



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 25 January 2011

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Printed and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by
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TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE
2nd Meeting 2011, Session 3

CONVENER

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con)
*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)
*Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
*Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)
*Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Roseanna Cunningham (Minister for Environment and Climate Change)
Bob Irvine (Scottish Government Energy and Climate Change Directorate)
Mary Mowat (Scottish Government Cabinet Directorate)
Paul Tyrer (Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

Committee Room 4

Scottish Parliament

Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Tuesday 25 January 2011

[The Deputy Convener *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

“Low Carbon Scotland: Public Engagement Strategy”

The Deputy Convener (Cathy Peattie): Welcome to the second meeting in 2011 of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. Committee members and members of the public should turn off their mobile phones and BlackBerry's because they affect our sound system.

We have received an apology for absence from Jackson Carlaw. Patrick Harvie, the convener, will be along later.

The first item on our agenda today is evidence from the Minister for Environment and Climate Change on the Scottish Government's “Low Carbon Scotland: Public Engagement Strategy”. I extend a warm welcome to the minister; it is her first attendance here as minister, and I hope that it will be positive.

With the minister are three Scottish Government officials: Bob Irvine, deputy director at the energy and climate change directorate, covering the water industry; Mary Mowat, communications manager at the cabinet directorate; and Paul Tyrer, principal research officer at the rural payments and inspections directorate, covering the environment.

Before we ask questions, I invite the minister to make opening remarks.

Roseanna Cunningham (Minister for Environment and Climate Change): Thank you, convener. I have some opening remarks. The job titles of my officials clearly indicate their specific areas of interest. They, too, will be able to respond to questions, if that is required by committee members.

“Low Carbon Scotland: Public Engagement Strategy” was published on 30 December 2010. It sets out how the Scottish Government will work with others to drive forward Scotland's transition to being a low-carbon society. The strategy is the latest in a series of documents that have followed the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. It will be used to help drive forward the messages in the energy efficiency action plan, the low-carbon economic strategy, the zero waste plan and the

draft report on proposals and policies, and it will support their implementation.

The most important part of the public engagement strategy is the annual delivery plan, which brings together for the first time in one document a list of actions that we are taking across the organisation, and actions that we are taking in conjunction with our partners. It is important that we see the plan as a living plan—I expect it to develop and be added to as we gather momentum.

The actions show how we will engage with people across Scotland to raise everyone's awareness of the opportunities that low-carbon living will bring. We particularly want to do more to motivate and inspire young people because, no matter the career path that they choose, the transition to low-carbon living will mean that their generation will have to develop very different skills from their predecessors. For some, it will be a significant change, as they develop expertise in renewables or carbon-capture technologies; for others, it will mean adding green elements and understanding to the more traditional jobs. Our young people can all expect significant changes in how they live, work and travel, and we want to ensure that they are well placed and well informed so that they can take best advantage of that transition.

One innovative project that has been developed for the engagement strategy is our work with Young Scot involving local investigation projects that are led by young people. That will be our chance to hear young people's perspectives of three critical aspects of low-carbon living, and to get their feedback. I look forward to seeing the work develop, and I expect that we will all learn from it.

We also give priority to increasing our engagement with business organisations and the private sector. We expect that 60,000 new jobs could be created in Scotland in renewables, low-carbon technologies and environmental management industries. We know, too, the key role that workplaces can have in engaging with staff on low-carbon living. I hope that the private sector actions that have been outlined in this first year of the public engagement strategy will be developed and increased year on year as we work with businesses and their representative organisations to ensure that employers have access to the information that will help them to benefit from our transition to a low-carbon economy.

The strategy also highlights the important role of communities and individuals who have expertise in low-carbon living and who can share their experience. The climate challenge fund has created a fantastic range of projects that

demonstrate what can be done at local level. We want to build on the expertise that they have developed and identify ways of sharing best practice more widely.

The engagement strategy also takes heed of the role that the public sector can play—both in ensuring that it operates in an increasingly low-carbon way, and in using its role to influence others through the wide range of functions and activities in which it engages.

The strategy sets out, too, the actions that we as individuals can all take in our daily lives to contribute to the achievement of Scotland's targets to reduce emissions. Those actions are tied to a long-term research programme that focuses on behaviour change and will track our progress.

Informing people about the impacts of climate change and about action to adapt to those impacts is another important role for Government. Although we do not have a statutory duty to publish an adaptation programme until 2013, we are already engaging widely on the issue. The public engagement strategy acknowledges some of those activities and is taking the opportunity to bring clarity and read-across to our messages on reducing emissions and adapting to change.

I recognise that this is the first year of a new process. I also recognise that public engagement is a dynamic activity that is subject to feedback and changing demands. It is important that we see engagement not as a one-way process: it must work two ways, if it is to work at all. The creation of an annual delivery plan, which will be reviewed and updated each year, means that we have built in additional flexibility and a formal opportunity for sharing progress with our partners and stakeholders. An internal public engagement implementation group has been established to oversee and evaluate the strategy.

In addition, I intend to add a further strand. This is something that I thought about in early conversations with officials on the issue. In recognition of the key role that our partners will play, I have asked officials to create a new public engagement stakeholders group that will work with the implementation group to ensure open and transparent dialogue on the progress of the public engagement strategy. The plan is that I will chair the stakeholders group when it meets every six months.

I need to be clear about this: the group is not intended to be a group of the usual suspects. My intention is to drill down a lot further to reach the level of people who one might say are already engaged in doing the work, such as the teachers and headteachers in eco-schools and the people who are involved in specific climate challenge projects. That will help us to get feedback from

those who are already actively engaged in the things that we are talking about.

The Deputy Convener: The committee will obviously want to ask questions on your statement. You spoke about the importance of involving people and about how dynamic the two-way process will be. Will you outline to what degree consultation was carried out in developing the public engagement strategy?

Roseanna Cunningham: As I think everyone here will know, we did not engage in a formal consultation process because the strategy is not a policy document. We tried to engage across as wide a spectrum as possible and go out to different groups of people—some were self-evidently the groups to whom we would go out, but others might not have been so obvious, such as the Young Scot network. We tried to identify groups beyond the immediate and obvious likely response area, and we discussed widely across the private, public and third sectors on that basis. A stakeholders workshop was held that included some private sector stakeholders, but it primarily involved third sector bodies. That is not a bad thing, because we have to reach all of the groups, and we took on board a lot of the results from it.

We had wider engagement across many different organisations, with education representative bodies and with the climate challenge fund representatives, which we thought was important. We believe that we engaged widely enough across a number of sectors in development of the strategy—bearing in mind that it is not a one-off strategy, but one that will continue to evolve, so we will continue to have conversations, albeit not in the formal consultative manner in which Government often goes about things.

The Deputy Convener: We are aware that it is a new way of working. A public engagement strategy is important, so I welcome your answer. What consideration was given to publishing the strategy outwith the Christmas holidays, when exposure was always going to be limited?

Roseanna Cunningham: As I understand it, the strategy was only ever going to be published after the other documents were published, which meant that there was a narrow window in which to do it. The other documents were published in November.

I cannot be certain what conversations were taking place before the ministerial change, but the change threw up a bit of a timescale difficulty. I think that 31 December was the actual deadline anyway, and we were anxious to keep publication within the deadline. That meant that the strategy would have to be published on that side of the new year holiday and after the various other

documents were published in November. I do not know whether the officials want to add to what I have said. I came into the job at an advanced stage of the process. I could have been in the business of simply signing it off unseen, but that would not have been appropriate. An unfortunate collection of untimely events meant that we were right up against the deadline.

The Deputy Convener: You will understand that a number of organisations were concerned and felt that there should have been a bigger launch for a public engagement strategy. They did not feel that there was much opportunity to engage.

Roseanna Cunningham: I can see that that might be a concern or criticism, but the truth of the matter is that the publication of the strategy was not a public engagement one-off and we will engage on it throughout the year. We were just in a perfect storm of events that made it difficult to do much else. By the time I came into the job, we were in the run-up to Christmas. I expect that publishing at that time would have brought the same criticisms, anyway. If I had published the strategy a week earlier, the criticism would have been that I was publishing it on Christmas eve, or whatever. Effectively, we would have had to bring forward publication another week and then we would have been into the time around the ministerial change. The way that the timing worked out was just unfortunate. It was not ideal, but we are where we are and that deadline was built into the process.

The Deputy Convener: I am aware that the deadline was set and I understand the difficulties.

Does the Scottish Government have an internal engagement plan on climate change issues for all civil servants and agencies, and if not, is such a lead necessary to complement external engagement strategies?

Roseanna Cunningham: We are doing lots of internal work and lots of cross-organisational work. Anybody who knows how government works—whether at national or local level—will know that lots of hard work has to go into getting people to think beyond their immediate departmental and organisational boundaries, even within the wider organisation. It does not happen just by snapping your fingers.

We now have a single document that details a range of Government actions that are taking place across the Scottish Government. That was quite a big win. It is instead of having separate documents for each of the departments, which might have been the default mechanism for how things work. We have to work quite hard across all those boundaries, so the single document is an achievement in itself.

It is important that we work right across the Government. I have learned quickly that one of the ministerial downsides to this new part of the portfolio landing in my lap is that I have to try simultaneously to make myself an expert on transport, energy and finance as well as on what might be seen as the more immediate environmental and climate change aspects. That we understand that internal engagement has to work right across Government is a testament to that. It is important to say that we are working on that basis. Have we done it perfectly? Probably not. I suspect that no Government engages perfectly and I am not sure that any Government ever will. The whole point is to keep working at it and not just to sign off something and think, "That's it done," and move on.

The Deputy Convener: I agree that it is difficult. Are you confident that climate change issues and the engagement strategy are being mainstreamed across Government departments? Do you feel that there is a problem around awareness raising? Do people have the skills and understanding to be able to deal with it? You flagged up the issue when you said that there was so much to do and that perhaps it takes time. We are interested in what is under way to facilitate that.

14:15

Roseanna Cunningham: It would be fair to say that there will be different levels of understanding between different departments and at different levels within those departments. We will have to tackle that, as will any organisation. This week, a new internal group met for the first time to ensure that we achieve internal engagement and that it is effective and focused on delivery. We are aware of the difficulties that are likely to arise if we do not keep our eye on the situation, and the internal group has been set up to ensure that we do not lose sight of what is happening internally and of the need to read across from department to department.

Of course, by definition, some departments will see themselves as being more in the front line than others. That was probably an easier argument for the energy and transport folk to have made than it might have been for some of the other areas that might not have automatically seen themselves as part and parcel of the issue.

We do what we have to do, and we must keep doing it. We hope that other organisations, big and small, in the public, private and third sectors, think about the issues as well. The bigger an organisation is, the more likely it is to contain different groups that will not necessarily be advancing at the same rate.

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): I want to ask about some of the quotations that the committee used when it reported on the Scottish Government's report on proposals and policies on climate change. The committee was concerned that there was not yet a wide enough acceptance within the general public and public and private sector organisations, although they recognised all the positive benefits of making changes to their lifestyles and organisations. What will the public engagement strategy do to tackle those concerns and to ensure that the behaviour of people and organisations will change in the way that we all hope it will?

Roseanna Cunningham: It is important to recognise that there is a spectrum of opinion among the public at large and we need to decide where we want to focus our biggest effort. Whichever specific policy we are talking about, that will be the overarching issue. On the one hand, there are the people who are already absolutely convinced and are self-starters, who are taking the message and turning it into reality in their own lives. At the other end of the spectrum there is the small group of people who continue to deny climate change and who might refuse as aggressively and noisily as possible to change their behaviour simply to make a point.

The most important part of the population for the public engagement strategy is the huge group of people in the middle who are neither convinced purists nor outright sceptics. They accept at a certain level that there is a problem that needs to be addressed, but they cannot quite see how their behaviour as individuals makes a difference.

Two years ago when I was first made a minister, a big Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey was done, and it highlighted some of the specific obstacles that we have to get over. The clear obstacles that people face are cost and convenience: there is no point in pretending that they are not big issues. We need to tackle whatever aspect we are looking at—it almost does not matter what it is—in language that ordinary people will understand and that will be of benefit to them.

Most people understand the more general benefits of climate change policy, but they have difficulty translating it to their individual level. There is the capacity for all sorts of useful suggestions to come from everywhere. The convener might be pleased to know that I have already asked for, and got a copy of, a document that the Green party published last week. It was published down south so I am not sure whether the convener is aware of it.

The Convener (Patrick Harvie): It is a different Green party.

Roseanna Cunningham: I think that it is a really interesting take on the matter. It talks of using wartime propaganda ideas as a way of getting across the messages. It is a great idea, albeit that it may have to be tweaked. It is arguable, of course, that an actual physical war has a physical end. The scenario is slightly different to what we are talking about in this respect. In getting across the messages, we have to look carefully at such things—indeed, we are looking at them in that way. It is really important that we engage with and talk to as wide a range of people as possible. We have to talk to people who do not come with a script; people who do not necessarily use the same language as we use. It is really important that we talk to the folk out there who are grappling around the edges and need a way in. That will help us and, in return, we will help them.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am pleased that the Government is open to picking up good practice wherever it finds it. Are you picking up on any primary research from Government or others from which we can learn about the barriers to behaviour change?

Roseanna Cunningham: Some of the barriers to behaviour change are set out clearly in the survey of two years ago. As it happens—it is always this way—just this morning I was handed a submission on the climate change behaviours research programme that the Government has instructed. I should also reference an international review of behaviour change initiatives that the University of Manchester will publish on 3 February. Obviously, I have not seen that yet. Receiving the climate change behaviours research programme submission this morning was my first awareness of this work. I am sure that the committee does not want me to read out the submission. We are very much aware of the issue of how to get around some of the big obstacles to effecting individual change, as well as institutional change across all three sectors. I am not sure how much you would like to know about the climate change behaviours research programme. Do you want more information?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Perhaps we could receive something in writing.

Roseanna Cunningham: That might be an idea. I have only just received it this morning. I am sure that you do not want me to read out the submission. I could do it, but—

Shirley-Anne Somerville: It might take up slightly too much time.

Roseanna Cunningham: I want to reassure people that we are very alert to all of this. In terms of the submission, we are talking about a two-

years-on study of the Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey of 2008.

I will reference Green party policy, convener. Last week, Caroline Lucas talked eloquently about darning your socks. When I first came into this job two years ago, I spoke about darning your socks. There you go. Perhaps she got her ideas from us.

The Convener: I will be sure to ask for clarification on the last point next time I see her.

Roseanna Cunningham: She has a darning mushroom, but does she actually darn her socks?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: On that note, I am happy for us to move on, convener. The minister has covered the remainder of my points.

The Convener: Before we move on, I have some supplementary questions on the points that have been raised thus far. I apologise for being a couple of minutes late for the start of the meeting.

In its preparation of the strategy, I want to understand a little more about the Government's assessment of the current state of public engagement with, or attitudes to, climate change. Obviously, we will not get the strategy right if we do not understand the starting point. We need to understand where people are coming from. The kind of collective approach that the minister talked about in speaking of wartime comparisons may be effective. We will not know whether it can be achieved until we know how many people are at the early adopter stage or the dig-your-heels-in denial stage, for example. We will also need to know why people form the views that they form, and the views and types of person in the great mass in the middle. I seek a little more information on that. The text of the strategy does not really say, "Here's our starting point. This is how we know where we are moving forward."

Roseanna Cunningham: There is the Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey, to which I referred previously and which is quite a detailed assessment of behaviours that broke them down in the ways that you talk about. Our intention is to update that continually. We did not redo it in the run-up to the public engagement strategy—we had the survey, which was a snapshot. Any survey would only ever be a snapshot at any one time, but it gave us very clear steers on what the issues are—mainly cost and convenience. Those are the two biggest stumbling blocks that we have to address head on in any public engagement strategy.

Another difficulty is getting people to relate the high-level stuff to their everyday lives. I guess that I am not alone in having people constantly say to me, "But what difference does it make if I do this?" Of course, if only one person does something, it will make no difference, but the point of the

process is that 3.5 million people might do it so that it does make a difference. Paul Tyrer was involved in previous research—he will say whether anything specific was done or whether we relied on information that we already had.

Paul Tyrer (Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate): We did a detailed evidence review internally in the Scottish Government to develop the headline behaviours that appear in the public engagement strategy. However, we have done a range of other work around people's current uptake of those behaviours—on how willing they are to take them on and how able they are to do so. We will publish an interim report from the climate change behaviours research programme in late February. It will contain all that detail. The process has fed into development of the public engagement strategy.

Roseanna Cunningham: Members would find it extraordinarily helpful to look at the Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey. I will ensure that we follow up with the details. The survey is now two years out of date, and will be redone. However, it gives quite a good idea of where people are in their thinking about climate change, and there are clear responses. For example, people absolutely now agree that climate change is a big global issue, but are not so clear that it is a Scottish issue. Such points that arise in surveys can give us pointers on how to tackle the issues, which is why I said that I hope to get past the usual suspects and to engage with people. They will feel some scepticism, but not scepticism about the message; it will be more scepticism about how they can influence or change anything.

The Convener: I look forward to the further data being published in February. We move on to some of the specifics with Marlyn Glen.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): I will be really interested to see the Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey, which I think is key to moving people on. Does the Scottish Government's analysis of evidence suggest that the general public is making any progress in the four core areas of home energy, travel, food and consumption?

Roseanna Cunningham: Obviously, the on-going work will be published, but I do not have any notice of that.

A survey will be developed to establish baselines and track trends every two years until 2020. We are trying to assess the current level of understanding. The anecdotal information is that it is very high. I think that people recognise and understand the issues. However, there are issues around home energy that we cannot run away from. One of those is the very high cost of retrofit

to anyone who is inclined to do that. Retrofitting a whole system seems to me to be out of reach, except for the early adopters, who will commit to it. Energy efficiency can be relatively easily sold on the ground of cost saving. Finding the match between the two is an on-going challenge; absent are the public funds simply to pay for retrofitting for everyone. That would be great, but the funds are not there.

On travel, we have big issues—

14:30

Marlyn Glen: I am sorry to interrupt you, but I have another question about home energy. You can see that there is an important gap between people's understanding and whether they are doing things. What assessment was made of existing public engagement on home energy issues?

Roseanna Cunningham: That is part of the on-going survey, which will be published in February. It is included in that research.

Marlyn Glen: Okay.

Bob Irvine (Scottish Government Energy and Climate Change Directorate): One of the suite of low-carbon documents that the Government published was the energy efficiency action plan; again, that was a requirement under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The plan reviewed in considerably more detail where things stood and considered the best way of approaching particular issues and customer difficulties and/or resistances. As the minister summarised, an important challenge to us in developing the implementation aspect of the engagement strategy is pulling together energy efficiency work and various other strands of continuing activity, so that we present as complete a package as possible and feed off the various momentums that exist. Quite a lot of the detail is included in the energy efficiency work.

Marlyn Glen: The minister was about to move on to travel, which is one of the four main areas that are to be considered. Will the need to achieve success in the delivery of the strategy result in changed perceptions, in Scottish Government transport policy terms, of the types of travel choices that ought to be available and that are seen as reasonable or socially inclusive in modern Scotland?

Roseanna Cunningham: We are already actively promoting sustainable transport choices. We think that that is the right approach at this stage. One of the biggest difficulties with people choosing public transport is its availability and convenience. As someone who has never owned a car, I struggle with that issue sometimes. The

key to the ideal situation is to satisfy all concerns about availability and convenience, which will take a considerable time to do.

Support for sustainable and active travel has increased from £21.2 million to £25.1 million, which is good, given the position of our finances. There has been increased investment in cycling, although we must accept that that will work better in some areas than in others. None of the approaches will work throughout the country; it will be better to focus some of them on some parts of the country, rather than others. At the moment, seven pilot communities are involved in a £15 million programme to increase active travel. The outcome of those projects will help us to work out how to roll out the programme beyond those communities to best effect.

Transport is a big issue. It cuts right to the heart of some of what we are trying to do on climate change, because it involves asking people not to do the individually convenient thing—just to jump into their car—all the time but to do something that they will see as more inconvenient, for the sake of their neighbour or the wider community. That cuts right to the heart of people's daily lives. I foresee that it is likely to be one of the biggest obstacles that the research that we are doing will identify.

Anybody who has a car will, in the main, use it even for very short journeys. Even in the areas where having a car is arguably a necessity for longer journeys but not for shorter journeys, people will still use it for shorter journeys if it is there. That is a big individual behaviour change that we have to try to effect. I am prejudging the results, but I suspect that that is one of the biggest obstacles.

Marlyn Glen: I presume that the challenge is to change that whole perception of the car being the most convenient form of transport, which obviously—

Roseanna Cunningham: Indeed. That is hard. I have never owned a car, so I have to try to put myself psychologically into the head of somebody who does, but I perceive that people see their car as an extension of their home, rather than as what it can be seen as objectively. Therefore, asking people to change their behaviour in relation to their car is almost like stepping into somebody's living room and asking them to change their behaviour in their living room. That is what I perceive it to be about; it is about personal space, which can be hardest to deal with. As I have indicated, I speak somewhat as an outsider on the issue, so I am not entirely clear what is at the core of it.

Marlyn Glen: I have always thought that the personal is the political anyway, so I do not have a

problem with asking people to change their behaviour in that way.

I will move on. The strategy states that getting people to avoid food waste and eat a healthy diet are areas where a contribution could be made to reducing household emissions. What consideration has been given to the concept of local food or slow food in the development of the strategy?

Roseanna Cunningham: The strategy calls for a greater emphasis on reducing and reusing in addition to efforts that are already being made on recycling. Those are the areas that are probably easier to talk to people about, because they are among the most obvious initial things to do. The Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey that was carried out two years ago, which I have already referenced, indicated that those were the behaviours that individuals took up more quickly and more directly—they are the lines of least resistance. Of course, the economic climate has added to those actions; people immediately translate them into costs, savings and all the rest of it. Those are the areas where I think that we can still get some of the biggest wins, because they are the ones that are of most immediate and obvious benefit to people and overcome the inbuilt obstacles that some of the others have.

Nevertheless, a huge number of folk out there still have not yet really taken on board some of the messages about reusing, recycling and so on. There is still a huge amount of work to do. Finding the right language to affect their individual behaviour will be really important. I suspect that the trick of that might be to recognise that different language is needed for different communities. I am clear that we cannot use the word “community” to refer to a single entity. We now exist in a variety of communities that overlap. People will receive different messages in those different communities, so we need to find the right way of speaking to them, in terms that mean that they are most likely to take on the messages.

When I came into this job and looked at the public engagement strategy, I was interested in the fact that we were talking about eco-congregations as well as eco-schools. That is quite important, because those are communities that we do not necessarily speak to directly in the way that you might expect or the language that you might choose. I thought that it was interesting that Cardinal O’Brien made a big thing about the need for a simpler lifestyle. The language used to reach that section of the population might be more resonant if it is different from the language that we use to reach other groups.

I am absolutely clear that there is not going to be a one-size-fits-all message. That presents a challenge, too, because we should avoid the

danger of going so far down the multiple messages route that we confuse the issue. There is a constant tension in getting the right message for one community without confusing the issue across the board.

Marlyn Glen: I know that there have been pilots to encourage slow food and promote locally produced food.

Roseanna Cunningham: Indeed. Perth is a cittaslow city, so I am very conscious of such movements.

Marlyn Glen: It would be good to see them promoted in the engagement strategy.

Roseanna Cunningham: There is also the Fife diet—people such as Mike Small are extraordinarily visionary and have done a hugely impressive amount of work. The cittaslow movement is extremely good.

We are currently up against the challenge of the economic climate, because in such circumstances people often run to the cheapest option. However, an interesting point is that over the past couple of years, with the Government’s national food and drink strategy, sales of Scottish-produced food have gone up. People are deliberately and in increasing numbers choosing to buy more local produce. That is on a Scotland-wide basis, but the message is beginning to have an effect. There will be various sections of the community for whom the message is difficult to take on board, because they will still have to look at either the cheapest or the most convenient, which of course are not always the same.

The Convener: I have some questions on the specifics. What role does the Government leading by example have in reinforcing public engagement? On travel, for example, one of the three areas highlighted in the strategy is:

“Using alternatives to flying where practical”.

How easy is it to sell that message publicly if the Government is still using aviation to get to London from the central belt?

Roseanna Cunningham: There is a constant tension, which we have to acknowledge. We are working as hard as we can to reduce air travel. Sometimes it comes down to a simple trade-off with the ability to maximise time, and there are times when it is possible to use alternatives to flying and times when it really is not. We minimise air travel as much as we can, and personally I have been involved in an awful lot of teleconferences with people in Westminster. I do not think that I have flown down to London once since I have been a minister, although I have flown to Brussels. Part of that is simply that other ways of getting there take up so much time that it becomes a problem.

The Convener: For mainland domestic routes, the time difference is relatively small. If we are asking people to make their calculations differently, do we not have to do the same?

Roseanna Cunningham: Absolutely. I would not run away from that as it is something that has to be looked at carefully. We have made some progress, but we have not made anything like the progress that we want to make. I do not suppose that air travel will ever be completely ruled out as a mode of transport, but it is necessary to minimise its use. As the minister, I certainly want to push that as hard as I can.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I will take up that point for a second. The journey between Edinburgh and Wick takes nine hours by train, but an hour and a quarter by air. We have to recognise that Scotland is bigger than the bubble that exists between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

On consumption of goods and services, we are talking about reducing and reusing in addition to the recycling message. What consideration was given to the inclusion in the strategy of actions that would seek to address the way in which Scottish society regards the accumulation of material and other goods in the first place, thus reducing the need for disposal routes?

Roseanna Cunningham: I am not entirely clear what you are asking.

Rob Gibson: I am asking whether there are ways of reducing consumption, because the more we consume, the more disposal routes there have to be for the things that we consume.

Roseanna Cunningham: Cardinal O'Brien's simpler lifestyle—is that it, Rob?

Rob Gibson: It could well be. If you think that we can sell that in the public engagement strategy, how will we do that?

14:45

Roseanna Cunningham: I suppose that you could sell it faster to some communities than to others. On one level, the current economic climate makes it easier to sell it across the board. We could all do with reducing the accumulation of stuff—I note that a new book that is along those lines was published relatively recently. We should all be passing on the message to others.

Before any of my officials jump in, I have something to say on a personal basis. I find it hard to deal with the economic message out there that people need to consume to help the economy. When people talk about consuming less or living a simpler lifestyle, they are often jumped on by those for whom consumption is how they measure their business and from which they make their

profits. We need to engage in that conversation. Perhaps we should talk about more intelligent consumption—I do not know. There might be ways of making the discussion more manageable somehow, within the scenario in which a collapse in consumption means that half the high street shops close, people lose their jobs and local economies are destroyed—if that is what is happening. There is a big tension that comes from the different messages that emanate from different places. Paul Tyrer may want to jump in at this point.

Paul Tyrer: The climate change behaviours research programme will look at that area, which some of the climate challenge fund projects have also explored. Reducing consumption is one of the most difficult and challenging areas in which to tackle and shift behaviour. We will look at successful examples from elsewhere of ways in which we might be able to do that.

Roseanna Cunningham: We are up against the same thing that we are often up against: the read-across from the individual's behaviour to the behaviour of the broader community. I return to car usage as an example that works in the reduce/reuse scenarios. I am absolutely certain that everybody agrees that car usage needs to be reduced and that non-essential journeys should not happen, but it is interesting to note that people always qualify that by saying that their own journeys are essential.

An issue that is often dear to a woman's heart is whether we really need that new pair of shoes. We may not need new shoes to walk around the streets, but need and want have become almost the same thing in our society and unpicking that will be very difficult. The challenge that Rob Gibson raises is the challenge that we have to try to address. As long as want is an essential part of our economy, we will find this difficult to unpick. We would be unwise to run away from some of these difficult challenges or not to acknowledge that they are going to be difficult to unpick.

Mary Mowat (Scottish Government Cabinet Directorate): I will raise an area that is perhaps easier to deal with than some of the broader issues. Among the examples in the actions that are listed in the programme for the year is the Scottish business in the community action, which is about linking people on a university masters course to good opportunities in small and medium-sized enterprises. The students learn on the job and are given free access to the SMEs, which get the students to do a carbon assessment for them and advise them on where they can reduce energy usage. That saves small companies money, helps the education of university students and reduces energy usage. It is an easier win-win area that we want to cover and ensure that we deliver this year.

Roseanna Cunningham: The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment would probably not want me to miss this opportunity to mention the zero waste plan, which is developing support for reuse centres—for example, for used furniture. I would not want to annoy Richard Lochhead by not pointing that out. It is part and parcel of what we are trying to do, but as I said there are caveats. We need to acknowledge that there are difficulties, some of which all of us in our personal behaviours probably exhibit from time to time.

Rob Gibson: I shall download music instead of buying CDs.

Looking at the situation in the round, we can see that there are other countries—Germany, for example—where people have been broadly buying into changing their behaviour over, say, 20 years. It is obviously not possible to expect Scotland to be at that stage at the moment. However, it is also nearly impossible to say that someone should not have a new kitchen unit or a new suite for the front room. Nevertheless, we need to understand whether the engagement strategy will be able to draw on information about how other places have changed that could help us to know how to tackle not only the broad issue of making the change but the specifics. For example, on consumption, do we want to say to people, “If you buy a good one, you may not need to change it so often”?

Roseanna Cunningham: That is a fair point. The stuff that is coming out of the University of Manchester might cover that because it is looking at international examples, so we may get some useful information from that. There is no easy answer to the problem, because we are tackling behaviours that are pretty ingrained. At one level, the economic climate means that we can make stronger arguments from the point of view of cost that might have been harder to make five years ago, because across the board people are now looking at ways in which to reduce their expenditure, which is likely to involve reducing their continued consumption of things. On the other hand, as I said, another message that is coming out very strongly is that consumption is the way out of the economic depression. The existence of those two messages makes it more difficult to engage with people at the level of their individual behaviour.

Rob Gibson: I had better move on because I am conscious of the time and there are lots of other questions.

We very much welcome the strategy's engagement principles. How were they developed?

Roseanna Cunningham: An official who has been deeply involved in that over the past year might want to answer.

Mary Mowat: In developing the engagement principles, we looked at principles that we have learned from other communications activity within Government, but we also cast the net more widely. We were interested in some of the more recent research and communications publications on climate change, such as the climate change communication advisory group's “Communicating climate change to mass public audiences”. Another document that I found very interesting is the Green Alliance's “From hot air to happy endings”. There is also a document that was produced for our marketing people and which is specifically about some of the greener Scotland marketing activities and big campaigns that we have undertaken in the past year or so. We pulled together those documents and advice and information from other places, and looked at what came through again and again as the things that should and should not be done. There was quite a bit of regularity about that, which we found very interesting. We developed that work collectively, talked to our research colleagues, and boiled it down to the engagement principles that are in the strategy document.

Rob Gibson: It will be interesting to see how that relates to my next question. Are the strategy's principles used in all engagement initiatives that the Scottish Government has developed?

Mary Mowat: A good number of them will be.

Rob Gibson: Can you give an example?

Mary Mowat: A prime example involves an issue that we are very aware of around using plain English, cutting jargon and being consistent and clear in our messages to people. It is often easy within Government for us to use acronyms when we talk to one another. However, as well as using such shorthand among ourselves, we have to be quite disciplined in ensuring that we communicate in a way that is helpful to our audience. We are always aware of that communication principle. Although we are not always great at doing it, we are very aware of the fact that we need to get better at doing it, so it had to be built into the principles in the strategy document, for example.

Rob Gibson: A number of points about that come into my mind, given that it is Burns night, but I will not make them at the moment.

On plain English, the initiatives that the Government takes and the green developments that you were talking about, is there an example of a campaign that influenced you to set up the engagement principles? Did you draw on any from the past couple of years?

Mary Mowat: We did not draw on one campaign in particular, but we looked at research that had been done post campaigns to see what worked and what did not work and talked to colleagues in other Government departments in other parts of the UK. One of the things that was found not to work was a focus on the negative. In the early days of communicating about climate change a lot was said about how what we do affects far-flung places. Research showed that people either found that overwhelming—they found it too difficult to understand the connection between what they do in their daily life and the impact on Greenland and so on—or found it a bit frightening and therefore stepped back from it. The message that came through in a number of pieces of research that we looked at was that we should focus not only on the big stuff but on what individuals can do in their community that is useful, practical and helpful. That message has come through in the past 18 months. There are other examples, but that was the overwhelming message. Initially with big campaigns, the thought was that we have to get that big global message across, but that was found not to be quite as effective as saying, “Here’s some positive suggestions for going greener.”

Rob Gibson: So you will be able to evolve the engagement principles on the basis of experience.

Mary Mowat: Indeed. We are always learning and we will always work with the research.

Roseanna Cunningham: As I said in my opening remarks, the whole process with the public engagement strategy is not about seeing it as a signed-off document and putting it to one side but about using it as a living document. That means that you have constantly to readdress the issues that are raised in it. I have talked about the survey that will be published soon. Can Paul Tyrer tell us whether it will be done every two years, or are we doing another one every two years?

Paul Tyrer: We will publish an interim report based on the evidence review that we have done in February. This year, we are developing a survey model in which we will ask a range of questions about the headline behaviours. That will be published every two years.

Roseanna Cunningham: So that will be done on a rolling two-yearly basis. Other surveys will assist. We will be able to mine the standard surveys, such as the Scottish household survey and the Scottish house condition survey, for useful information. That will be a constant and on-going process. It will have to be, because the point at which you measure that a message is not working is the point at which you have to decide that you will revisit it and go back to the drawing board.

The Convener: Rob Gibson is quite right that we are running short of time. If we are to allow adequate time for the rest of the agenda, I will have to ask members and the minister to keep questions and answers as short and to the point as possible.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): I will turn to the delivery plan for 2011. It seems to me that it is very detailed—it has more than 60 actions in it—perhaps in an attempt to cover all the bases rather than to bring about a step change. Minister, you spoke enthusiastically about engaging with the general public in the middle of that spectrum, but the reality seems to be that the delivery plan for this year is heavily reliant on engagement with the existing players in the public and private sectors. Will you comment on that?

Roseanna Cunningham: We have put out a detailed delivery plan, some of which is about action that is already taking place; it is not action that has just been conceived of and put out there as a big long list. It is important that we acknowledge that a lot of action is taking place. These are specific actions, but the general engagement that I am talking about is overarching. I suppose that we have two different levels. We have the strategy level, which is about some of what we have been talking about, and the more specific delivery plan, which is not about strategy but about some of the mechanisms by which we can engage in concrete terms. That is what I see as the difference—one aspect does not preclude the other. The delivery plan arises from the broader strategy.

Much of the work will continue. Of course, it is not exclusively in the Government’s gift. We are clear about the fact that we must involve everybody. Engagement is about not just Scottish Government engagement but engagement across the board and at every level.

I see Paul Tyrer twitching, which probably means that he is thinking of something that he does not expect me to say, so I had better bring him in.

15:00

Paul Tyrer: I was not thinking of anything in particular—I was just nodding.

Roseanna Cunningham: You were just nodding—okay; that is always useful.

By having a delivery plan, any Government runs the risk that someone will come along at the end of the year and say, “You had 60 actions in your delivery plan but you did only 43 of them.” That is always possible.

The action that I referenced in my opening remarks to create the stakeholder forum that I

want, at the level at which I want it, is not in the plan because, until I got my eyes on the documents, such a forum was not in place. We could almost argue that there are now 61 actions. I guess that actions will be added to the plan as we move through any year. I do not want it to be seen as a definitive list from which we will not depart, or vice versa. I do not know whether that helps.

Alison McInnes: That is helpful—thank you.

The previous major change that the country needed many individuals to make related to zero waste—reuse and recycling. We are further down that road than the climate change road. Significant changes in individuals' behaviour in relation to waste have been made. What lessons have been learned from those changes? We have had many Government messages in the past decade about waste. What worked and what did not work?

Roseanna Cunningham: I will ask my officials to respond briefly, but the biggest message is that a push-pull scenario is needed—that was what the activity was about. Some pull came from changing how waste was collected and how people thought about matters and some push related to addressing costs to the personal purse. The bigger and more strategic message from work on waste is that a combination of push and pull is needed—that is what made the measures work. The waste situation is not perfect and we are still working on it, but it is interesting that people have adopted such behaviours most easily. That is because of the push-pull basis.

I do not know whether Paul Tyrer wants to speak.

Paul Tyrer: I do—I will contribute now.

A key aspect of the zero waste agenda is that social norms have been affected by the placing of infrastructure on the street. Having recycling bins on the street sends a clear message to people that they should take recycling seriously. In the climate change behaviours research programme, we will consider closely whether we can influence social norms for all the behaviours that we have identified.

Alison McInnes: Whenever we talk about climate change, a consistent theme from the committee is that early action is needed. Does the strategy have enough urgency?

Roseanna Cunningham: I am not entirely sure what issues you would define as urgent. We are already doing much that we are talking about. The public engagement strategy will give a strategic focus to some sets of initiatives that are in train. On urgency, we are not starting with a blank sheet of paper, so I am not entirely certain what you might expect to see that is not in the strategy.

We have already taken forward quite a lot of things, so they have been brought under the public engagement strategy umbrella, and we have imposed on them a structure through which we not only take them forward, but develop new things. A strategy is not about urgency. I suppose that you are saying that the delivery plan is urgent.

Alison McInnes: I suppose that the issue relates to a previous question and to how the strategy relates to the report on proposals and policies. Do we need a push-pull approach? Can we get enough change at the right speed in the programme, or is it very gradual?

Roseanna Cunningham: I do not think that we can afford its being very gradual. We need some push-pull, and we will have to work out where that will work best. That will be harder in some areas than in others.

Alison McInnes: Finally, you have explored the idea of a digital communication group. Does the Government already have a digital communication strategy, or is this the start of one?

Roseanna Cunningham: We want to try to build digital communication into every project. Therefore, rather than have another document on the digital communication strategy, we want to make digital communication part and parcel of the way in which we communicate about everything. We almost assume and take for granted that digital communication will be used, because it would be absurd not to work in that way in this day and age. The proposal in the strategy relates specifically to climate change and will take place during 2011, so we are moving on that, but the assumption is that everything that we do will involve digital communication.

The Convener: One action in the delivery plan for 2011 is the production of a set of headline messages about the changes that the climate can be expected to go through and the impact of those changes, which can act as a stimulus for debates about how to minimise those impacts. Can you give any more information about the process for developing those messages and how that meshes with the Government's adaptation strategy?

Roseanna Cunningham: I have been advised that some of the approach was generated by Richard Lochhead in conjunction with other United Kingdom Administration ministers and that there will be a meeting in February to progress the matter. I confess that I am wary of entering into a discussion about the background to the issue, as I am not completely au fait with it.

The Convener: That is understood.

Roseanna Cunningham: We can follow the issue up in a letter.

The Convener: Perhaps you could give us a written update on progress and the timescale that you expect.

Roseanna Cunningham: Yes, that would be fine. We will produce a set of headline messages, but because the impetus for that appears to have come from Richard Lochhead, I am a little wary about saying exactly what it means.

The Convener: That is fine. We can pursue the matter in writing.

Education institutions—schools, colleges, universities and community education institutions—have a range of positive opportunities for engaging with us, but perhaps the same things cannot be done in the different settings. Is there an issue to do with the diverse range of institutions in education? Will anything make it difficult to turn potential into reality? Will the Scottish Government make resources available to fund actions under the education heading?

Roseanna Cunningham: There is an education issue that relates to what I said earlier. We must develop languages that are appropriate to different sectors and communities. Obviously, talking and delivering messages to primary school children is a different kettle of fish from talking and delivering messages to people in further education or universities, or, indeed, people who are completely outwith the formal education structure—the vast majority of adults are no longer in that structure, of course. Education must be taken in its broader sense.

Most of the education focus in the public engagement strategy concerns education with a capital E. We are talking about the education sector and the delivery of messages through mechanisms with which we are already working—eco-schools and the curriculum for excellence, which provides an interesting platform for a lot of what we do.

The Convener: What resources is the Government able to put in place to ensure that those different settings can engage with the process?

Roseanna Cunningham: That funding will come out of the mainstream education budget, not the climate change budget. That takes us back to the early part of the discussion about read-across and a whole-Government approach. It would be difficult—although I suppose that it would be an interesting exercise—to establish within each different directorate what we could allocate specifically to climate change. That would be hard to do because we are trying to mainstream the delivery of climate change messages across all Government.

I am looking at the officials to see whether they have a different message, but I do not think that they do.

Mary Mowat: I simply add that, in developing the actions and strategies, it has been interesting to pull together officials from the schools sector, the Young Scot project—which is a new, one-off project for this year—community learning and development and higher education and consider collectively how all their engagement work marries up. That is a big part of mainstreaming and is happening already.

Roseanna Cunningham: That might sound a little vague, but the truth of the matter is that it is difficult to isolate a figure when we are trying to mainstream the agenda across all the various directorates.

The Convener: We are short of time, so we might be able to explore that matter in further detail at a future meeting.

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): Minister, you have touched on my question already, but will you say a wee bit more about reaching out to voluntary and community organisations and individuals who are not self-selecting? In particular, will you say something about reaching individuals who are hard to reach and/or resistant to climate change messages?

Roseanna Cunningham: To take the last point first, there will be useful information on that from the 2008 survey and the current research programme. A lot depends on the reasons why people are resistant. If they are resistant because they simply do not believe in climate change, I am not sure that we can do an awful lot that is not about changing regulations and laws, because such people will not be easily influenced to change their behaviours.

The bigger group of people are those who find it difficult to make the link between what they might accept is a problem and how they can make a direct impact on it at an individual level, which they do not see. They are the biggest challenge for us, because we have to find the way to get to them, which will be difficult. That is why organisations across the voluntary and public sectors will be key to getting the messages to such people, many of whom will interact with a variety of different organisations.

I suspect that there will always be resistance to behaviour change, although one hopes among a small and diminishing section of the population. We try to work across as wide a range of organisations as possible, right down to the community level, which is why I want to use the stakeholder forum to try to reach out right now to as many individuals as we can, including those who might be most resistant for whatever reason.

However, we must first of all understand why resistance exists. Without that knowledge, it is hard to develop a way of coping with it.

Charlie Gordon: Will you identify the main barriers to the private sector's engagement with the climate change agenda? How does that link to private sector actions in relation to the RPP?

15:15

Roseanna Cunningham: I suppose the biggest barriers are the same as for individuals and are to do with cost and convenience. Most businesses will look at the work simply in terms of what will benefit them. The benefits can come in a variety of ways. I spoke at a conference yesterday afternoon and after my speech there was a presentation about the selling point that comes from a business being badged, honestly, as green or whatever. There is a high degree of public scepticism about self-applied labels, because people are not convinced that they tell the truth. However, the presentation was about the huge benefit that exists to businesses where such labels can be applied with a degree of confidence. People—although not as many as we would want—are beginning to look around and choose to buy or engage services from companies that they feel are green, ethical or whatever.

We only have to look at the huge explosion in fair trade, for example, to see the possibilities that exist when people have that degree of confidence, but the degree of confidence is important. That is a more vague benefit that can be sold to businesses, but more and more of them are beginning to see that it is important. For most businesses, the issue is probably still the bottom line and what savings they can make—energy efficiency saves their company money. In that sense, I suppose that they are less interested in why they are doing it and more interested in the result. The private sector can be engaged quite readily with that language, and more and more businesses are genuinely seeing that there are possibilities.

It is harder to get businesses to see some other aspects. Some months ago I attended a biodiversity business breakfast and I could see from the faces of those from some businesses there that they could not quite get to why they should be involved. I guess that there are still businesses that are at that level in relation to climate change. In general, the situation is the same as it is with the individuals that we have talked about: some businesses are much further down the line than others. If they are the successful ones, they will become exemplars for others, which is really important.

There are barriers. Small businesses will always have a bigger difficulty simply because they do not have the resources to do some of the things that might be needed or to analyse their activities, but we are aware of that and we want to try to put in place particular support for small businesses that will allow them to effect change, too. We have to remember that the private sector encompasses everything from the single self-employed individual all the way up to the massive multinational company, and the same message is not going to work for everybody.

Charlie Gordon: I accept that partnership with the private sector is essential for delivery, but is it wholly appropriate for the 2011 delivery plan to attribute to one company—Scottish and Southern Energy—six of the actions therein?

Roseanna Cunningham: That is because it is one of the companies that are pretty far out in terms of doing the work. If we are going to talk about exemplars for the private sector, we have to be up front and acknowledge that. Ian Marchant has been very keen on some of the climate change work that has been going on and there is recognition that SSE has not just delivered up to now but continues to do so. Its existence is a challenge to others—particularly to other power companies, although not just to them, because it is a challenge to other really big companies. There are benefits to be gotten from changed behaviour. I do not see any difficulty in our acknowledging that up front.

The Convener: Cathy Peattie has a supplementary question.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): Forgive me. I want to go back to the community engagement issue.

Minister, you spoke about involving voluntary and community organisations in stakeholder discussions. That is positive, but I am concerned about individuals who are hard to reach—people in communities who think that this is not about them. It is a hearts-and-minds issue, because just struggling through their daily lives can be a difficulty for those people. Some of the discussions—not just with you, but our discussions as well—sound very middle class, with people saying, “We’ll do good things, and we’ll do good things for poor people too.” How do we ensure that the community development work happens? How do we ensure that people recognise that this is about them, rather than people being, if you like, in a ghetto, thinking that it is about someone else? Are we forgetting about those people?

Roseanna Cunningham: That is a good point, and it is what drives my desire not to sit around a table with the usual suspects. The danger is that we end up talking to each other rather than to the

groups that we are talking about. In developing the stakeholder forum idea, I was thinking about groups of people at a much more local level. It would not be a fixed forum; in other words, the people who meet in the first six months might not be the same people who meet the next time. We need to get out to as many groups as possible, which might involve a huge range of groups, including pensioners' organisations. It is really important to do that because if we do not, we will just be preaching at each other from a script that we already know. I am really concerned that we should not do that. I very much want to get down to the level of the people who might not yet see that they have a role to play.

Two years ago, when I talked about darning your socks, I said that we could start learning behaviours from our grandparents and great-grandparents. What was interesting was that I began to get letters from people saying that that was a really good idea. It is important that we get right out there to the people for whom those behaviours would have just been automatic. Above a certain age group, there is not much that we can tell people about make do and mend because that is how they lived their lives. Some of those people will be among the most challenged in terms of their economic circumstances, but reconnecting with them is extraordinarily important.

Cathy Peattie: Minister, when we talk about public consultation and public engagement there is a danger of simply seeing it in terms of the gatekeepers—the people who think that they know what people are thinking. I despair, as I am sure you do, that that is often what happens. You have expressed the need to get beyond that.

Roseanna Cunningham: The difficulty is getting beyond the gatekeepers. We have to ensure that we are at the level of the most local organisations, so that the gatekeepers that we are talking about are not the ones that we perhaps recognise at a more national level. It will not be easy to engage face to face with every single adult human being in Scotland, so we have to begin with organisations that operate at a much more local level in various areas. I am sure that every member of Parliament will know of extremely active local organisations that would probably be delighted to be asked for their feelings and opinions but are not often asked. Those are the ones that I want to engage with. We have to take it to a certain level. Beyond that, given our resources at this stage, we are probably talking about survey mechanisms rather than one-to-one methods.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The delivery plan details a number of actions, some of which will be the responsibility of the Scottish Environment

Protection Agency. Will SEPA be sufficiently resourced to deliver all the additional actions that are included in the plan, particularly the requirement to be a best practice exemplar?

Roseanna Cunningham: It is important to acknowledge the work that SEPA has already been doing in a range of areas related to the strategy. SEPA is one of the agencies in Government that has worked hardest to change its internal culture, which is extraordinarily important. I engage with SEPA regularly to ensure that it is properly resourced and able to do the things that we are asking of it. I would expect to hear from it pretty instantly if it had significant concerns about what it was being asked to do. I am confident that SEPA can deliver whatever it is asked to do. In fact, SEPA is currently pitching to do more things than we have asked it to do because, as an organisation, it is interested in the climate change side of things. Far from there being concerns about its resourcing, there might be concerns about its ambition.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: That is a good thing.

Roseanna Cunningham: Absolutely, and it is one that I want to encourage.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I will move on to local authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. A great deal will have to be done in partnership with councils. What is the Scottish Government doing to ensure that public engagement is included in any discussions on single outcome agreements and in other discussions that the Government has with COSLA and councils, to ensure that they deliver on the climate change agenda?

Roseanna Cunningham: Public engagement is part and parcel of the discussions that regularly take place between John Swinney's team and COSLA on many such issues. I know that there is a bit of a tension, which is always about money. As I indicated earlier, if we had the money, some of these things would be easier, but we do not, and we have to find ways to work around that.

The single outcome agreement issue is an interesting one. Some research was done last year, by an individual MSP I think, about what appeared in single outcome agreements in respect of a specific issue—biodiversity, I think it was. It was found that very few single outcome agreements acknowledged biodiversity up front. I had a look at the research and I discovered that a lot of local authorities were doing more good work than they necessarily acknowledged themselves, through aligning single outcome agreements. That said, I caution against an assumption that single outcome agreements are all that local authorities are about. Many local authorities are doing a lot more than what is outlined in SOAs. When I

discover that to be the case, I ask the local authority concerned, "Why on earth do you not have that in the SOA?" If they are already doing something, what is the point of not including it? That is my cautionary note about single outcome agreements. As I have discovered, they are not the be-all and end-all.

We are still working through single outcome agreements—they are new and came in only a couple of years ago—and we are working to develop them to the best capacity, but I reiterate that slight note of caution. I have discovered local authorities doing a heck of a lot more than their single outcome agreements would suggest—we have to go behind the agreements.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The work that is being jointly undertaken with trade unions is also important. The Scottish Government and the Scottish Trades Union Conference signed a joint communiqué on climate change in 2009. Has that delivered any measurable success, and how will it be developed, now that we have the public engagement strategy?

Roseanna Cunningham: We must continue to work with the STUC, which will be an important partner, as it provides a significant mechanism by which some of the messages can be disseminated—and to a group of people who might not necessarily take them on otherwise.

Some of the same issues will arise in respect of the STUC. Its principal concern is not climate change, but the security of jobs and employment, which is understandable. We need to continue to work hard with the STUC to ensure that it takes on the message in a robust way. It is a matter of continuing dialogue. The public engagement strategy is not the be-all and end-all; it is a matter of embarking on a process by which we engage with sectors such as those represented through the STUC. I do not know whether we can quite call it the third sector, which it is at one level; the STUC probably sees itself as quite different from the third sector. Anyway, we acknowledge the continuing importance of the STUC, through its membership.

The STUC is as strong as its individual members, rather than just as an organisation in itself. The organisation is a mechanism through which we can get messages to individual members. We can consider persuading the STUC to help us in discussions with employers in both the public and the private sectors. Having the STUC and the trade unions on board when it comes to the climate change agenda will be important for ensuring successful outcomes to our discussions.

15:30

The Convener: You managed to avoid that ghastly word "stakeholder"; I am grateful for that, at any rate.

Roseanna Cunningham: I think that I might have used it.

Cathy Peattie: I am interested in monitoring and evaluation. You have rightly said that this is a work in progress and that processes will develop, but I am interested in how we will know whether the strategy is working. Where will the monitoring start from? What indicators will be put in place? Will they be sector based? Clearly, if we are to move forward, we need to know where we are starting from and how we will monitor and evaluate the work that is taking place to enable any changes that need to happen in the future to be implemented.

Roseanna Cunningham: There is an implementation group, which will deal with a lot of those issues. I will not mention the S-word, but it might come into play at that point. The group has been established and it will oversee, manage and evaluate the strategy as it goes through. As it happens, Bob Irvine is the chair of the implementation group—there are obviously other members of the group.

Where you perhaps missed my use of the S-word, convener, was in my opening remarks. I want to knit it into the implementation of the strategy, because the forum that I talked about will be a constant check on the effectiveness of some of the measures that we have mentioned. I anticipate that being done on a six-monthly basis, so there are a couple of things on the go that will constantly monitor and evaluate what is happening. The implementation group will develop a forward programme of announcements and engagements. I think that you have seen one of those already: the Young Scot initiative that we announced prior to today. That is also, in a sense, part of the evaluation process. We do not want to make the evaluation too mechanistic.

Cathy Peattie: The Young Scot initiative is welcome, but it is a project. I am asking what indicators are in place and about looking at where we are starting from. It is difficult to measure how successful something is if you have not measured where you are starting from and you are not very clear about what the indicators will be. How can you measure outcomes if you do not know what the indicators are? Should that not happen at the start?

Roseanna Cunningham: That is all fine and dandy if you want us to spend another six or nine months developing such indicators. We either start now, or we spend a lot of time in front of Excel spreadsheets setting up tick boxes and what have

you. The whole point about the implementation group is to evaluate the strategy on an on-going basis, and the whole point about the forum that I am talking about is to have a regular six-monthly check at the ground level, if you like, on whether the measures are working. If you want it to be done by developing yet more lists of things to check off, tick off and all the rest of it, we can, by all means, do that, but I would far rather that we spent the time and energy getting on and doing it.

Cathy Peattie: I suggest that that is a cop out. For any strategy that is produced, you need to be clear about how successful it should be. Surely such a process should have been ready now, rather than having an implementation group working on it all the way along. Of course it is important that that group is there, but surely a process of monitoring and evaluation must be in place first. Otherwise, how will we know that the strategy is working? How will we know that the situation is improving? How will we ensure that where we are now is not where we hope to be next year? How do we measure progress?

Roseanna Cunningham: I have already talked about the rolling programme of surveys that will measure progress in real terms with the people who are not only the most affected, but those we most need to get to. I am not sure that developing a whole set of evaluations, indicators and all the rest of it would help. Frankly, I see that as the cop out, rather than getting on and doing it. Bob Irvine wants to comment.

Bob Irvine: That is perfectly right as regards the strategy itself. It is important that all these actions continue and gather their own momentum, but it is also important that the strategy is seen as part of the suite of low-carbon documents. The most important, and the sharpest target that the Government has to deliver on is the emissions reduction target, which the RPP sets out. The committee has asked how the Government will monitor progress on the RPP and we will present further information on the matter as the document is finalised. The test of the effectiveness of the public engagement strategy will be whether we make sufficient progress on the emissions reduction target.

We acknowledge that, because the targets are abstract and there are delays with data on emissions and carbon content in the atmosphere and so on, we need indicators that will enable us to ensure that we are making progress. The minister is right to say that the bias is towards simplifying the system rather than having indicators just for the sake of it or running statistical exercises left, right and centre. There will be a continuing tracking of people's attitudes and behaviours, to supplement other work, as the minister and Paul Tyrer said. It is important that

we consider what is happening in the round and do not just think that there is a specific set of things that have to be monitored to death.

Cathy Peattie: I want you to think about what the indicators are and where you would start. What you said is right: the targets on climate change are clear. I do not want a tick-box exercise; I want targets to be set that mean something. I hope that the implementation group can take that on board.

The Convener: Let me try to wrap up the discussion on that point—I hope in a non-confrontational way. There are difficult challenges to do with assessing the effectiveness of a public engagement effort on any subject. For example, we can get some evidence on the effectiveness of many public health campaigns, but we cannot really know what the public health outcomes would have been if it had not been for those interventions or if it had not been for a storyline in a soap opera that happened to be on television at the same time.

As the months and years go by, how much clarity does the Government think that we are likely to achieve on the effectiveness of public engagement on climate change in changing individual behaviour? How can we be sure that what Government is doing—as opposed to the media or economic factors—is achieving something?

Roseanna Cunningham: I do not suppose that we will ever be able to separate everything out. The media will be part and parcel of the process whereby public engagement is achieved. It will be extraordinarily difficult to separate what the Government does from what the media does, because to quite a large extent the Government will use the media to deliver its message.

In my view, it will start to become patently clear that there has been a positive impact on behavioural change across the board. That is what we are looking for. It will be interesting to compare the results from the new survey with the results from the environmental attitudes and behaviours survey that was done two years ago. Surveys will provide a constant check. It would be hard to do such a survey more often than every two years, although I suppose it might be argued that it could be done every year. The survey itself will become a measure, in addition to other measures that we have built in, such as recycling rates and all the rest of it.

There are measures that already exist; we do not have to invent them. I am confident that certain measures will begin to fall steadily. I do not know whether we will ever be able to tease out whether that happened because of the public engagement strategy, because of the zero waste plan or

because *The Herald* ran a big campaign on such-and-such. Nor should we bother to try to tease that out, because the truth is that if rates improve across the board we will have achieved the success that we were looking for. That is the end result that we want.

The Convener: If there are no further supplementary questions for the witnesses, I thank the minister and her colleagues for joining us and answering questions. I am aware that we have run over time slightly, but the subject is important and the discussion has been worth while.

Roseanna Cunningham: I will pass your apologies to the Cabinet.

The Convener: We have identified a couple of issues that we will pursue in writing. We look forward to receiving your response.

15:40

Meeting suspended.

15:45

On resuming—

Transport (Severe Weather)

The Convener: We were due to come on to agenda item 2, an evidence session with the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, who was to give an update on issues relating to the severe weather conditions that were experienced recently. However, the minister is still with the Public Petitions Committee. It is unclear how long it will be before he is able to join us; it could be 20 to 30 minutes. I am happy to take committee members' views, but members may feel that it is best to defer the item to another committee meeting; I am told that we will be able to hold a session in the near future. If members agree, we can defer the item, rather than twiddle our thumbs for half an hour.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: That is a sensible suggestion, given the circumstances. Would the committee consider inviting further witnesses—for example, from BAA, Network Rail and ScotRail—to give evidence? It is important that we hear from some operators, as well as from the Government, on how work has continued. We may also want to broaden the questioning.

Charlie Gordon: I go along with that. I do not think that everything that we hear about the operators should be mediated through Transport Scotland. Sometimes you need to talk to the organ grinder.

The Convener: I take that on board. At a previous meeting, we agreed simply to call the minister. I suggest that over the next few days I have an e-mail dialogue with committee members and through the clerks, so that we can reach a view on which witnesses are appropriate.

Rob Gibson: In the debate that the Labour Party led on winter resilience, I made the point that other committees, such as the Health and Sport Committee and the Local Government and Communities Committee, needed to be involved. I know that we cannot do anything about that directly, but we could ask them to become involved. We will not get an overall picture of how resilient we are unless we do that. Given that we are putting the matter on the record, it may be a good idea for us to write to the committees to ask what they are doing.

The Convener: We can certainly consider doing that. We could also reflect in a legacy paper on whether a more wide-ranging inquiry needs to be held in the new session.

Rob Gibson: With respect, might we not write to them now to ask whether they are waiting to

take evidence on the subject, given that we are doing so?

The Convener: I will bring back a response at the next meeting, if possible. Agenda item 2 is deferred to a future meeting.

European Union Legislative Proposals (Reporter)

15:48

The Convener: Agenda item 3 concerns the appointment of an EU reporter. Members will have seen the paper that has been circulated, which contains suggestions from the European and External Relations Committee on the appointment of reporters. The Conveners Group discussed the issue and agreed the default position that deputy conveners of committees should act as reporters in this capacity, which seems reasonable. I am told that our deputy convener may agree to that.

Cathy Peattie: I expected Charlie Gordon to take on the role, as he was interested in it. Failing that, I am happy to do it.

The Convener: His face suggests that he may be happy for you to take it on. Do we agree to appoint Cathy Peattie to act as our reporter for the period of the pilot?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I remind members that our next meeting is scheduled for 8 February.

Meeting closed at 15:49.

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