will ask Professor Anable to round that one off, and I might propose a solution myself. Some years ago, there was a referendum on road pricing in Edinburgh but it failed. What else could we actually do? I hear the problem being described but I hear rather less about solutions.

The Convener: We will go to Professor Anable first and then I will bring in Mags Simpson on whether road pricing is a good idea for logistics.

Professor Anable: Road pricing is key if it is a national scheme where you might not be paying anything for use at some times but, at other times, you might be paying something. Such a national scheme would be quite sophisticated, taking account of the roads that people are on and the time that they are using them.

We have to start talking about destination shifting, not just mode shifting. We really need to reduce journey length by replacing some journeys with virtual means. When we are talking about the transport system, we must include investment in the 5G network and fast broadband. That is part of the transport system; there is absolutely no doubt about that.

We have to stop building houses and other things in car-dependent locations. We must put services back into smaller towns and improve local high streets and the attractiveness of local areas. We must understand from our experience of Covid over the past year what has or has not worked for people. Where has it been a better experience for people to use their local area? Where has it not been better? We have a huge opportunity to learn and to see how we can keep people using their local areas. That is a large part of the solution.

10:30

Modal shift is important, but I would like to see a change in emphasis. We will not make progress unless we reduce the total amount of travel in the system.

I can illustrate that with one example that concentrates the mind. We all talk about the Netherlands, where 29 per cent of trips are undertaken by bike, which compares to 1 or 2 per cent in Scotland. We think that they have it sorted, but they do not. The per capita carbon footprint from travel in the Netherlands is as high as it is in Scotland? Why? Because people there also own large cars and use them on longer distances. People in the Netherlands do more of everything and they travel further.

That is why we cannot focus only on modal splits and on improving the percentage of active

travel. We must talk about bringing down the number of kilometres travelled, and we can achieve that by looking at journey length.

The Convener: It is all very well having local services, but my local shop is eight miles away and has a very poor selection. It will never have a better selection because there is no demand for that, so I—like many people in Scotland—am forced to go to bigger outlets to have the choice that I want of the goods that I need. Your suggestion is fine, but is it realistic?

Sorry Jillian, you are muted. I am missing your defence.

Professor Anable: It is difficult to explain in a forum like this because everything is joined up and complicated.

You are right. For that to work, we must also ensure that large, out-of-town retail sites pay their way and that people must pay to park there. We should also reduce business rates for local shops so that they have an advantage.

The Convener: I must interrupt you. It is all very well to say that people should pay for parking when they go to retail parks, but I would be made to pay for the luxury of having to travel because there is nothing for me to go to locally. Many people would object to paying for parking at the other end.

Professor Anable: I understand that, but this is about changing the balance of opportunities. Local shops have been stripped of their ability to grow and to keep a larger stock because they are not being used as much and their overall running costs are higher.

You are right. This is not only about putting local shops back but about giving them a relative advantage over larger retail outlets. That would come from a complex mixture of business rates, parking opportunities and all kinds of things. It is not just about provision; it is about relative advantage and about ensuring that those places can thrive and can offer the right selection to attract trade. It is not a transport solution for a transport problem.

Mags Simpson (Logistics UK): A lot of the discussion has been about private cars, which is not relevant to us, from our freight and logistics point of view.

I will pick up on the point about road user charging. We are asking our members about that. We have been opposed to charging for road use, but the industry now recognises that allocation of road space and reducing congestion are priorities.

Our industry will do everything that it possibly can to reduce emissions and improve air quality, but the solution is not straightforward. There are

many levers and different vehicle types across the industry. Neither should it be forgotten that the freight and logistics industry exists because of society's demands: trucks are on the road because society demands whichever goods and services it is looking for.

Much of our discussion has been about road building. It is important not to forget that Scotland is quite literally at the end of the supply chain. We need to maintain our infrastructure—whether it be for road, rail, sea or air transport—to ensure that goods and services can keep moving across Scottish communities, including rural ones.

Just to put the importance of freight and logistics into perspective, 90 per cent of our freight is moved around by road. We fully support the modal shift that is often talked about, which aims to move transport from road to rail, or indeed to waterborne freight where appropriate. However, it is important not to lump freight and logistics together, because there are many different dynamics within that area. For example, although timber is a heavy product, it could be moved quite sufficiently by rail, which would take trucks off the roads. However, we would not start putting supermarket stock on the back of trains to get it locally around our cities.

Forgive me—much of what we have discussed is irrelevant to us, as it concerns private car use, but I stress that the logistics industry is here to do what it can and absolutely recognises that it has a part to play.

The Convener: Thank you for making those important points.

We will go back to Stewart Stevenson, who has further questions.

Stewart Stevenson: I had to smile when Professor Anable said that 5G is going to be the answer. Where we live there is no 4G or 3G service—we never had 2G—and it means a half-mile walk if we are to get the barest of signals. The idea of having 5G is just a joke in rural areas.

To go back to the agenda that is before the committee, I wonder how we can get more ultra-low-emission vehicles into both the commercial and private spheres. This might have happened only in the USA, but I have in my mind a recollection that there was a legal requirement for car manufacturers to achieve an average MPG for the fleet of cars that they sold. Is that still the case? If not, could such an approach nudge us away from SUVs, which have a much higher fuel consumption, and towards more efficient vehicles? Are there other ways in which we could have more low-emission vehicles?

Eighteen months ago, my wife and I were in Norway. In Bergen, we never heard any traffic because virtually all of it consisted of electric

vehicles. I believe that more than 50 per cent of the vehicles now sold in Norway are electric. What are they doing that we could also do to make a difference here? If we were to go back to Colin Howden with that question, that would be a useful start.

Colin Howden: I will briefly have a go at answering your previous question as well. There are three things that we could do to—

The Convener: Absolutely not. You have got to stay on track.

Colin Howden: Oh, no. *[Laughter.]*

The Convener: Sorry.

Colin Howden: That is a shame.

Mr Stevenson's other question was on how we might incentivise the uptake of ultra-low-emission vehicles. We did not lead on that in our evidence, so I will not answer that question in detail. My understanding is that Norway has high car purchase taxes, as does Denmark. The Norwegian and Danish pricing model for car ownership is therefore different, but perhaps we should consider following it.

The Convener: Ewan Wallace, would you like to come in on that? Would you feel comfortable answering that question?

Ewan Wallace: Yes—thank you, convener. Perhaps you saw me heading towards the keyboard to put in my request to speak.

As I mentioned earlier, local authorities are currently examining how we do what we do. Vehicle use is a large part of the range of activities that a local authority undertakes. Large numbers of us at SCOTS study the fleet side of that.

The 2030 timescale will focus our minds. On a practical level, every organisation will have to think about how to deal with that. We are being asked to set out plans to ensure that we do not buy any more petrol and diesel vehicles after that date, because public bodies will not be able to do so. There is a concern that there might be a surge of people purchasing existing vehicles in 2029 and using them for as long as possible.

SCOTS is trying to encourage sharing of knowledge about what is working. With my day job hat on, I have seen a significant shift over the past three or four years. A lot of organisations will start to put those ultra-low-emission vehicles in place, up to 7.5 tonnes. It gets more difficult for the higher payload vehicles. A significant amount of work is being done on the opportunities around hydrogen. We have seen that in the north-east, in particular, on the bus side of things, where the technology is very similar when it comes to the powertrain, the refuelling opportunities and the training of drivers and mechanics. The ability to

carry out trials across Scotland is really positive and the Scottish Government has committed to carrying out work on what the larger-vehicle fleet will look like.

For the smaller vehicles, the technology is coming. It is picking up pace. They are still expensive, so local authorities are getting support to put them in the fleet and they are finding them to be of benefit. They cost less, they are cleaner to look after and they are becoming increasingly reliable. I remember the first generation of those vehicles, which spent more time on a low-loader going to be repaired than being used to go around the network and undertake the different duties.

There are definitely a lot of opportunities, but it will take time. Over the next three or four years, as new technology starts to kick in and 2030 starts to loom large, we will come under pressure to plan how we will comply when we are no longer able to purchase petrol and diesel vehicles. I hope that that helps in terms of where local authorities are on the shift to ultra-low-emission vehicles.

Stewart Stevenson: How do we actually ban the sale of diesel and petrol vehicles from 2030? It is a Scottish Government objective—and I am pleased to say that it is also now a United Kingdom Government objective. That may contain the answer, because I am not sure that the Scottish Parliament has the legal powers to do something like that. We might be able to restrict access to roads for such vehicles, but I suspect that we cannot actually ban them. What does the ban mean, in practical terms? I am not certain who to address that question to, so let us stick with Ewan Wallace.

Ewan Wallace: That is a good point about practicalities. Every authority will be looking at what it is required to do. The bigger question is about the carbon footprint of the functions that they undertake and what part they can play in the move to net zero by 2045. If we put to one side the thought that we cannot impose the ban as it is currently constituted and there might need to be a shift on that, the aspiration and plans of every organisation, across the private as well as the public sector, will have to look at the situation in terms of their contribution to achieving net zero. Whether or not there is a loophole, on the local authority side of things we are certainly looking at what our contribution is and that is a big part of it.

The Convener: Stewart, if you are happy with that, I will move on to Richard Lyle.

Stewart Stevenson: Yes; thanks.

10:45

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): My question is to Ewan Wallace. As

Stewart Stevenson said, 2030 is coming very fast. Where are we going to charge our electric cars? What additional electric vehicle charging infrastructure will need to be in place by 2030 in order to support the widespread uptake of electric cars, particularly for those who live in tower blocks, flats, tenements and homes without private parking? Do you agree with me—I have been pushing this for years—that new homes should be built with electric charging points?

The Convener: Ewan Wallace, you are in the firing line.

Ewan Wallace: The society is very much involved in that, in every local authority, so some committee members will already have seen things coming through. Everybody is working out not so much the strategy as the delivery plans for where we will put charging points. We are rolling them out as much as possible and in lots of locations. They will be in public car parks, and, through work with the private sector, they will be installed increasingly in the destinations that Professor Anable has talked about, whether out of town or in town centres.

In urban areas, there is a difficulty about whether on-street charging is going to be feasible for many locations. My colleagues in the bigger cities are trying to work that through. At the moment, the top range for vehicles may be 300 miles plus; there is therefore a question about where and when people will go to charge, including whether that would be at home.

I agree absolutely that something should be introduced as part of the specification for new builds. At the moment, retrofitting costs several thousand pounds, and grants are available to assist.

If we stick all those things together, I always pose the question to colleagues about how they currently get the energy for their mode of choice. They go to a central location and put a liquid into their fuel tank. However, are we really going to build charging points everywhere? I think that the model will be more dispersed. Charging points will be in different locations. It is easier than building a petrol filling station; that is for sure.

A whole range of activity is going on at the moment around EV. Local authorities are working with industry and the Scottish Government to put that out. To go back to my earlier comment, it is patchy, but it is picking up pace. That is what we see across our membership. I hope that that helps to answer Mr Lyle's question.

Richard Lyle: Again, the problem is that people can turn up at a petrol station and fill up in five minutes, but an electric car will take longer than five minutes to charge. They would need a long tea break—assuming that they could find

somewhere to have a cup of tea. That is the basic problem that we will face over the next number of years.

For the sake of time, convener, I will move on.

The Convener: Richard, before you do, I want to bring in Jillian Anable on charging points.

Richard Lyle: I was going to ask her that same question next.

The Convener: Perfect. I will let you ask the question. As you are floating it, I observe that the committee heard in one evidence session that some local authorities are constructing charging points on lamp posts for people who are unable to get charging from their house because, for example, they live in a flat. I think that Milton Keynes was given as an example. Sorry—back to you, Richard, and maybe Jillian Anable will consider that.

Richard Lyle: I am working with a company which is looking at that. In my view, you could put charging points on lamp posts. We all know that cabling for broadband has gone into different areas. Basically, people could lift a small lid at the side of the pavement and plug in.

Jillian Anable, I was very interested in your comment about Holland. My mother-in-law was Dutch, and I totally agree with the points that you have made.

Can our electricity generation and distribution infrastructure support the widespread uptake of electric cars? If not, what changes need to be made and by whom?

Professor Anable: On the charging infrastructure, I agree with everything that Ewan Wallace said—at the moment, it is very patchy, and we do not have good strategies for creating the charging infrastructure for these diverse-usage cases. For example, in residential areas, where there is mainly on-street parking, the provision is very patchy. Huge innovation is happening with on-street parking charging points. Lamp posts have been mentioned, and there are pop-up charging lanyard facilities, and initiatives to get people to share their charging points as part of the sharing economy phenomenon. I am not saying that it is not a problem, but I think that innovation will happen quickly.

In Norway, it is not that the charging points went in first and that that encouraged the more than 50 per cent uptake. The uptake happened rapidly, and they sorted out the charging situation in response. The main issue is how to incentivise people to use electric vehicles. The charging infrastructure and the innovation will come from that. Scotland has pockets of the most intensely and rapidly increasing uptake of electric vehicles in the UK. Some of that is to do with an awareness

of green electricity in Scotland and the idea that it makes sense to own it. It genuinely makes sense to people, environmentally, because they are tying it in with the fact that electricity generation is increasingly coming from renewables. That is an important aspect of consumer attitudes as well as of the system initiatives.

In Scotland, we must move much faster on public procurement. We need much earlier dates for turning public sector fleets over to electric vehicles. We need much better ways of managing the local charging point infrastructure, and Derek Halden submitted some suggestions on that in his evidence. We certainly need to make it more resilient and ensure that it works. What is there at the moment often does not work properly.

We need to adapt local planning guidance, which has been mentioned. Every new house should have a charging facility. We also need a proper residential charging point scheme—we cannot just think and hope that that will happen. We need to identify where electric vehicle uptake will be most rapid—we can make good guesses about where uptake is most likely on the basis of demographics and current car ownership—and then roll out the infrastructure in a targeted way in residential streets to get better value for money, rather than the current piecemeal approach that leaves it to experiments and to the local authorities that have the time, resources and enthusiasm for it.

The Convener: Mags Simpson wants to come in on that.

Mags Simpson: I will give you some real-life examples. Clearly, electrification is accepted in our industry as a potential solution for vans. Infrastructure is a key concern, but we have also had members who have said that they will buy 10, 12 or 15 electric vans who have then been told by their electricity provider that they have to build a substation on site, because there is not the grid capacity to bring in larger vehicles in sensible quantities.

The committee should be aware that part of the equation is capacity across the grid. If we bring in large numbers of electric vehicles, which is obviously what we want to do, we need to ensure that there is the opportunity and funding to make the power source available.

This week, at our freight council, we asked our members for their experiences of using alternative fuels. One member pointed out that it is much easier to access public charging points in Scotland, because commercial users apparently need only one card. Across England, they need several cards, because of all the different regions, authorities or whatever it is. Scotland is doing that part right, so drivers of commercial vehicles can

access the charging points, but it is clear that demand for access to those points will increase as more people convert to the use of electric vehicles. I just want to make that point.

Richard Lyle: The Scottish Government provides a scheme whereby people can apply for funding to erect a charging point, but housing associations sometimes do not allow people to do that because they do not have a designated parking space. How do we solve that issue?

Mags Simpson: Forgive me, but I am not here to represent private car owners. The industry will have to look at that issue.

Richard Lyle: That is fine.

The Convener: The next questions come from Emma Harper.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Good morning. I paused because I was waiting for my camera to come on.

There has been a lot of discussion about private car use, but I have questions about the modal shift to walking and cycling. We know that there needs to be a change, with people taking up alternatives to the private car. The Scottish Government has created an e-bike grant fund and has committed to spending £500 million on active travel over the next five years. What else do we need to do to encourage people to use e-bikes or e-cargo bikes, for example? I know that that would be for certain shorter journeys. As Jillian Anable said, we need to reduce our journeys. I am interested to hear your thoughts on the modal shift to walking and cycling.

The Convener: Was that question to Jillian Anable?

Emma Harper: It could be for Jillian Anable or Sustrans.

The Convener: Sorry—I misheard. I will bring in John Lauder first.

John Lauder: Emma Harper asks a good question. As Colin Howden, Jillian Anable, Ewan Wallace and I have said, we are delivering some good, innovative projects in Scotland. The active travel budget, which is £100 million a year for the next five years, is really welcome. Sustrans provides funding with our statutory partners, but our budget is at capacity, so we will find it increasingly difficult to meet demand from local authorities and other statutory agencies. We have a great opportunity to grow the budget. I know that lots of people will say to the committee that their budget should increase, but the budget that I control is now at capacity, and it will flatline for the next five years, so I am really worried about meeting demand.

There is a great opportunity, especially now that a lot of Scotland's workforce is at home, to deliver 20-minute neighbourhoods. That is a trendy term, but it means making it as easy as possible for people to get all the things that they need within 20 minutes. I totally accept that that will be different in rural areas, although many rural towns could, and should, be fantastic 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Emma Harper asked about e-cargo bikes. There is a huge opportunity for public agencies and the private sector to work together. An awful lot of goods and services could be moved using last-mile deliveries. Amazon has been mentioned, but there are many other parcel companies that could transfer over to the use of electric vans, which Mags Simpson spoke about, and bicycles could be used for last-mile deliveries, particularly to fit in with low-emission zones, which Maureen Watt touched on.

There is some great partnership working out there, so we can demonstrate what can happen, but this is not the first time that I have told the committee that although we have really good evidence and can provide lots of good reports, the work that we do is quite patchy, in the sense that we have a limited budget, which means that local authorities have to bid in. Therefore, we are not working as uniformly as we could across Scotland.

11:00

My second point is that we know from the evidence what the public want. They will take the option to use a bicycle or walk when it is feasible, and when they feel that it is safe to do so. In a dense urban context, in big cities and towns, that often means segregating cyclists from pedestrians and cars, which is the northern European model. We have some good current examples of that in Glasgow, and there are developments in Edinburgh, Stirling, Arbroath and other towns and cities in Scotland. We also have some great rural initiatives that connect villages to towns, where the distance is around a mile or a mile and a half. There are issues around maintenance and the funding of maintenance, in particular at local authority level and in a rural context; Ewan Wallace might want to touch on that.

What I am saying to the committee is that I feel that the door is open and that, with more funding, we could do a lot more in Scotland. We have great examples, and the rest of the United Kingdom looks to us for leadership in this area. With more investment, we could do more. That is my plea to the committee.

The Convener: I promised Jillian Anable that she could come in next.

Professor Anable: Thank you, convener. I will focus quickly on e-bikes, because I am pleased that they have come up. I truly believe that they have a really important part to play in the decarbonisation agenda for transport. We did some analysis in which we investigated the types of car trips for which it might be possible to switch over to electric bikes, taking into account distance, the proportion of the population who are fit enough—given that people still need a certain level of fitness to travel by electric bike—and the proportion of journeys that do not involve people carrying a lot of stuff.

We concluded that the greatest potential for moving from car to e-bike journeys does not exist in the centre of urban areas, which is where we currently tend to focus some of our attention—for example, we tend to put e-bike sharing schemes in the centre of larger towns and cities, where there are other options and people do not really need e-bikes. The greatest e-bike potential is for those 5 to 10-mile journeys that criss-cross all over the place, which do not necessarily go into urban centres but often go between smaller towns. That means that we need to think about where we put in the infrastructure. It is not simply about trying to make e-bikes sexy or giving out grants; we need people to want to use them on the roads because they feel that it is safe enough to do so.

As a country, we are behind many other European countries in e-bike uptake. In countries such as the Netherlands, which I mentioned earlier, where one would have thought that they would have squeezed out all the cycling potential that they could, e-bikes are reaching places and people that conventional bikes did not reach, because the infrastructure is now in place. As a result, the Netherlands is finally starting to see a dent in car use to some extent because of e-bikes.

We need to think about longer-distance cycling networks that can target some of the places that are not necessarily on radial routes into urban centres, to pick up some of the 5 to 10-mile journeys that are difficult to hit with bus routes and are certainly not conducive to conventional walking and cycling. That is where e-bikes could make a huge difference.

The Convener: I think that Emma Harper is back online now.

Emma Harper: As a bike rider myself, I am interested in e-bikes. I have seen a lot of people take up e-bikes during lockdown—that has been very successful, because they know that they can go for 10 miles instead of 5 miles, or do twice the length of journey that they would normally undertake.

I know that the Scottish Government has announced a £50 million fund for active travel

freeways, but it has not defined what those freeways are, although I assume that they would be safe, segregated active travel cycleways. Do we need another active travel fund or is that something that we should fund using existing processes? Do we need that £50 million specifically for active travel freeways?

John Lauder: Currently, the Scottish Government is investing £100 million a year in active travel—walking, cycling and wheeling infrastructure—and the smarter choices programme, which encourages people to use those options. That is fixed, but my plea is that we need a high-quality freeway or highway network, and we have submitted some ideas on that to the strategic transport projects review, because it is a strategic national initiative.

As I said, the budget of £60 million a year that Sustrans manages, which is match funded by local authorities that are in receipt of grants that we give out for infrastructure, is at capacity, so I cannot do any more; I could not fund a strategic active highway network on that. The £50 million fund that is being talked of—it is a bit vague; I am struggling to pin down with the civil service what that really means—sounds brilliant. If that was a stand-alone fund that was invested in a high-quality network that was rolled out in a partnership between local authorities, regional transport partnerships, other statutory bodies and Sustrans, and which was perhaps built on the back of the existing national cycle network, that would be brilliant.

As Jillian Anable said, when you have an electric bike, you can travel longer distances and headwinds and gradients are less of an issue, because it is almost like cycling with a tailwind wherever you go. As with cars, the distance that you can do is growing as battery efficiency grows.

Such a network could be absolutely fantastic. I warmly welcome that idea and would love it to be embraced by the strategic transport project network and adopted, almost like a trunk road network for cycling and walking. It would also have a fantastic economic dividend, particularly for rural Scotland and deeply rural Scotland, because it would allow people to get out on defined routes and tour and spend money as they go. As has been said, you cannot carry a lot on a bike.

It is a brilliant idea, but we need to get it pinned down. That is my theme of the morning—please help us to pin down what it is that we want to do, when we want to do it and what funds are available, because we are here to support and work in partnership to do that.

The Convener: We will get the chance to pin down Government ministers when they give evidence to the committee.

Derek Halden wants to come in.

Derek Halden: I want to respond to Emma Harper's question about whether we need a fund. It is the same answer that I would give on charging points for new homes or local pick-up and drop-off points for electric cargo bikes or whatever—we absolutely need a fund.

I reiterate the point that I made at the start: the transport economy is 10 times what the Government funds. If we want to lever those resources into a national mission for climate change targets, we must ensure that every Government pound buys nine more from the private sector. That is what partnering with all the people who can do that stuff is about. One housing development that I have just been involved in will lock in at least £20 million per year of car-dependent spending by the households that live in those houses—that is the scale of money that is involved. Such relatively small commitments of Government money are much less important than external processes like planning when we get the decisions wrong.

A lot of this goes back to Ewan Wallace and his colleagues in local government. When they give planning permission for new homes or whatever—new homes are Scotland's biggest road builder, by the way—why is it so difficult for them to factor in, with the people who are doing the development, a net zero philosophy or strategy? In the climate change plan update, it is as if the Scottish Government is saying, "We'll go and have a chat about how we improve this."

In the past 30 years since the original planning policy guidance 17, we have learned a lot about how to do these things, so why are we not doing them? If, instead of trying to treat zero-carbon transport as though it was a great new idea, we did more of the things that have worked over the past 30 years, we would be on the right road to the future—that goes for charging points, e-bikes and everything else.

Emma Harper was spot on and asked the right question. Let us develop such a network and start thinking about what funds we need to enable and lever in the people and businesses of Scotland so that they start spending their money to deliver on that mission.

The Convener: Derek, you got e-bikes in at the end, so that was fine.

Emma Harper has a supplementary question.

Emma Harper: It is for John Lauder. If we are to support uptake of e-bikes, local authorities need to provide safe and secure lockers so that they can be parked safely in town centres, and charging points. Am I right in assuming that that is the case?

The Convener: John, you can answer yes or no to that, I am sure.

John Lauder: My answer would be yes. It is all about good-quality infrastructure. That extends not just to paths and segregated lanes, but to safe places to store the bikes so that people are confident that they will be there when they come back.

My colleagues in the Energy Saving Trust, which runs the grant scheme for electric bikes, are also at capacity. They have spent their budget, so the demand is there. E-bikes are brilliant. I hope that members of the committee have all had a chance to use one, because they are fantastic.

The Convener: We will push on. Colin Smyth has some questions.

I will just say at this stage that, although he has sat very quietly in the background, Andy Jefferson's time will come. He has not been forgotten.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I am pleased that Jillian Anable and Derek Halden bravely tried to move the discussion on to prevention rather than cure, and reducing the need to travel, rather than just talking about the punishments or carrots that we can use on those who are forced to travel into congested cities. Frankly, that is where we create all the jobs. My constituents would love nothing more than to have a local job instead of having to spend hours travelling into Edinburgh or Glasgow every day.

However, I will stick to the script and talk about modes of travel. I turn to the issue of rail; my question is aimed at Mark Gaynor from the Rail Delivery Group. The draft climate change plan update has one rail-related policy, which is to decarbonise our rail services by 2035. A key aspect of that policy is electrification. Does the rail industry have the capacity to deliver those electrification plans, which do not appear to have any costings at this stage?

Mark Gaynor: Transport Scotland has published an outline railway decarbonisation action plan, which suggests that there is a need to electrify 130km of track each year. In itself, that is deliverable, but I think that my supply chain colleagues would say, "Show us the money—show us the financial commitment to that—and then we can gear up and deliver it."

South of the border, similar plans are being developed, and we expect the Department for Transport to publish a transport decarb plan in the spring. That might say something else about electrification. It would make sense to look at those plans in the round and see what they mean for the supply chain. The supply chain has said that if it is given a steady, long-term electrification

plan that is committed and funded, it can gear up and deliver it efficiently. In the past, we have had problems—although not so much in Scotland, where there has been steady progress on electrification. The Great Western electrification between London and Wales came out of nowhere. That was a good—or a bad—example of boom and bust, the delivery of which caused a lot of problems for the supply chain.

My general view would be that if a steady, funded and predictable pipeline that delivers the confidence that the supply chain needs is provided, the supply chain can gear up and deliver it cost efficiently.

11:15

Colin Smyth: Some areas, such as the area south-west of Girvan, are excluded from the electrification plan and will have to rely on battery or hydrogen-powered rolling stock. Are there cost or practical barriers to those alternatives? Is there concern that using those alternatives will show that there is not the same level of long-term commitment to those routes?

Mark Gaynor: There are a range of technologies, with different associated costs and capabilities. Generally speaking, there are trade-offs. With a relatively intensively used service, such as a mainline intercity service, a good business case can be made for electrification, as the costs are offset by the savings that can be made. With more lightly used routes, it is much harder to make the case for full-blown electrification, because of the cost of the infrastructure. That means that other technologies, such as battery or hydrogen fuel cell, might be more cost effective.

If we get very good at electrifying, we will get the costs down, and that will mean that we can do more electrification rather than less. However, if we have to rely on other technologies, they are developing rapidly. We are seeing improvements in battery performance—costs are coming down and capability is going up. It is not always the case that those technologies are "second-rate" solutions. They might well have a good capability, but their purpose will be strictly for the sorts of routes that are suggested for them in, for example, Transport Scotland's rail services decarbonisation action plan.

Colin Smyth: Where and when can we realistically expect to see battery and hydrogen-operated trains being used on a regular basis on Scotland's railways?

Mark Gaynor: The technologies are reasonably well advanced. There are examples in Germany of hydrogen fuel cells being used on passenger services. There are providers and manufacturers

in the UK that are developing the technologies. They do not need to be developed and trialled in a huge way; the question is more about whether, when there is an order, the supply chain is ready to step up and deliver.

Colin Smyth: I appreciate that other witnesses will want to speak about rail, but I have one more question for Mark Gaynor. How important will new or reinstated railways be in supporting a switch from road to rail? We have seen campaigns for the extension of the Borders railway and the reopening of the Dumfries to Stranraer line, and there are numerous other examples. Railways would make a huge difference to areas.

Mark Gaynor: Railways can play a valuable role in connecting communities. Expanding the railway in that way—if it becomes convenient, easy to use, accessible and inclusive—could play an important role in weaning people off the car. As others have said, integrating thinking about rail expansion into more general discussions about planning is important, so that we do not end up developing communities that are reliant on car travel from the very start. It is very important to ensure that we are thinking about rail very early on in planning.

Colin Howden: I will come in briefly on both of Colin Smyth's questions. The first was on whether the plans are deliverable. We welcome Transport Scotland's plans but have argued that 2035 may be too late and they should be brought forward to 2030. Three quarters of Scotland's diesel trains will be life expired by about 2030, so we think that the plans needs to be brought forward somewhat. We noticed a reference to 2032 in one of the diagrams and wonder whether Transport Scotland is perhaps thinking of some movement.

On reinstated railways, we have supported the campaign for the Levenmouth railway to be reinstated and it is great to see that happening, but there are other deserving cases. For example, the Buchan line to Fraserburgh and Peterhead needs to be looked at alongside the cash that will go into expanding the A90 to those places. We need to look at rail at the same time. One way in which journey times across the intercity network could be transformed is by reinstating a direct line between Perth and Edinburgh. According to Transport Scotland's figures in the 2009 STPR, that would reduce journey times to 45 minutes and improve journey times heading towards Perth and on to Inverness. Those are the aspirations that we would raise for rail line reinstatement.

The Convener: I will bring in Mags Simpson to talk about logistics and railways, as this is a good opportunity to cover that.

Mags Simpson: We believe that electrification is the path to net zero for the rail sector. A couple

of good examples of modal shift from roads to rail have been achieved recently in Scotland. We are involved in the Scotland freight joint board meetings with Network Rail.

To give you an idea of what is happening, there was a timber trial with Vica Railfreight near Inverness that took a significant number of trucks off the road. It was, admittedly, a short route—it is from Caithness to Dalcross—but loading points were secured at Inverness to allow the timber to be moved on to the railway. Another big success story is the addition of a siding at the Highland Spring plant in Blackford. That involved a significant amount of investment, but it has been successful and, again, it will take a number of heavy goods vehicles off the roads.

I will make a couple of points. Capacity is the biggest issue for getting additional freight routes on the network across the UK, but particularly in Scotland. It is also important to remember that, unlike in the passenger rail sector, which uses Government-procured rolling stock, rail freight stock is owned and operated by private sector companies. They are obviously looking for direction from the Government before they say, "Right, yes, we're going to invest in electric stock." There are significant cost implications to that, but there is an opportunity to put some freight, particularly heavy goods that are not time sensitive, on to rail.

My final point is that we should not think of it being either road or rail. The two very much work together. Access is needed to the site where the train can be loaded, which has to be suitable for HGVs. It is very much a case of the two modes working together. That is the future for freight.

The Convener: I am seeing various comments. Colin Howden says that he has another rail line, but he is right that we cannot mention them all. Do you want to give us one thing—a few brief words about that railway line before we move on, Colin?

Colin Howden: It is the reopening of passenger rail services from Grangemouth to Falkirk, which we would absolutely support. We recently responded to the union connectivity review and said that we should look at reinstating rail services to Cairnryan. If we are looking at dualling the A75, why are we not reinstating the rail line from Carlisle to Stranraer and Cairnryan? We could go on listing rail aspirations. Last week, I saw that the Greens have plans for a rail tunnel under the Forth. However, you are running short of time so I will shut up at that point.

The Convener: You stretched your one thing. I will bring in Angus MacDonald next and then I think that Andy Jefferson's time has come.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): Indeed, convener—Andy Jefferson and I have

both been waiting patiently to get to the issue of aviation.

The CCPU includes one aviation-related policy outcome:

“We will work to decarbonise scheduled flights within Scotland by 2040.”

In 2018, only 5 per cent of Scottish air passengers flew between two Scottish airports. Given that such flights are often relatively short and are often made using smaller aircraft, they are likely to account for less than 5 per cent of Scottish aviation emissions. What impact do you expect that decarbonising scheduled flights within Scotland will have on Scottish aviation emissions overall? That question is for Andy Jefferson, of course.

Andy Jefferson (Sustainable Aviation): Good morning, everybody. I have been waiting patiently, and I am still here. It is great to be with you all. I have a couple of points to make.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Sustainable Aviation coalition, we are a coalition of the UK aviation industry, with members across all parts of the industry from the aerospace manufacturers through to the airlines, airports and air traffic control providers.

To answer Angus MacDonald's question, the impact of flights within Scotland on aviation emissions can be dramatically cut. We developed a plan, which we published in February last year, that led to a commitment from the industry to deliver net zero aviation by 2050 at least. Within that, we are looking at two key areas. One is how we switch to new-technology aircraft, such as hydrogen and electric aircraft. There are some exciting opportunities for Highlands and Islands flights across Scotland in that space; I know that airlines such as Loganair are talking with innovators about how they can phase in those new aircraft.

However, we will see those aircraft in use by the 2030s at the earliest, so the challenge in the interim is to consider what else we can do. One area to look at is how we can change fuel use on our current aircraft, from a fossil-based fuel to one that is much more sustainable; members will have seen the one-page infographic in our submission to the committee. We think that there are knock-on opportunities in terms of broader economic benefits for Scotland. We are doing some work across the industry to look at how we can use waste that cannot be recycled and currently goes to landfill by turning it into jet fuel. There are also possible opportunities in that regard with agricultural wastes and wastes from forestry operations.

In the longer run, we are looking at how we can progress from using waste products to make fuel towards using a power-to-liquid solution, which would use renewable energy linked with hydrogen production to create jet fuel. At that point, we would be able to produce jet fuel on zero carbon.

Yes—aviation currently makes up a relatively small part of overall carbon emissions, but its impact is likely to grow if we do not do anything. As we have heard, decarbonisation is taking place in various sectors across other parts of the economy, so the key for aviation is to ensure that we do not become the problem child of the future. I hope that that helps to answer Angus MacDonald's question.

Angus MacDonald: That is helpful—there are certainly some exciting developments. We are aware that the French Government has set Air France a target for measuring emissions per passenger kilometre for domestic flights by 2024 and for international flights by 2030. Many domestic routes will be replaced by rail travel. Should the UK Government and/or the Scottish Government take that approach, or is partial state ownership a requirement for such action?

Andy Jefferson: From the industry's point of view, no solutions are off the table—at present, it is important to explore everything. The impact of the Covid pandemic is clearly a challenge for industry; we are looking at a 90 per cent reduction in normal business, and therefore a big loss of money—cash flow, in effect—across the aviation industry.

A lot of the solutions in decarbonising aviation are in the innovation space, and innovators are at a relatively early stage, so will need help to bring those opportunities into the commercial arena and scale them up. Those could be sustainable fuels or new aircraft technologies.

11:30

The issue with targets is how we set ones that do not end up creating unexpected consequences. An example is if we were to insist on the use of sustainable fuel or put a cost on flights in Scotland. That would mean in effect that we would penalise people who wish to fly in Scotland compared with people who fly elsewhere. That might create a situation in which they choose to drive down to England or elsewhere. Therefore, we might not necessarily be solving the problem.

I welcome the opportunity to talk through such ideas with you and others, but we need to do that in a smart way.

Angus MacDonald: That would be helpful. Convener, I do not know whether you want to

open that question out to others who might want to comment?

The Convener: I am nervous about time, Angus, because I have two more members' questions to get in. Colin, would you like to come in very briefly?

Colin Howden: Yes, very briefly. I refer to Angus MacDonald's statement that the proposal in the plan refers to only 5 per cent of flights. It therefore completely omits reference to flights from Edinburgh to London or Glasgow to London, which are both among the top 10 paired flight corridors in western Europe.

Action needs to be taken by the Scottish Government to instruct public bodies that they should not fly from Edinburgh or Glasgow to London except in very exceptional circumstances. That is how we can drive down emissions from the aviation sector.

The Convener: Okay, I am not sure that business—

I am sorry, do you mean that you want to stop all flights between Edinburgh and Glasgow to London?

Colin Howden: I did not say all flights; I said that the Scottish Government could give instructions to public bodies to stop people flying from Edinburgh or Glasgow to London when there are competitive rail services that provide much lower emissions—a quarter of those that are created by flying—and have productivity benefits, because people can work on trains in a way that they cannot on planes.

That should be inserted into the plan. It is not sufficient for the Government to say that it is only responsible for flights within Scotland if that means only 5 per cent of all flights.

The Convener: Thank you for clarifying that.

Jamie Halcro Johnston, you have been waiting very patiently, too. Now is your moment.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Thank you for the build-up, convener.

My question is for Mags Simpson. We touched on this issue before; it relates to the logistics industry. We are interested in finding out what the industry is doing to reduce emissions from HGVs before the proposed 2035 target for all new HGVs to be zero-emission vehicles.

Mags Simpson: Euro 6 is the cleanest version of a diesel truck that you can get, and by the end of—[Inaudible.]—we expect that 70 per cent of the fleet across the UK will use Euro 6. I can give you specific information on that if you would like it.

The issue that we have with ultra-low-emission HGVs is that there is significant uncertainty, at this moment in time, about which fuel will be the most efficient. As I mentioned, I posed that issue to our freight council recently. I look after the freight council in Scotland and the three that are in the north of England. Some liquefied natural gas or compressed natural gas is being used, but businesses are doing that in a small percentage of their fleet to check productivity and how much it costs to run those. However, that is still a fossil fuel and is very much considered by the industry as a stepping stone.

As I alluded to, many of our members are looking at electric vehicles, but that is a solution for vehicles up to a maximum of 4.2 tonnes only. With vehicles that are heavier than that, the weight of the battery that is needed destroys the payload and therefore nullifies the solution.

There is some chat about hydrogen, but I encourage everyone to be aware of the fact that hydrogen seems to be a solution in pockets of the country, and we need a UK approach to heavy goods vehicles—[Inaudible.] Companies tend to run national operations the length and breadth of the country, and the industry needs certainty about the infrastructure, funding and support, because those vehicles are significantly more expensive than the vehicles that are currently in use. Nobody will invest hugely until they are certain that that will be the fuel of the future.

The industry as a whole absolutely recognises that it has a part to play. It wants to do that, but it needs certainty about which fuel everyone will use and the policy framework on the funding that will be available, whether that encourages people to use a certain type of fuel or—[Inaudible.] There is a broad range of vehicles, including specialist vehicles. Because there are so many elements, there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

The Convener: Jamie Halcro Johnston can come back in with one more question, as we are up against the clock.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I appreciate that, convener.

Mags Simpson said that Scotland is at the end of the supply chain. Of course, the Highlands and Islands are even more so and they have their own difficulties. Is there a solution for the Highlands and Islands, or will we see even greater issues for lower or zero-emission vehicles supplying the Highlands and Islands?

Mags Simpson: I agree completely. We do not want to cut off the Highlands any more than they are at the moment. As I alluded to earlier, roads are the main route for getting products to the north of Scotland, followed quickly by ferries. A lot of work is going on to look at hybrid solutions—

hydrogen and electric—for ferries. As I said, one size does not fit all, but we must be careful that no part of Scotland, or indeed Scotland as a whole, is cut off from the rest of the UK. The infrastructure needs to be available the length and breadth of the country.

The Convener: We now have questions from the deputy convener, Maureen Watt.

Maureen Watt: Emissions from light goods vehicles have almost doubled since 1990, which is due largely to the growth of online shopping. It seems as though some witnesses hope that that growth will continue so that people who live in rural areas and work from home will get their shopping delivered and either do leisure activities at home or stop those activities and no longer go to tourist destinations. What can the industry do to reduce emissions from that growing sector? Derek Halden might be best placed to start that conversation.

Derek Halden: *[Inaudible.]*

The Convener: Hold on, Derek. We have missed your pearls of wisdom, because you were still muted. You are now unmuted, so off you go.

Derek Halden: Sorry. I wanted to clarify with Maureen Watt the specific sector that we are talking about.

Maureen Watt: It is the white-van-man delivery.

Derek Halden: So it is not about retail or anything like that. We are thinking about the white van as a means of facilitating small business and moving loads around as much as moving things to customers.

There are different mechanisms for how we fund things. Vans are way ahead of trucks. As Mags Simpson said, the question with heavy goods vehicles is whether hydrogen will be used or whether, for instance, there will be catenary systems, such as the Siemens system, up the A9 in a few years, using battery for the final 40 miles. Vans will be run more like cars. We will get a decent enough range out of them, so they will not need to be on the catenary systems on the long-distance motorways and trunk roads. They probably do not need the cost premium of hydrogen. We can electrify most of that aspect.

The single biggest thing that we can do with white vans concerns the local pick-up and drop-off points. As I think we have discussed already with cargo bikes and so on, the low-hanging fruit with carbon emissions lies in growing an industry within local communities such that virtually every delivery goes to a local community hub or hubs, as we are seeing with Collect+ and other companies. It is in the last mile where vans are doing all the wasted mileage in delivering small numbers of parcels to individual houses. If the bigger vehicle delivered to

a hub, that would be really efficient. It could drop off 100 parcels at once, and the cargo bike could do the final mile, or people could even walk in or whatever. In the white-van market, the low-hanging fruit is in that space.

The predominantly electric technology is there, so let us do more of it. That is why companies such as Amazon are making heavy investments in electric vans. There is low-hanging fruit with the actual efficiency of delivery, too.

Maureen Watt: If Amazon's adverts are to be believed, it is investing in low-carbon and electric vehicles, but it represents just one part of that sector. How do we get others to do the same, and what about the hubs that you talked about? Does Government have a role in incentivising hubs? Would there be a hub in the 20-minute zone, say? Would vans take all the goods that people have ordered from different companies and take them out? Is that how you envisage that working?

Derek Halden: That goes back to what I have been saying about people and businesses. The right incentives should be in place for everybody to do the right thing. I do not think that thresholds are a good idea. I know that 20 minutes has a nice ring to it, and it illustrates the concept of having everybody within walking distance. It could be 15 minutes. The general academic consensus is that whatever threshold you set is wrong and will lead to more counterintuitive things happening and unintended consequences.

We want to take everybody from where they are this year and make things better next year. We can measure that. We know how long it takes for every household in the country to walk to a grocer and we can ensure that, next year, that time will have gone down for all households in Scotland.

We could deliver incrementally and we could give everyone the right incentives and grants. It is those missing grants and incentives that are the biggest holes in the plan. The plan just does not deal with the population. John Lauder might be brilliant at making decisions on which active travel networks Sustrans will fund, for example, but that will never be as good as the collective will of the Scottish people investing in all the ways that they have the capability to do.

This is the point: how do we enable more people, including the white van purchasers, to do more stuff?

The Convener: I am really sorry to have to draw this evidence session to a close. However, we do so with a question that we do not have an answer for, which will stimulate further thought.

That will have to be the end of the session. I thank all our witnesses. I apologise for the times when they did not get to contribute when they

wanted to, I apologise to those who had to wait longer than they wanted to, and I apologise to those who do not think that they had a fair hearing. It has been difficult with nine witnesses, but we have enjoyed the evidence session and we have learned a huge amount, so thank you very much.

11:45

Meeting suspended.

11:50

On resuming—

European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018

Animals, Food and Feed (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

The Convener: Item 2 is the sift of one Brexit-related Scottish statutory instrument, as detailed on the agenda. The Scottish Government has allocated the negative procedure to the SSI. Is the committee content with the parliamentary procedure allocated to the instrument by the Scottish Government? Anyone who has a comment should put that in the chat bar.

I see nothing in the chat bar, so I assume that members are content.

Subordinate Legislation

Agricultural Holdings (Relinquishment and Assignment) (Application to Relevant Partnerships) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 [Draft]

11:51

The Convener: Item 3 is consideration of one affirmative instrument as detailed on the agenda. The committee will take evidence, then the motion on approval of the affirmative instrument will be considered at item 4. We have not received any representations on the instrument.

I welcome Fergus Ewing, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism. We also have James Muldoon, head of the agriculture support policy division; John Martin, senior policy adviser; and Kirsty Slee, lawyer, all from the Scottish Government.

The cabinet secretary will make an opening statement. After that, I will ask members if they have any relevant interests to declare.

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): I thank the committee for taking time to consider these important regulations and giving me the opportunity to address members.

The draft regulations were laid using the powers conferred in the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 2003, as amended by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016.

Part 3A of the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 1991 enables tenant farmers who hold secure tenancies under that act and who do not have successors to seek to relinquish their tenancy to the landlord for value. In cases where the landlord cannot or does not want to take the tenancy back in hand, part 3A allows the landlord to assign that tenancy for value to a new entrant or to a person who is progressing in farming.

The regulations modify part 3A in its application to limited partnership tenancies. The effect of that is to allow eligible tenant farmers to seek to relinquish their tenancy but not assign it if the landlord declines to accept notice of relinquishment. The Scottish Government considers that that approach provides a fair balance to the rights of both parties within the lease in those tenancies where the limited partnership structure gives rise to a different set of rights and considerations on the part of the landlord and their tenants.

The regulations, along with the wider relinquishment and assignment regulations, will

provide a mechanism and support for older eligible tenant farmers who wish to relinquish agricultural tenancies secured under the 1991 act and to retire out of agriculture to have greater clarity and an easier-to-use process.

My officials and I are happy to answer members' questions.

The Convener: Before we move to questions, I ask members to make any relevant declarations of interest. I declare an interest in that I am a member of a farming partnership in Moray.

Peter Chapman: I declare that I am a member of a farming partnership in Aberdeenshire.

Stewart Stevenson: I am joint owner of a small registered agricultural holding, from which I derive no income.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I am now a member of a farming partnership in Orkney. I am also a member of a number of agricultural groups, including NFU Scotland and Scottish Land & Estates.

The Convener: I do not see any other member indicating that they wish to declare an interest, so I will move on to ask our first question of the cabinet secretary.

Cabinet secretary, perhaps you could clarify a point that affects farming partnerships that are based on agricultural tenancies under the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 1991. It seems that, if a general partner wants to resign, the instrument that we are considering does not give them any right to assign their tenancy, because such partnerships are specifically excluded. Is my understanding correct?

Fergus Ewing: If I may, convener, I will preface my answer with a caveat. I do not often do this—in fact, I do not think that I have done it before—but this is a highly legally complex issue, which I have spent two hours researching this morning. If I should make any slip from a legal point of view I ask my officials to intervene, but I think that I am reasonably well prepared.

My answer to your question is that your understanding is correct. As I am sure you know well, convener, limited partnerships were introduced as a method of allowing tenants and farmers to enter into an agreement without conferring the security that secure tenancies provide. That was the purpose of such partnerships. They were attractive from the landlord's point of view but less so from the tenant's, but nonetheless they were deployed. Because such a partnership is a different beast from a secure tenancy, in which security of tenure applies, the landlord's rights are greater.

Of course, I cannot reveal the legal advice that the Scottish Government has received but, broadly speaking, the approach that we have determined so as to steer a course in accordance with the law is that there needs to be a balancing of tenants' and landlords' interests under limited partnership arrangements. It was felt that the relinquishment provisions were satisfactory and complied with the European convention on human rights. However, had we extended what I will term the assignation rights in respect of passage to a new entrant, or to someone who wanted to progress in farming, that would have perhaps gone too far in achieving that balance.

We had to make a judgment with regard to the ECHR provisions. I must stress that those are very important—not only per se, because they protect the rights of property owners, but because they also provide for Governments balancing such rights with public policy in general. Therefore, by definition, the process is a balancing act. After taking lengthy and painstaking advice, our judgment was that such an approach would be fair and correct, and would strike an appropriate balance in the particular circumstances.

As I said, I hope that I have framed that in a way that is correct and not inaccurate. However, because this is such a highly legalistic issue, it might be helpful were my officials now to have an opportunity to add anything that they feel is necessary—in case I have failed the legal exam, since the last one that I took was in 1976.

The Convener: Kirsty Slee has not asked to come in, but I will be happy to bring her in to correct you, cabinet secretary, if you are failing on those legal points. She does not look very keen to do so.

Kirsty Slee (Scottish Government): Thank you. I have nothing to add. That is a comprehensive summary of the approach that has been taken. I am happy to leave it at that.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Kirsty—and thank you, cabinet secretary, for clarifying that point. I have one further question, then we will have questions from other members.

On the assignation of a tenancy, the incoming tenant usually pays the waygo compensation to the outgoing tenant. Did you consider that the instrument's provisions would be detrimental to new entrants or neutral? We all want to see more entrants coming in to take on tenancies where possible.

12:00

Fergus Ewing: I give the same caveat as before, but I believe that the effect will be neutral. The measure whereby assignation provision will

be available to a new entrant or those who wish to progress in farming is long overdue and is separate from the waygo issues, which are free standing. As members will know, there are a number of financial demands on a new entrant or new farmer in setting up a new business. For some types of farming, the capital that is required to get stock and for buildings is substantial. I am not suggesting that anything is straightforward about such matters, because I think that the convener is hinting at the financial position of a new entrant or someone else who would be able to avail themselves of the assignation provisions. Anyone who wants to come into farming and start afresh faces financial challenges.

Most new entrants do not really start afresh—they probably worked as fencing contractors or might have done a bit of their own contract farming. In other words, they have learned the ropes, they have done their apprenticeship, they know what they are doing and they have decided to move up to the next level. Nonetheless, the Scottish Tenant Farmers Association has warmly welcomed the assignation provision and has described it as a ladder or a way in for new entrants. The organisation, with which we have worked closely, has campaigned for the measure for a long time.

The provision will be very helpful to older farmers who are perhaps on the wrong side of 60—as I am, sadly—and who might not even be in possession of their original hips. To be serious, it will help farmers to make their lives a little less demanding, which active farming, of course, is.

Maureen Watt: The provisions are obviously very complicated and have been four years in the making. Unfortunately, during that time, a number of retiring tenants have had landlords who have been unwilling to take part in informal negotiations. Some tenants have been unable to wait for the regulations and have had to leave their tenancies with reduced legal compensation. Does the cabinet secretary know how many people have been holding on for the new regulations? Will a significant number of people make use of the provisions very soon?

Fergus Ewing: Ms Watt has asked several questions. I believe that many people have been waiting some time to avail themselves of the provisions. I am aware, as the STFA press release that was issued recently states, that there might be others who would like to avail themselves but have not been able to.

The most recent survey of opinion shows that most landlords and tenants get on quite well and are satisfied with the relationship. That is very much welcome. I think that 80 or 90 per cent are satisfied—it is about 90 per cent in the case of landlords—but that leaves 10 or 20 per cent of

them. I hope that it is possible for landlords and tenants, voluntarily and by negotiation, discussion and agreement, to reach an accommodation on all important matters, but there will always be a number of cases in which that does not happen. I regret that, but it is a fact.

I will make another point in response to Ms Watt's questions. The process has taken a long time. I accept that it has perhaps taken too long. As the minister, ultimately, I am responsible for that. I was in the Parliament when we passed what became the 2003 act. We did so with good intentions, but an important measure in that act was judged to be illegal by the courts. The case was *Salvesen v Riddell*, if I remember correctly.

That judgment found that the Government had breached article 1 of protocol 1 of the ECHR. I say "the Government" but, collectively, we—the predecessor committee—and the Parliament passed a law that was proved to be ultra vires because it contravened the convention. That is very much in my mind. Obviously, as the minister, I do not want to be the person who passed legislation that is open to challenge—far less to see it actually being challenged. The ECHR is a very important document that protects the legal rights of individuals, including property owners, so we have to proceed with care.

In essence, that is why it has taken such a long time. Although I cannot divulge legal advice, I can absolutely assure you that lawyers have worked painstakingly with civil servants to try to strike the right balance, and they have had discussions with various stakeholders in order to deliver a piece of legislation that will help a vast number of people in Scotland. Frankly, I am pleased to be able to explain why it has taken longer than I would have liked to arrive at that place but, having arrived, I am very confident that the legislation will unlock opportunities for young people to enter farming, which must surely be a good thing, as well as allowing those who wish to retire to do so.

Angus MacDonald: Having served on the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee in the previous session of the Parliament, which took extensive evidence on these issues during our scrutiny of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill in 2015 and 2016, I am certainly delighted to see the SSIs that are before us today.

It is clear that the approach encourages the continuation of tenant farming and social cohesion in rural areas. As the cabinet secretary has mentioned, it will be particularly beneficial to older tenant farmers who wish to retire out of agriculture and, crucially, it supports the retention of younger people in farming families and assists in removing barriers for new entrants. All in all, it is a very welcome development for landlords and tenants,

as it creates a greater level of confidence all round.

That was a more of a comment than a question, convener.

The Convener: I agree that it was a comment. No answer is required, cabinet secretary.

I think that Peter Chapman has a question rather than a statement.

Peter Chapman: I do. I am pleased that the cabinet secretary believes that this will unlock a lot of new tenancies so that new folk can get involved in agriculture. For many years, I have said that the tenanted sector in Scotland has not been working as it should, so I hope that this will make that happen.

If the landlord decides to take back the tenancy, what is the process for assigning its value? On the flip side, if the landlord does not take back the tenancy, is there a similar method for calculating the value of that tenancy for a new person coming in, or is that just subject to market forces? That was two questions.

Fergus Ewing: Again, I start with my original caveat, but my understanding is that first, the tenant who wishes to be outgoing offers relinquishment to the landlord, then, if the landlord does not wish relinquishment, the assignation procedure kicks in and can take place. The assignation is then a matter between the existing tenant and the prospective assignee.

Market value and valuation is a complex area. I have asked about and had advice about it, obviously. A lot of work has been done on that by all parties. Discussions took place with stakeholders early in 2019 and subsequently. The tenant farming commissioner, Bob McIntosh, it is also going to provide guidance. I saw that Scottish Land & Estates welcomed that, and I think that all parties will do so.

The arrangement is not new. Land agents are already involved in the work around the valuation of the particular interest that has been assigned. I read the formula for that area, but I am not sure that it would serve any particular purpose if I were to read out a fairly arid and lawyerly text today.

My understanding is that people in the farming community are generally familiar with what is involved and are ready and willing to activate it. The tenant farming commissioner is a welcome adjunct to the system and plays a positive, constructive and collaborative role in encouraging all parties to make the new system work.

I hope that that answers Mr Chapman's questions. If it is insufficient—because he asked a slightly technical series of questions—I will ask my officials to add something.

The Convener: I am happy to bring in your officials, but I am not sure that reading out a list of how a waygoing tenancy is valued would be of huge benefit. Having gone through that before, I know that it is quite formulaic. I do not know whether any of them would like to come in—I see that they are all looking the other way, which is always a good thing to do. Peter, did the minister answer your question?

Peter Chapman: Not quite. I think that there is a formula if the landlord wants to take back the tenancy. I was wondering how, if the landlord does not wish to do that, a valuation is decided between the new tenant coming in and the tenant who is relinquishing the tenancy. Is that just subject to market forces? How is that valuation going to be done?

Fergus Ewing: It would be a matter for consensual agreement between the outgoing and incoming tenants. It would be for the two parties to negotiate, presumably with the benefit of some advice and with reference to guidance that will be forthcoming from the tenant farming commissioner. In that respect, I guess that it would be like any property transaction.

Essentially, it would be a matter for the parties concerned, but, in this case, with quite a considerable statutory overlay that would help to guide the parties with regard to how that valuation should be calculated. We are talking about a different species of beast. With regard to a property right, it is quite easy to understand the value of land that is being sold with vacant possession. That is what happens in the property market in Scotland. However, the fact that the agricultural holdings provisions impose the right of security means that the value of land with a secure tenancy is different, because the landlord is not able to enjoy the fruits of possession—that is the legal phrase that I am dredging from my memory banks, dating back to the 1970s and 1980s. Therefore, it is essentially a matter for the two parties, but they will receive a substantial amount of support in terms of advice that they can access from agents and the tenant farming commissioner, and in terms of existing practice, because, as I said, the arrangement is not new, and, indeed, many parties have already come to an agreement and are just waiting on the statutory instrument to come into force.

In all of these things, the key thing is that we have willing parties. Parties going into a contract must be, in general terms, willing to have both of them benefiting therefrom. That is the idea of contracts in the free market, which is something that I imagine that Mr Chapman supports.

Emma Harper: Good morning. I know that the regulations have been welcomed. A constituent with whom I have been working over the years is

happy about their introduction and has already set up a meeting with his landlord. I am sure that landlords, tenants and land agents are already very knowledgeable about them, but who is responsible for communicating to those people that the regulations are now in place? Is it the Scottish Land Commission?

12:15

Fergus Ewing: Primarily, we communicate that to the specialist farming press, which covers such matters in a great deal of detail and reports on them very accurately. The likes of *The Scottish Farmer* will, I am sure, report substantially on the regulations.

In addition, representative bodies such as NFU Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates and the STFA, which has been leading the campaign in this area for many, many years, will immediately inform their members that the provisions have been approved by Parliament. The jungle drums beat quite loudly in farming circles, and news travels fast. Good news travels pretty fast—bad news probably travels even faster—and I think that this good news will be communicated and promulgated to everybody who is likely to be affected. Nonetheless, Emma Harper makes a fair point and, in light of her question, I will ensure that we take pains to get our message across to all.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: Good afternoon, cabinet secretary. I think that we all welcome efforts to encourage new entrants into farming, and the regulations do just that. Do you have concerns about abuse or artificial workarounds in relation to any aspect of the regulations? If so, what safeguards have been, or could be, put in place to address those concerns?

Fergus Ewing: We have set out additional rights that will accrue to an existing tenant farmer, and I believe that we have done so in a way that will allow the new system to function well.

On what measures we have taken to prevent circumvention, the first point to consider is that the draftsmanship has been the result of a long and considered process. Secondly—this is probably the main point—there has been expansive engagement with the parties involved, including the main representative bodies, to secure a broad consensus. From working with those representative bodies, as I do and as Mr Halcro Johnston does—as we all do, in fact—we know that they have a wealth of experience. To be frank, such bodies have not just centuries but millennia of experience, given the senior members of the farming community that tend to populate them.

I am confident that we have come up with a workable scheme. I am not aware of any specific avoidance or circumvention plan that could

operate in that respect. I do not know whether Mr Halcro Johnston has anything in mind—if so, he might want to share it with us now—but I am not aware of any obvious plan that would be able to thwart the legislation's intent. I do not think that that is likely to happen, but we will keep all such matters under review.

The Convener: Jamie, do you want to come back on that, or are you happy with the answer?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: One issue that was raised with me—[Inaudible.]—the potential for—[Inaudible.]—pass on to a younger family member, with the potential that the value would then increase. I wondered whether that is an area of concern, or whether there are various safeguards within the—[Inaudible.]—legislation or the regulations, or the—[Inaudible.]—scrutiny, to ensure that that does not happen.

I do not know whether you heard me, cabinet secretary—I am sorry if you did not.

Fergus Ewing: I am sorry, but I could not make you out very well.

The Convener: Nor could I. Jamie, could you repeat your question, please?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: Apologies. I will try to speak a bit louder and a bit closer to the microphone.

One of the issues that has been raised with me—[Inaudible.]—passed on to a younger family member, because the value may be higher, with a view to their transferring it on further. Is that an area of concern? Is scrutiny and supervision in place to ensure that that does not happen?

The Convener: Did you get that, cabinet secretary?

Fergus Ewing: I think that I got the gist of it. An assignation by an existing tenant farmer to a relative is a process that is already heavily regulated and controlled. Measures to avoid such abuse—if that is how it is seen—are dealt with by the existing legislation. If the issue that Mr Halcro Johnston raises is a factor, it is not one that is a result of anything that we are doing this morning. However, that answer is just off the top of my head. I am not quite sure that I have totally grasped the scenario, so perhaps it would be best if one of my officials were to add something—should they have anything to add.

The Convener: My understanding is that it is a question of who is an appropriate assignee. Is that right, cabinet secretary?

Fergus Ewing: Yes.

Kirsty Slee: I confirm what the cabinet secretary said. The existing provisions on when a landlord is entitled to object to a proposed

assignee are already fairly tight. If somebody was proposing to assign a tenancy to a person who had no farming experience purely for the purposes of trying to get round the valuation requirements in the provisions in part 3A of the 1991 act, the landlord would have solid grounds for objecting to that assignation. The basis for that objection would be that the person was not an appropriate assignee under the existing provisions, which are in section 10A of the 1991 act. That is why the issue has not been specifically addressed in these regulations.

On a related point, the landlord also has an opportunity at the end of the relinquishment and assignation process to object to the proposed assignee. Controls for the landlord are built into both the existing assignation process and the proposed assignation process.

The Convener: I had forgotten about that section in the act—thank you for reminding me. I will have a look at it.

Peter Chapman: There is a concern that, one way or another, an established farmer might manage to get round the rules and regulations and be able to outbid a new entrant or progressing farmer. What safeguards are in place to ensure that the assignee is a new entrant or someone who is relatively new and progressing in the industry, rather than somebody with a fairly well-established business who would probably be able to offer a bit more to the outgoing tenant to take over the tenancy? There is a concern that there are people out there who would try to do that in order to get more land.

Fergus Ewing: I believe that the legislation sets out to define the two categories of qualifying—that is, permitted—assignees. Those are, first, new entrants and, secondly, those who wish to progress in farming. Mr Chapman's question is fair, and the answer is that those were the groups that we wished to benefit, as it were, by conferring rights upon them to be the qualifying prospective assignees. The definitions of new entrants and progressing farmers have been subject to considerable consideration to ensure that they deliver the policy objectives and are as fair as possible to outgoing tenants, potential incoming tenants and landlords, and that opportunities for abuse are eliminated, or at least minimised.

I think that it was right that we went beyond new entrants to include people who are progressing in farming. The definitions are there for people to see; I do not propose to read them out.

Broadly speaking, the approach that we have taken is one that not only meets the policy objective of encouraging new people into farming but which also does not exclude people who have just reached the first rung on the ladder and want

to move up. It is realistic to assume that the sort of people who will make a success of farming are people who have had experience of working in the farming world in various different categories and want a farm of their own.

The definitions have been very much drafted with Mr Chapman's fears in mind, and with the intention of encouraging precision and certainty, which are the two desiderata of good law.

The Convener: As we have reached the end of members' questions, we will move to item 4, which is the consideration of motion S5M-23935.

Motion moved,

That the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee recommends that the Agricultural Holdings (Relinquishment and Assignment) (Application to Relevant Partnerships) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.—[Fergus Ewing]

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: I thank the cabinet secretary and his officials for their time.

Agricultural Holdings (Relinquishment and Assignment) Regulations (SSI 2020/430)

Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 (Commencement No 12) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/428)

Animals, Food and Feed (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/455)

The Convener: Item 5 is consideration of two negative instruments and one laid-only instrument, as detailed on the agenda.

The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee has considered these instruments and reported SSI 2020/455 in respect of the failure to lay the instrument in accordance with laying requirements, and on the general reporting ground, due to text being included in error in regulation 5(2)(c).

The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee notes that it is satisfied with the explanation that it has been given by the Scottish Government for the failure to comply with the rule. The Scottish Government has also committed to omit the text that was included in error in a forthcoming Scottish statutory instrument.

The laid-only instrument—SSI 2020/428—was included on the agenda for the committee to note only.

No motions to annul have been received in relation to the instruments. Do members have any comments to make?

As there is absolute silence, I propose that the committee make no recommendations in relation to the instruments. No one has indicated to the contrary, so that is agreed.

European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018

Organics (Amendment) Regulations 2021

12:30

The Convener: Item 6 concerns a consent notification that we have received in relation to a United Kingdom statutory instrument, as detailed on the agenda. The instrument is being laid in the UK Parliament in relation to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

The following issues are brought to our attention in the papers. Similar to the notification that the committee considered last week, the committee has been given only a very short time to consider the instrument. It is also suggested that the committee might wish to ask the Scottish Government to keep it informed if it appears that significant irregularities and infringements have occurred while the derogations proposed by this SI are in place.

Do members have any comments?

Maureen Watt: Would asking the Scottish Government to keep us informed be the only question that we would put to it, rather than asking about anything else in relation to the instrument?

The Convener: I was going to propose that the committee could write to the Scottish Government to confirm that it is content for consent to be given and that, in doing so, we could highlight the two issues that I just raised. We would really just be requesting that, if there are any changes, we should be kept informed so that we can reconsider the matter if necessary. Are you happy with that?

Maureen Watt: Yes.

The Convener: Does the committee agree to write to the Scottish Government to confirm that it is content for consent to be given to the UK SI referred to in the notification, and to highlight the two issues that have been brought to our attention in the papers?

I am not seeing anyone disagreeing, so that is agreed.

I remind members that the next meeting of the committee will be on 3 February, in the morning, when we will have an evidence session on the parts of the climate change plan that relate to agriculture and forestry. We will also deal with one SSI and two SIs.

Committee members will now move to another platform to discuss the evidence that we have heard this morning.

12:32

Meeting continued in private until 13:00.

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