

Climate Change Committee Meeting

Present: John Deben, Keith Bell, Mike Davies, Nick Chater, Piers Forster, Rebecca Heaton, Paul Johnson, Corinne Le Quéré, Pete Betts, Chris Stark.

Member interests: www.theccc.org.uk/about/transparency

Date: 21 May 2021, 09:30 – 15:00

Held: Virtual meeting by Zoom

Climate Change Committee

1 Victoria Street,
Westminster, London,
SW1H 0ET

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

The Committee said thank you to Rebecca Heaton, as this was her last meeting. Her new role with Ovo will overlap with an increased number of areas of work for the Committee, significantly reducing the number of areas on which it is possible to contribute without a conflict of interest.

Lord Deben noted with sadness the death of Peter Ainsworth, the creator of the Climate Change Act.

1. Progress report

The primary focus of the meeting was to discuss the mitigation progress report, due to be published on 24 June. Discussion was on three key aspects: the executive summary, key messages and charts, and the comms and launch plan for the report.

Various comments were provided on the executive summary, key messages and charts. Agreed changes included:

- A need to split the key messages on the first two pages between progress on emissions, policy and ambition as against the requirements for the Net Zero Strategy.
- Greater focus on the need for the planning process to take account of Net Zero, including the introduction of Net Zero Test, both to ensure that all decisions are aligned with the requirements of the Climate Change Act and also to avoid undermining public engagement in the Net Zero transition.
- That although the Government has not explicitly ruled out demand-side action on diet change and aviation to contribute to meeting the Sixth Carbon Budget, its silence on these issues means that these should be included as shortfalls in the chart that compares Government ambition to the CCC's Balanced Pathway.
- A 'wedge chart' showing current how deployment rates compare to future required rates was not included in the report, as it did not provide a clear indication of whether current action is on track to the targets or not,

and that it would detract from the value of the equivalent charts on ambition and policy progress.

- The set of recommendations were discussed, focusing on those that had not been made in the 2020 progress report or the advice on the Sixth Carbon Budget. There was a recognition that the department-by-department approach to setting out the recommendations led to repetition where these covered multiple departments, but that this was preferable to other approaches which would not provide a comprehensive list of recommendations for each department.
- In finalising the recommendation tables, consideration should be given to splitting longer recommendations into multiple ones, in order to mark them more specifically as 'achieved' or 'not achieved' rather than 'partly achieved', and to make them shorter and more explicit.
- Given the length of the departmental recommendation tables, these should be moved to the end of the report, rather than following immediately after the Executive Summary as previously.

The Committee asked that a further version of the Executive Summary, taking into account these comments, be circulated by email for approval by correspondence.

2. NAO presentation

The National Audit Office (NAO) presented the findings of their report *Achieving Net Zero*, which was published in December 2020. The report discussed how the Government is organised to achieve Net Zero and requirements of the Net Zero Strategy.

The NAO also introduced their work on *Local Government and Net Zero*, which is of considerable interest to the Committee.

The Committee commented of various aspects, including that:

- Responsibilities at different levels of Government will need a strong governance framework that ensures sensible interactions between them.
- Net Zero will not be at the top of the political agenda throughout the transition and that things will sometimes go wrong.
- Lessons must be learnt, quickly, within a positive environment that encourages experimentation rather than vilifying failure.

The Committee were keen to continue to hear about the work of the NAO on these matters, and to work together where possible.

3. Northern Ireland advice

The Committee discussed the Private Members Bill that has passed its second reading in the Northern Ireland Assembly that would set a Net Zero target for 2045. This goes well beyond what the Committee has assessed as a feasible reduction for Northern Ireland, given its relatively large livestock sector and limited scope for deployment of greenhouse gas removals.

The Committee were clear that the Committee must continue to be guided by the evidence of not only the scientific evidence on the need to reduce emissions but also the feasible opportunities to do so, and how these differ in different parts of the UK.

The Committee agreed that Lord Deben, Keith Bell (as Northern Ireland champion) and the secretariat should engage with the Northern Ireland assembly and officials to ensure that the targets are both stretching and feasible, and that any role for the Committee in providing advice continues to be grounded in providing evidence-based advice.

4. Climate Councils meeting

Committee members and secretariat reported back from the meeting of the various climate advisory committees around the world, held on the 18th and 19th May. Representatives from 22 Climate Councils from countries around the world came together virtually to share experiences, discuss common challenges and explore how to support one another in their work.

The participants reflected how both newer and existing Councils have much to learn from each other. The Committee were keen to continue to collaborate through regular forums, and to include and support new Climate Councils around the world into this network.