



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Climate Change Bill:  
Climate Change Committee

10 June 2021

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Declan McAleer (Chairperson)  
Ms Clare Bailey  
Mrs Rosemary Barton  
Mr John Blair  
Mr Maurice Bradley  
Mr Harry Harvey  
Mr William Irwin  
Mr Patsy McGlone

**Witnesses:**

Mr Thomas Andrews	UK Climate Change Committee
Lord Deben	UK Climate Change Committee

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** I welcome, by StarLeaf, Lord Deben, the chair of the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC); and Thomas Andrews, the senior analyst of the Climate Change Committee. I invite Lord Deben and Thomas to brief the Committee, after which members will ask some questions. You are very welcome.

**Lord Deben (UK Climate Change Committee):** Thank you very much. I will be short in my briefing, simply because you have a time constraint, and I will do my best to help with that.

First of all, the Climate Change Committee is clear about the basis on which it operates. First, it is absolutely determined to make sure that its findings and recommendations are based on the science, and, therefore, we have a reputation internationally of being entirely reliable. Secondly, we are not prepared to advise people to do things that, we know, they cannot do because, otherwise, we would not be accepted by those who have to implement our policies. When we set the net zero target, it was in response to the United Kingdom Government's request: "Could we reach net zero? When could we reach net zero? What would it cost?". We said, "Yes, we can. We would like to do it as early as possible, but we do not believe that it can be done sensibly until 2050, and then we can do it at a price that will be somewhere between 0.5 and 2% of the gross national product". That has since been revised as we have done much more work on the costings, and we can say that it will be about 1% at most, and it may be less than that.

In looking at the whole of the United Kingdom, we are committing to net zero in 2050. As for the constituent nations of the United Kingdom, each has a different problem, and each has more or fewer opportunities. It will all have to add up to net zero. It is perfectly reasonable to say that the Scots feel

that they can reach net zero by 2045. The Welsh were originally thought not to be able to do it until after 2050, but we now see that they can. Then we come to look at Northern Ireland, and we have recognised that the particular problems mean that it cannot reasonably be sure of reaching net zero by 2050 but can do 82%. That is a tough demand. Do not, for one moment, think that we are asking something small. Secondly, because we do it in that way, we expect you to reach that target. It is not a kind of hopeful, wish-list figure; it is a necessary part, because, as somebody said very simply in the previous session, which I was privileged to be able to watch, it is a whole-United Kingdom decision, but it means that other parts of the United Kingdom will have to make up for the bits that will be more difficult for the North of Ireland to deliver.

If, in Northern Ireland, you then face the issue of your relationship with the Republic, one has to say that you are part of the United Kingdom. That is what you have chosen to be. As long as you are part of the United Kingdom, it is the United Kingdom target of net zero by 2050 to which you contribute. I know that all sorts of other difficulties arise, particularly now that we have left the European Union, but the fact is that we have said what we have said in that context.

I would love to get to net zero in Northern Ireland by 2045, but I would be untruthful if I were to say that you could do it. I absolutely *[Inaudible owing to poor sound quality]* truthful to say that you can reach 82% by 2050, but I have to say that it will be extremely hard. You will have to work hard on it, particularly the farming community, in which, as you know, I have a particular interest as a farmer and former Minister of Agriculture. It will be important for the farming community to buy into it and to work on all the mechanisms that it can have to reduce the emissions that agriculture produces.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** Can you hear me OK, Lord Deben?

**Lord Deben:** Yes, I can.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** Thank you very much for that presentation, Lord Deben. Do you want to add something, Thomas, or will you come in later?

**Mr Thomas Andrews (UK Climate Change Committee):** I am just providing technical support today. I will let Lord Deben do most of the talking.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** OK. Sorry. That's perfect.

**Lord Deben:** He is there for when I forget the facts.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** I draw on my last comments in the previous session, which you listened to. I hear what you say. I suppose that, constitutionally, this part of Ireland is part of the UK, but, in all other ways, particularly with regard to food processing, we are part of the island of Ireland. Even the experts in the energy market say that the best way to meet net zero in that sector is to look at it on a single-island basis. Is it not better that we look at that on a single-island basis? Indeed, because we are the same island, we have far more of the same characteristics, land patterns and farming patterns, and food is produced across the island as a whole. Would it not make more sense to look at that on an island-wide basis, as opposed to this part of the island being part of the UK contribution?

**Lord Deben:** You tempt me, in a dangerous way, to move into the two most contentious things that we could talk about, which are Brexit and the relationship between the North and South of Ireland. I am determined not to get into that. We just have to live in the world that we have created for ourselves. We have created for ourselves a divided Ireland and a United Kingdom that is outside the European Union. My own views on both those subjects are well known — well, they are well known about Brexit. The fact of the matter is that we now have to live with it. Therefore, what we propose is the United Kingdom answer. The Republic will propose the European Union answer. Between us, we will have to work out the cross-border issues. You are perfectly right to point to those issues. It is also perfectly right to say that much of the agricultural activity is similar on both parts of the island. There is no doubt that it will be an important element of the work that you do to try to make sure that you work together in the most effective way. However, I have to deal with the politics as they are and not with the politics as you or I or anyone else would like them to be. Therefore, in those terms, I have to advise you, as part of the United Kingdom, that you can manage if you work really hard to reach 82%. I am not advising the Republic Government, nor do I know what advice they have had or how they have worked out that they can reach net zero by 2050, because none of that information is available.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** I hear what you say, but I should say one thing: we did not create a divided island. Those were decisions that were made historically; indeed, our decision on Brexit was overridden, effectively, by the English decision on it.

I do not want to talk politically. However, it is important to point out that, historically, even preceding partition, food processing has always existed across the island of Ireland; indeed, there are farms, even in my constituency, where one side of the field is in the South of Ireland and the other side is in the North. Simply implementing a rigid approach and saying, "This is part of the UK, and that is all that we can do about it", does not make sense on the ground. The first briefing that we had this morning was about an outbreak of disease among poultry. Again, that issue straddles the border between County Tyrone and County Monaghan. We live on one island, notwithstanding the politics of all that.

Many people believe that it would make more sense if the issue were looked at from an island-of-Ireland point of view. I should also say that, if we are looking at a situation where England, Wales and Scotland are moving towards carbon neutrality by 2050, there is a large constituency of people here who feel that we will end up in a situation where the environment in the North — its air quality, soil and water — will be worse off than in Britain. They do not feel that it is fair that the North should be worse off than Britain. What critics say is that, as a consequence of the North's being a food-producing region for Britain, it will be left, effectively, as a carbon dump, with different targets and air quality than other parts.

**Lord Deben:** I understand that, but I do not understand why that would make it easier for you to accept a target that, we know, you cannot reach in the present circumstances. Should we have significant breakthroughs in ways of reducing emissions from agriculture and new ways of ensuring that we have sequestration much more widely — let us say in an area that I am particularly interested in, which is sequestration in the oceans around the islands of Britain — we would, obviously, change the target. What we cannot do is present a target today that we cannot stand behind and keep you to, which is part of our job, and keep the United Kingdom Government to the part that they have to make up, if we put forward a proposal that, we know, does not conform with the work that we have done to see what, in the present circumstances and with the present technologies, you can do.

I am a great believer in setting high targets to make sure that people reach them — I do not want to have dumbing down — but 82% will be bloody difficult. Therefore, that is the highest target that we can ask you to set in the present circumstances. Should we move to a situation in which there is more cooperation, more opportunities, new technologies and new ideas, we will revise that target, but it does not help anybody to aim for something that, all the research that has been done by very significant people who have worked hard to get it right says, is not possible.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** Thank you for that. There are a number of members who want to ask questions.

**Ms Bailey:** Thanks for being with us again, Lord Deben. You say that the 82% target, which I fully understand, is based on current systems and present circumstances. The UK Government have committed to net zero by 2050, so I wonder how you would advise a Government who have passed legislation for net zero. The question is how we get there, not whether a net-zero target by 2045 will be set. If we are basing our projections on current systems and circumstances but know that we have to shift far and fast, the question is "How?" and not "Whether?". How will that work out?

**Lord Deben:** First, we advised the United Kingdom Government on the question of whether they could get to net zero and the earliest date by which they could do it. That is what we have said about 2050. If the Government were to say to us, "We want to reach net zero by 2040", we would have to say to them that there are a series of things that cannot be put into order in current circumstances to enable them to do that. I wish that we could. No one is more aware of the absolute and serious urgency of doing everything that we can to keep the level of warming below 2°C and as near to 1.5°C as possible. I am totally on your side. I rarely find myself out of line with what the Greens say on these matters, but I have a proper and statutory duty to say that I do not believe that the United Kingdom as a whole could do it more quickly than by 2050 in current circumstances.

We put a mechanism in all of our documentation that shows what would happen if everything were on our side, if new technology were to come in, if there were no drawbacks and if it all worked together. That shows that we could do it very slightly earlier, but everything would have to be on our side. All of my life, I have run businesses, and I believe strongly in achieving ends. I want to win. I do not believe that you can achieve ends by telling people that they can do something that, you know, they cannot

do. I believe that they may be able to do that if you get them on the route to doing something that, they know, they can do. You can then apply any new information or technology and give them the opportunity to do better. That is exactly what we would do.

For me, the real issue is about how we even get 82% done. People have got to believe in themselves and know that they can do it. I can assure them that they can do it, I can work with them to do it and I can push the Northern Irish Government to make sure that they do it. After all, there are lots of things that I will have to push them on, if I may say so. You and I may well find ourselves doing the same thing with regard to that. I do not think that you can do that, however, by asking an Ulster farmer to do something that, he knows, he cannot do. That is why I have to stick to this.

**Ms Bailey:** *[Inaudible.]*

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** Unmute yourself, Clare.

**Ms Bailey:** I have. Can you hear me?

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** Yes.

**Lord Deben:** I can hear you now.

**Ms Bailey:** Apologies for that. What happens if the UK Government decide to increase their climate ambition ahead of the Conference of the Parties (COP), at COP or because of something that comes out of COP that means they want to go further and faster? Would the CCC recommend that that is just not achievable or possible?

**Lord Deben:** We have to. We are the official advisers. That is why they accepted the sixth carbon budget. They will not agree to go further and faster, because they have already accepted the toughest measures that any country in the world has accepted. We have to recognise that. I am well known for being pretty critical of the Government, but accepting what we proposed to them means that the United Kingdom is accepting a programme that is tougher than anyone else's. It has to do that, because it cannot reach net zero by 2050 unless it does that. I spend my time bringing Ministers' feet to the fire. I did that this morning with the Minister of Education by pointing out that they are not doing a series of things that they have to do to reach net zero by 2050. I am afraid that I can see a long period ahead of doing precisely the same thing with the Government of Northern Ireland. I saw that somebody said that you are doing better than the South, but you are not doing well enough. If you are going to achieve the 82%, a great deal needs to be done immediately. That is why I say to you that we may find ourselves saying the same things about exactly that.

**Ms Bailey:** Thanks. You are not expecting the UK Government to move their targets. I know that Boris Johnson recently increased the UK's ambition to 78% by 2035.

**Lord Deben:** Meeting the figure in the sixth carbon budget, which we produced in December and which was the most extensive work ever done anywhere in the world, is exactly what the Prime Minister has committed himself to for 2035; in other words, we have set the budgets, and the figures in those budgets are the figures that the Prime Minister has accepted and announced. He has not announced anything different from that.

**Ms Bailey:** Does the CCC see any potential risks to private investment in Northern Ireland, if it does not achieve net zero? If the world, corporations and global private investment move towards net zero and Northern Ireland does not move towards that or moves in a different direction, have you identified any potential risks for banks, investments, loans or investment in business here?

**Lord Deben:** We looked at that very particularly. It is clear that one of the great achievements of the past six months, certainly 12 months, is the movement of the financial world to look at those issues as a key part of how it invests. There is no worry about that as long as the North of Ireland keeps in line with the 82%, because that means that it will keep in line with the United Kingdom commitment. That is exactly what you need to do. We have no evidence whatever that it will make life more difficult for you in either investment or selling. However, you have a particular quality of meat and dairy products and other things, which I often buy. You want to build the reputation of Northern Ireland around that. It will be important for you to say all the way along the line that you are meeting the targets and making your proper contribution to the United Kingdom and that you do not allow anybody not to say that.

People will respect you in a way in which they would not otherwise. There are people who merely say, "We're going to do it" without showing that they can do it. My worry is a much bigger one. A lot of people around the world are promising things that they have no plan for and probably no intention of achieving: you are promising something that you intend to achieve. As the weeks and months go by, that is what will count.

**Ms Bailey:** Do you see there being no difference between our equitable contribution at a UK level and a global level, particularly given that, as you identified, because of Brexit and the protocol, Northern Ireland produce is labelled and identified as ours to allow for sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) checks and the movement of goods? Do you not see any difference between Northern Ireland's equitable contribution being a UK one and identified differently as a global one?

**Lord Deben:** I do not think that it will be in any way harmful. If I did, it would have been one of the things that I underlined in the statements that I have made. I do not think that it will be harmful.

Frankly, other people will have to think about that too. I was asked what the proudest moment was in my ministerial career. This is something that I have not said before, except on that very occasion: it was when I broke the Government advice and voted in favour of the bubble in the European Union, which, if you remember, was the way in which it came to Kyoto. The bubble meant that the United Kingdom had to do more so that Ireland, Portugal and some other countries could do less because they had not started in the way in which we had. I wanted to do that because it was a matter of justice. That was the justice that I sought. The same thing applies here: it is a matter of justice. There are parts of the United Kingdom that can do better than others, and they should do so. The parts that will find it more difficult should be given that balance. If we lead the world in that way and constantly talk about the just transition, the world will be much more likely to follow us. We will have to pay for that transition in the poorest countries; we will have to help those countries with technology and the like; and we will have to have a just transition within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland so that the poorest do not pay a bigger burden than they can pay. All of that has to happen. It is part of that just transition.

**Mr Harvey:** It is good to see you, Lord Deben and Thomas.

Lord Deben, you said that your findings are based on science, that they are entirely reliable and that you work with the world. I was impressed by that.

Lord Deben, farmers are doing a lot, as you know, and are always happy to play their part, but we need to take into account our thriving food market. Do you agree that the private Member's Bill is no credible pathway? Did the Climate Change Committee have any engagement with the Bill's authors, prior to its submission?

**Lord Deben:** I will not answer that second question because, if we have conversations or not — that does not mean that we have or have not — it seems to me that we ought to have those in privacy. It is open to everybody to come and talk to us.

As far as the first thing is concerned, we have presented a figure that, we believe, you can reach and that we can show you the route to reach. I do not think that there is a similar route if you change the figure and the date. If you change it from 82% to 100% and you change the date from 2050 to 2045, I do not think that there is a credible route to do that. If I did, I would have proposed it myself. What I have proposed is the very toughest figure that, I believe, you can do. I will then be able to do what I intend to — I am sure that my successor, when I go in 18 months' time, will do the same — which is to press and keep the Government of the North Ireland on line. I can do that honestly and decently, because I know that they can achieve it. I could not do that if I asked them to do something that they could not do.

**Mr Harvey:** That is great, thank you. You have made it clear that net zero by 2050 is, at best, courageous. What were the key considerations that informed that position? Do you feel that those considerations have been accounted for in the private Member's Bill?

**Lord Deben:** I am loath to comment on the private Member's Bill. What I have said is that all the work that we have done — it is recognised as the most extensive work done in the world, particularly the sixth carbon budget, which has been received almost everywhere as absolutely exemplary — leads one to be able to say truthfully to the United Kingdom Government, "You can do this. You can say,

'We will do 68% reduction on 1990 by 2030. We will meet a tougher target by 2035. We can actually promise that, because we know that we can do it". That is all based on that science.

It was my predecessor who did it. Back in those days, 10, 11 or 12 years ago, when we started, the battle was to get people to believe in climate change. We do not have that problem very much any longer, but people had to understand and believe in it. He knew right from the beginning that you could not get people to accept it unless you had the science right, had done your homework and were clearly recognised as being accurate. One thing that those who do not believe in climate change, a small number now, have never been able to do is undermine the facts that we have presented. That gives us a great strength.

The Government of the North of Ireland ought to be quite worried about that. If I were the Government of the North of Ireland, I would know that I would be pressed, pushed, argued with and given every demand because the Climate Change Committee had shown that I could do it and, therefore, I would no longer have the excuse. The problem of asking a Government to do something that they cannot do is that they have an excuse not to do even as much as they can. For me, that is the danger of asking people to reach a level that, we know, we cannot.

**Mr Harvey:** OK. Thank you, Lord Deben.

**Mr Blair:** Thank you, Lord Deben and Thomas. I add my voice to the welcome and thanks that you were given for coming back to the Committee. It is good to see you.

Some of what I was going to ask has been covered. There are two outstanding issues, if we could describe them as that, from what we have heard so far. First, Lord Deben, you referred to an apparent absence of certain detailed information on the state of play in the Republic of Ireland. Can efforts be made by the UK Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and, of course, the Republic of Ireland Government to overcome any barriers?

**Lord Deben:** First, if I may say so, I do not think that the barriers are purposeful ones. The situation is much more that the Republic of Ireland has not yet produced its programme for reaching its determined end. Obviously, the sooner it does that, the easier it will be for us to make sure that we can work with it on the cross-border issues that we perfectly respect and on which we are willing to be as helpful as possible to the Northern Irish Executive. I am not really blaming the Republic of Ireland; I am just saying that we do not know and, therefore, I cannot comment on it.

**Mr Blair:** OK. That is fine.

Secondly, you referred to the sixth carbon budget and the publication of the report on that. There were some suggestions that the report was not able to capture at all levels the positive impacts being made across the agriculture sector, particularly on some of the smaller farms that may not be captured by departmental assessments, for example. Can efforts be made to ensure that we capture as much information as possible? That could be a positive contribution towards reaching the targets.

**Lord Deben:** I believe that we are capturing as much information as possible. I am very much on your side in making sure that we do that; indeed, when I first became chairman, I refused to publish a document on agriculture because I said that the baseline figures were not of comparable quality to those that we had for industry, building and other matters. I am very much a supporter of the agriculture community, as I am part of it. All I will say is that you have to be careful about people promising things that they have not measured properly, which is why, for me, measurement is absolutely central.

It was only when the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) produced a proper baseline for England that I was prepared to opine on England. The same is true now. We are watching all the time. The better the Northern Ireland Executive are able to refine information and get more information, the more we will use it. We are absolutely committed to using the best information. I think that we had more than enough information to make the decisions that we made in the sixth carbon budget — if I did not, I would have said so — but we need to go on doing that because, of course, the situation changes all the time. The more we know about sequestration and the more we can measure sequestration, the more we will be able to encourage it. That may well be one of the things that will make a huge difference in the North of Ireland.

**Mr Blair:** That is helpful. Thank you.

**Mr M Bradley:** Thank you very much, Lord Deben, for returning to address the Committee. You have brought up some valid points today, as have members, so I do not want to repeat anything. We in Northern Ireland have a delicate balance between climate change and our agri-food sector. While we seem to be focusing mainly on farming practices today, there are other issues at play like industry, haulage, lack of rail infrastructure, reforestation, lack of reintroduction to produce wetlands and sequestration measures that we could take. There is an awful lot of hard work to do. I was interested to find out that, at the moment, we do not have any indication of or information on what the Republic of Ireland is doing to reach its targets, so we cannot really do a comparison. The Chair mentioned that we should work closely with our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland. I find it difficult to understand how, without that information, we can measure what the UK is trying to do against what the Republic of Ireland is doing. Can I have your thoughts on that, please, Lord Deben?

**Lord Deben:** There may come a time when that is important. At the moment, there is so much to be done on both sides of the border that whatever you do, frankly, will not be very much more informed by knowing what is happening elsewhere. As you rightly said when making that list, the things that need to be done can be done by the Northern Ireland Executive and the people of Northern Ireland.

You mentioned re-wetting peatlands and stopping using peat, which is really important. The sequestration that will result from that is hugely important. As you know, the problem with peat is that, if peatland is degraded, it becomes a net exporter of emissions. If you have good peatland, it is a major sequestrator. It is a really big change if you can recreate peatland or protect peatland from the way that it is being used. That is one of the reasons why the Climate Change Committee has said firmly that we should ban the use of horticultural peat in every circumstance. The quicker we do that, the more we get out of the ludicrous situation where the Government are providing money to restore peatlands and, at the same time, letting people destroy peatlands; that must be barmy. That is one example.

There is a great deal that you can get on with now. I am sure that the Republic will have to produce all that information. Every country in the European Union has to do that, partly because of the hard work that the British did when they were members. Therefore, that information will come forward. Your doing more in the meantime will not make a difference to what happens in the Republic, but, once the Republic produces the information, you can begin to work much more closely together. However, that is for you, and it has to have the political will. As you know, I am a great believer in cooperation and working together, which is why I was such a strong supporter of our membership of the European Union. In the end, you have to work together; otherwise, you collapse together. We all have to find ways of working together. We have to find new ways now, and I hope very much that you will be in the vanguard of those new ways.

**Mr M Bradley:** Thank you very much, Lord Deben.

**Mr McGlone:** Lord Deben, it is great to see you again. Thanks very much for all the knowledge and passion that you bring to the topic. Some of us represent rural constituencies where the agri-food sector is a key element. Nonetheless, we have a clear notion that climate change must be tackled. No elected representative wants to chart a course that will be impossible to deliver. We will be in a more difficult situation, first, if we cannot deliver it and, secondly, if we create problems for those who are being pressurised into delivering it. I hear clearly what you say on the course that you have charted for the North and the pragmatism that you bring with that.

We talked earlier about a just transition. There will be communities and sectors that feel pressurised. Elected representatives are already receiving emails from sectors and farming families who feel that they will be pressurised. How do you see the just transition for those sectors and farming families as we move gradually towards meeting the targets? On the flip side, what commercial opportunities may exist for businesses as we move towards achieving those targets?

**Lord Deben:** First, I am glad that you have mentioned opportunities. The reality is that the world is coming to realise the threat of climate change; that is happening so fast already. In that sense, the cry from Extinction Rebellion, whatever else you may think about it, is absolutely right: we are threatened in an existential way. As people become more and more aware of that, they will demand that the people whom they trade with, buy from and supply play their part. It seems to me that, if the North of Ireland shows that it is playing its part in the process and is really determined to win through, that will give a necessary claim to your products, agricultural or otherwise. More and more people will not buy what, they think, is not making the contribution.

Even though the individual may not do that, the large company will have to do it, because it will have to justify that to its investors. That is the big change. The investors are now saying, "If you want my money, I have to know that you are sustainable, because I have to know that that money will not be wasted in stranded assets", for example. You only have to look at what has happened, fascinatingly, in the United States. ExxonMobil, by far one of the worst performers on this, has now had three directors forced on it, because it is not doing the job properly. That is an amazing thing to happen in the United States, but it has happened because the people who put the money up for ExxonMobil do not want to lose it. They have that opportunity, which is, "If we meet those requirements, we will get the investment".

I am even-handed on the matter. I want to say to the Greens that I do not believe that it is sensible to ask people to do something that they cannot do, but I also want to say, particularly to the representatives of the farming community, that we have to be extremely careful about not always explaining that there is this reason or that reason why this or that farm or these or those people cannot do it. I am afraid that people have to step up to it. I will take a lot of convincing that people cannot do what we say they can do, because that is the basis on which we have proceeded. Much as I love the farming communities, when I talk to my farmers that live around me, they all point to three or four who have always got a good reason for not doing what they ought to do. I am sure that you could do that too, though you would not because you probably want their votes. However, it is worth remembering that we have to make the whole community recognise that, in order to earn the balance that we are talking about in the rest of the United Kingdom, we have to do 100% of the 82% that you are asked to do.

**Mr McGlone:** Do you have any thoughts on the matter of just transition support?

**Lord Deben:** The Climate Change Committee demanded that the British Treasury produce a document showing what the costs would be and how they would fall and what the Government would do to make those costs just.

Let me take a non-controversial thing, as far as agriculture is concerned: housing. It is clear that the housing stock is way below the quality and standards in heating that we need. Many people will be able to make those changes, but we will have to help them by making money available for them to borrow and by giving them advice. I have recently bought a new heating arrangement with an air source heat pump. I have also bought an electric car. Buying an electric car is the simplest thing in the world. Car companies want to sell you something. Therefore, they will do it in the simplest way, and, if you have the money, you do it and you buy it. Buying a heat pump is one of the most difficult things that I have done in my life. I ought to get the best advice because, after all, I am chairman of the Climate Change Committee. I can only tell you that it is murderous. Now that I have got it, however, it is extremely good.

We have to help people to do these things. The just transition is not just about money. You cannot expect Mrs McGuinness in some village in Fermanagh to know about climate change. She needs to be able, when changing her boiler, to get proper advice in an easy way. That is what has to happen. It is about money — yes, we have to help people to do the job — but we also have to help people with the resource of knowledge.

**Mr McGlone:** Thank you. Has she been in touch with you as well? *[Laughter.]*

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** On the topic of County Fermanagh, Lord Deben, we are moving to County Fermanagh now —

**Lord Deben:** I thought that I was stirring it.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** — to bring in not Mrs McGuinness but Mrs Barton. I should say that we are extremely tight for time, so keep it as succinct as possible, bearing in mind the importance of the issue.

**Mrs Barton:** OK. Thank you, Lord Deben, for your comments. Given that I live in and was brought up in Fermanagh, I know it well.

I have two questions. How much consideration have you given to UK food security in the CCC advice? Further to that, would you be happy if the UK were forced to increase meat and dairy imports due to restrictions in the UK and because we had fewer animals and less food production?

**Lord Deben:** Food security is absolutely crucial. The last thing that we want to do is import goods from elsewhere, not least because the carbon footprint of United Kingdom animals is one of the lowest in the world. Almost any kind of import from anywhere else would have a higher carbon footprint. I am absolutely clear that the Government have to make sure that there is no importation from countries that are not meeting the same standards as we are. I have made that part of what the Climate Change Committee says. We are unanimous and united on that front. We are, therefore, concerned about the proposed discussion about Australia. We do not believe that we can have trade agreements that do not include the same standards as we ask of British farmers. That is a matter of not only just transition but climate change fact. If we do not do that, we will increase emissions, because we will provide markets for countries that are not meeting the requirements.

I am sorry that it is difficult. I know that the Government do not like it, but that is one of the results of committing yourself to this. It is no good saying, "Well, we're going to make exceptions for this country or that country". I am afraid that we have to have an absolute acceptance of what the Government promised. One Minister after another, in the House of Lords and outside it — I heard them in the House of Lords — publicly promised that we would have the highest standards of safety, climate change demands and all those things and that we would not allow the import of goods that would undermine that market. For me, that is a crucial part of what we have to do.

On the number of animals, it is remarkable how we have reduced significantly the carbon footprint of United Kingdom ruminants, be they sheep or cattle. We have done it because, by better breeding, better health and higher production, we have had fewer animals. That has done a great deal of good. We are not talking about attacking meat. I would like to make this point very clear: the Climate Change Committee believes that, in the next 10 years, we should reduce the amount of meat that we eat by 20%, but we ought to eat better meat. I never understand why people do not make this link. The meat that is largely produced in the North of Ireland is good meat, pasture-fed, and that is the sort of meat that people ought to eat. We ought to choose that, and, if we eat a little bit less — 20% is not much less — but you pay a bit more for that which you eat, it seems to me that that is the answer for the farmer.

It is also the answer as far as health is concerned. What we ask for is significantly less than the health experts demand. The reason that we ask for this and do not go to extremes is that we need ruminants and mixed agriculture is crucial if we are to return fertility to the soil. Veganism is not the answer, and vegans should not use climate change as an excuse to push their entirely different programme. That is not the programme that we are pushing. We say that people are reducing the amount of meat that they eat for all kinds of reasons, not least their health, and we think that that is necessary, but we want them to eat better meat and rather less meat.

We should eat less altogether, when you think about it, not just meat. We are overeating, and we have to accommodate that. The way to accommodate it is to produce better, more nutritious food. The serious thing is that the five a day is worth less today than it was 40 years ago, because those vegetables are less likely to have the mix of trace elements and the like that they would have had 40 years ago. That is what we have done to our land. That is what I mean when I quote the Pope's comment that climate change is a symptom of what we have done to the world. One of the things that we have done to the world is to reduce the fertility of the soil, and we have to recover that. We will not do that without animals, cattle and sheep.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** The last member to speak is William. We are running seriously out of time.

**Mr Irwin:** I welcome Lord Deben. We are delighted to have you here. I have been a farmer all my life. I am one of those who want to help to make change. Farmers, in the main, want to help the environment, but they need advice and help to do so. I admire your advice and wisdom. Others talked about how being part of the UK — a region of the UK — gives us some flexibility in that, by reaching 82% by 2050, it means that the UK as a whole reaches net zero by 2050. It is positive, and I support your advice fully. Other regions of the UK have accepted your advice, and I hope that Northern Ireland also accepts that advice.

**Lord Deben:** Thank you very much. I hesitate to do this, Mr Irwin, but I would just remind you that the other half of the advice is that, if it is 82%, you have got to do it. That is the deal, if you like. That is why I am so determined not to offer something that you cannot do. There is something wrong in doing that, and I really mean morally wrong. You must not ask people to do things that they cannot do. You must ask people to do things that are very stretching.

I have just come to London to welcome my sixth grandchild. I watch my four children and their partners — well, their wives and husbands; I do not like the word "partner" — bringing up those children. I notice that they are all determined to do one thing, which is to give them confidence to do more than they think they can do but never to ask them to do something they cannot do. Curiously enough, that most intimate and important part of life — bringing up children — should also be a lesson in how to deal with people generally. You must never underestimate them. Some schools never stretched children properly because they never understood how much they could do: you stretch them to the utmost but never beyond it. Eighty-two per cent will be difficult, but you can do it.

**Mr Irwin:** Thank you very much. That is a sensible approach.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** Lord Deben and Thomas, that was helpful and informative, as always. It is good to see you again. I hope that you have a nice day. We will see you again.

**Lord Deben:** Thank you very much.

**The Chairperson (Mr McAleer):** Take care. Thank you.