

Committee on Climate Change Meeting Minutes

Friday 29th May 2020, 9:30 – 15:30 | Virtual meeting

Present: John Deben, Keith Bell, Julia Brown, Nick Chater, Piers Forster, Rebecca Heaton (sessions 1&2 only), Paul Johnson, Corinne Le Quéré, Pete Betts (as an advisor), Chris Stark.

Members' interests: Interests can be found on the CCC's website at:
<https://www.theccc.org.uk/about/transparency/>.

Committee members were reminded of the need to declare any conflicts of interest.

1. Progress report

The secretariat presented proposed sectoral policy recommendations, for discussion. The Committee discussed recommendations across areas that had had less focus in earlier meetings, including waste, use of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), aviation, shipping as well as a set of cross-cutting recommendations.

Rebecca Heaton highlighted her conflict of interest on BECCS, and did not contribute to agreeing the recommendations in this area.

The Committee also returned to the phase-out date for sales of petrol and diesel vehicles, both in relation to the progress report and the advice on the Sixth Carbon Budget – it was agreed that 2032 is the latest date that the UK should be aiming for, and the 2030 would be better if this is feasible.

The Committee discussed the tone and wording of the executive summary. It was agreed that a further version would be circulated by email for comments and sign-off.

2. Power sector strategic session

The secretariat presented on strategic issues facing the electricity sector and the implications for the Committee's advice on the Sixth Carbon Budget, as well as presenting plans for analysis of scenarios for electricity supply, once the demands from the transport, buildings, industry and removals sectors have been estimated initially.

The Committee discussed the range of mixes that the electricity supply analysis should cover, and expressed interest in scenarios with high proportions of variable renewables and to understand how these compare with other scenarios on cost and other metrics. There was recognition that the sharp reduction in the auction price for offshore wind in the second half of 2019 means that the assumed contribution of renewables in the earlier Net Zero advice may now be too conservative.

There was discussion of interconnection, and the extent to which the UK should rely on being a net importer of electricity, if decarbonisation of electricity elsewhere in Europe is progressing more slowly than in the UK.

The Committee had an initial discussion on how and when to phase out unabated gas-fired generation in the UK, with a preference to have phased approach first requiring any new fossil gas plants being ready for a switch to low-carbon (e.g. hydrogen or carbon capture and storage),

followed by all new capacity being low- or zero-carbon, and finally for all generation to be low- or zero-carbon. The team will work towards proposing dates for these phases, following stakeholder engagement over the coming months.

Rebecca Heaton highlighted her conflict of interest on gas-fired generation, and did not contribute to this discussion.

3. International update

The secretariat gave a brief update on the international work programme.

There was discussion over the need for the UK to set a Nationally Determined Contribution for 2030 under the Paris Agreement, following the UK's exit from the EU. The Committee were keen that this be ambitious and that this ends up consistent with the path for UK emissions that the Committee will recommend in December in its advice on the Sixth Carbon Budget.

It was recognised that depending on timings, it may be that the UK needs to set an NDC based on the existing level of the Fifth Carbon Budget (which is centred on 2030), which was set on the path to the previous 2050 target of an 80% reduction, with a later update once the Committee is able to publish its revised path for emissions on the way to Net Zero.

The Committee agreed to offer its advice to the Government on setting the NDC for 2030.