

Energy Security and Net Zero Committee

Zero sum game: How the UK can reframe the energy transition

Second Report of Session 2026–27

HC 230

Energy Security and Net Zero Committee

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Summary

For decades the UK has been on a journey reducing its carbon emissions and it has also made significant international commitments to address the threat of climate change. The political consensus that enabled the UK to be a world leader in tackling climate change and transitioning to clean energy has broken down. It broke because a gas price shock and the acute cost of living pressures contributed to a shift of sentiment and scapegoating of the transition rather than the fossil fuel dependence that had caused the crisis. That has had consequences for public trust which this Report examines.

The term net zero has become a distraction from the broader aims and the benefits of the energy transition and the politics of the energy transition have become mired in a stale debate on the cost and feasibility of achieving an emissions target. The public debate fails to reflect the wider benefits of engaging with the transition or the costs of not tackling climate change. Continued delivery of the UK's targets for the energy transition will need more substantive communications of the need for change and the benefits will need to be more directly experienced by those being asked to change.

We found that current messaging from the whole of public society is inconsistent, overly technical, and does not sufficiently connect the energy transition with tangible, everyday benefits such as lower bills, warmer homes, jobs and career opportunities for young people, energy security and health improvements. There is a clear demand for simple, practical, and locally relevant information on the costs, benefits, and actions required in meeting the threat of climate change. Government messaging has also been inconsistent in connecting the energy transition with wider national goals such as improving public health and buttressing national security.

Future Government communications under the new administration should be more demonstrably relevant to people's lives, with clear information on how people might reduce their costs or minimise their exposure to future costs in a way that they believe they can achieve. The Department should drop 'net zero' from its name as a start to making its communications less technocratic and reduce its use in regular communications and public statements, instead focussing on wider societal benefits.

Trusted messengers are critical but for increasing numbers, the Government is not trusted. We have been told that scientists, local actors, and civil society organisations are more trusted sources and should be more effectively utilised as messengers but institutions such as the UK's National

Academies fail to engage with the broader public discourse on matters like the energy transition. Without that engagement it is increasingly difficult for people to “do their own research” on the basis of factual information.

We are concerned at the increasing use of “credibility laundering” of internet myths relating to the energy transition. We would like to see social media platforms encouraged or mandated to emphasise credible information sources over those working to engender outrage and misinformation.

The Government needs to work hard to maintain public support for the energy transition, in this Report we recommend:

- The term net zero has lost much of its significant positive association. It increasingly acts as a distraction from the broader aims of the energy transition and as a lightning rod for opposition to climate action. As part of efforts to communicate the energy transition effectively, the term net zero should be dropped from the Department’s name and its key communications.
- We welcome the Government’s increasing focus on energy security as a rationale for the energy transition.
- Tackling the rise of misinformation about climate and the energy transition.
- We recommend that the Government tasks the national academies to raise their profile with the nation at large.
- The Government should develop a dedicated strategy to engage SMEs in the energy transition.

1 Introduction

1. The Government has said making the UK a “Clean Energy Superpower” was one of its six flagship missions for national renewal. The clean energy mission aims to make Britain a leader in renewable energy and secure home-grown energy by delivering clean power by 2030 and reaching Net Zero by 2050.¹ However, we were told that this ambition has not been consistently translated into a clear and compelling public narrative about how these goals were derived and decided and why these goals matter in practice or about how they can be achieved.
2. Around one-third of the emissions reductions that are needed rely on households adopting measures such as electric heating and electric vehicles. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) has therefore emphasised the need for meaningful two-way dialogue to support the energy transition if policy is to effectively be translated in to action. Without sufficient public adoption, uptake may be inadequate, risking delays, inefficiencies, and inequitable outcomes.² While there is some engagement of individuals through community energy schemes and low-carbon technologies, wider participation is constrained by cost and lack of access, limited advice, misconceptions, inconsistent messaging and low trust.
3. One barrier to broad engagement with the energy transition has been that it has been spoken about, in policy terms, simply as a means of achieving net zero. While there is broad support for addressing climate change, there is an increasing vocal opposition to the use of the phrase net zero. Recent polling also indicates 60 per cent support the Government’s commitment compared to around a quarter of the country saying they are opposed to the target of achieving net zero by 2050. Support for net zero is associated with how people think it will affect them personally, with the large majority of those who are opposed (75%) expecting that it would leave them worse off.³ Bob Ward, Policy and Communications Director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment suggested that while “net zero means stopping climate change” and this should be stressed whenever Ministers talk about it, people did not necessarily make the link between climate change concerns and policies labelled “net zero”.⁴ The

1 Prime Minister’s Office, Plan for Change, [Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower](#), 5 December 2024

2 The Climate Change Committee, [The Seventh Carbon Budget](#), 26 February 2025

3 YouGov, [How far does the public support net zero?](#), 11 November 2025

4 [Q256](#) [Bob Ward]

United Nations has warned of a “massive disinformation campaign” that is hindering the transition to low carbon energy.⁵ Some narratives undermine scientific evidence and question human responsibility, while others downplay the severity of the climate crisis and the need for urgent action.⁶ The heatwaves experienced this summer should act as a seminal moment to counteract these narratives.

4. Last year, we chose to inquire into the growing gap between the need for energy transition and the public support needed to deliver it. We wanted to determine whether the Government was sufficiently aware of the declining public engagement and what it was doing to bolster that. We also considered whether the narrative from the Government was properly pitched to build support and how that might be improved.
5. In this Report we consider how the energy transition might be better framed to build support, how the Government might seek to better inform people, how the issues might be communicated from a broader base, and how the Government could be supporting the development of trusted voices that might allow for more informed public debate.
6. Since launching our inquiry in February 2025, we have published over 130 pieces of written evidence from a variety of stakeholders. These have included academics, industry consortia, trade unions, trade and accreditation bodies, as well as the public and third sectors. We also held six oral evidence sessions from June 2025 to February 2026. We are very grateful to everyone who has supported the inquiry and especially those who provided formal written submissions or attended oral evidence hearings.
7. In December 2025, we also held a roundtable event to greater understand public perceptions regarding the energy transition. The aim of the event was to provide insight into how people engage with the Government’s policy of shifting away from the use of fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and better understand how the public are responding to current communication of the energy transition. A summary note of the event is published in the Annexes to this Report. We would like to particularly thank those who participated in the event, as well as all those who expressed interest in attending and took the time to fill out the pre-event survey.

5 The Guardian, [‘Massive disinformation campaign’ is slowing global transition to green energy](#), 8 August 2024 [Last accessed 23 June 2026]

6 Stop Funding Heat, Reliable Media [[BSE0118](#)]

2 The case for the energy transition

Articulating the co-benefits of the energy transition

8. Over the course of multiple evidence sessions, witnesses said that the co-benefits of policies to deliver the energy transition are currently not being consistently or clearly articulated. The Welsh Government stressed that climate, health, economic and security benefits are “interconnected” and should be communicated through a “strong national Government-led narrative” that is simple and coherent.⁷ We heard that while people respond strongly to messages about health and environmental benefits, there is also significant appetite for messaging on jobs and economic opportunity, including among those less convinced by climate action.⁸
9. However, communications from the Government on the energy transition often fail to reflect these priorities. Rachel Brisley, Director, Energy and Environment, Ipsos UK, warned that support falls sharply when policies are framed through cost or abstract climate goals, rather than “what it means for them”, particularly where upfront costs are high.⁹ Co-benefits must be clearly “affordable and accessible” if they are to influence public behaviour.¹⁰
10. DESNZ also acknowledged, as “a fair critique”, that Government does not “always take the opportunities to see the links between” the environmental benefits of infrastructure projects “and certainly not to draw them out in public announcements”.¹¹ Ben Golding, Director, Clean Power 2030 Unit, DESNZ, told us that “we could possibly do more in communication to show the links and the opportunities across the different parts of Government”.¹²

7 [Q43](#) [Claire Chappell]

8 [Q6](#), [Q35](#) [Professor Karen Bickerstaff] and [Q109](#) [Professor Sara Walker]

9 [Q23](#) [Rachel Brisley]

10 [Q89](#) [Professor Sara Walker]

11 [Q477](#) [Ben Golding]

12 [Q477](#) [Ben Golding]

He also noted that while Mission Control could promote the benefits of clean power to improve cross-government messaging, it has limited ability to ensure other departments reflect these links in their own communications.¹³

11. Chris Stark, Head of the UK's Mission for Clean Power 2030 at DESNZ, told us that public support for the energy transition will not be secured by reference to a single overarching objective, warning that "we are not going to win this argument if there is only one reason for doing all this, which is the achievement of a statutory target".¹⁴ He wanted the Government to "talk about the things we are doing" rather than primarily the pursuit of a goal.¹⁵ He argued that Government should communicate the tangible benefits of the transition, including energy security, lower bills, economic growth and job creation, rather than focusing primarily on net zero. While most people care about climate change, he suggested that support is strongest when climate action is presented as delivering benefits that people experience directly in their daily lives.¹⁶ This evidence is corroborated by a recent report by Potential Energy Coalition, commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation, considering how to communicate about climate more effectively. It found 'net zero' was the single least popular climate term tested, whereas support for climate action broadened when communications were focused on pollution, health, household costs, energy independence, and protecting families.¹⁷

12. **CONCLUSION**

There is a danger that the politics of the energy transition has replaced the previous consensus with a stale discussion on the cost and feasibility of achieving an emissions target. That is reflected in the public debate which fails to reflect the full range of benefits of engaging with the transition or the costs of not tackling climate change. The evidence to this inquiry, and to our concurrent inquiries on energy resilience and the cost of energy, is that the transition is the route to lower bills and greater security, and that the costs of delay are borne by the public in higher prices, colder homes and lost jobs. The question for the country is not whether to make the transition but how quickly and how fairly.

13 [Q478](#) [Ben Golding]

14 [Q445](#) [Chris Stark]

15 [Q445](#) [Chris Stark]

16 [Q442](#) [Chris Stark]

17 The Rockefeller Foundation, Press Release, [New Potential Energy Study Commissioned by Rockefeller Foundation: Climate Support Strong Across Leading Democracies, But Words Matter](#), 18 June 2026

13.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should urgently supplement the work of Energising Britain by developing and implementing a cross-departmental, benefit-led communications strategy for energy transition, ensuring consistent messaging on its health, economic, national security, food security and social co-benefits. This should prioritise the benefits most salient to the public, particularly health outcomes, cost savings, and job creation. The Government should also strengthen evaluation of public understanding and commission further analysis, including from the Climate Change Committee, on the costs of inaction, in order to improve public understanding of the economic and social consequences of failing to act.

14.

RECOMMENDATION

The term net zero has lost much of its significant positive association. It increasingly acts as a distraction from the broader aims of the energy transition and as a lightning rod for opposition to climate action. As part of efforts to communicate the energy transition effectively, the term net zero should be dropped from the Department's name and reduce its use in regular communications and public statements, instead focussing on wider societal benefits.

Energy security and resilience

15. Following recent geopolitical instability and the energy cost crisis, we heard that the war in Ukraine has led to a paradigm shift in the public's prioritisation of energy security and, in a separate inquiry on Energy resilience, we heard how the Iran conflict had exposed major vulnerabilities in UK energy security. David Whitehouse, Chief Executive, Offshore Energies UK, warned that the current Middle East crisis would cause an energy price shock, illustrating the direct fiscal and consumer impacts of geopolitical instability on the UK energy system.¹⁸ Energy security is now a primary lens through which the energy transition is understood, and reducing reliance on imported sources of energy is a strong entry point for public engagement.¹⁹ This is more factual than arguments around bills and cost.
16. Andrew Sissons, Deputy Director, Sustainable Future Mission at Nesta, told us that the 2022 energy crisis was driven by gas market volatility linked to geopolitical disruption, particularly the effects of the conflict in Ukraine. He emphasised that this exposure will persist "until such time as gas-fired power plants are no longer called on," sustaining vulnerability

¹⁸ Oral evidence taken on 25 March 2026, [Q41](#) [David Whitehouse]

¹⁹ [Q31](#), [Q11](#) [Luke Tryl]

to external shocks while gas remains central to the system.²⁰ The then Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero subsequently made a similar argument in response to the conflict in the Middle East, telling the House that UK energy consumers remain “price takers not price makers” in international oil and gas markets.²¹ He made the case that recent events had demonstrated the need to move “further and faster” towards clean power in order to strengthen energy security and protect consumers from future price shocks.²²

17. Luke Tryl, Executive Director at More in Common described how Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has led to a paradigm shift in how people understand energy security, reframing fossil fuel dependence as a vulnerability rather than a strength.²³ France’s nuclear programme in the 1980s is an example of long-term coordinated investment that reduced exposure to fossil fuel price volatility. This kind of energy transition involves upfront costs and delayed benefits. But, during a visit to Paris in November 2025, we heard that public understanding improves when long-term system gains are clearly explained and that narrative framing is as important as technical policy design in securing public support. Public support is strongest when the transition is framed in terms which include reducing exposure to volatile international energy markets, rather than primarily climate mitigation messaging.²⁴ Similarly, during the Committee visit to Canada, it was clear there was an increased focussed on pragmatism, jobs and energy security rather than climate mitigation messaging.
18. The Government’s narrative following the conflict in Iran and ensuing energy crisis has begun to develop further this linkage between boosting energy security and shifting away from a dependence on international energy markets.²⁵ The former Energy Secretary has argued that the second fossil fuel shock of the decade means that for Britain “clean energy is now the only route to financial security, energy security and indeed national security”. He has argued the crisis necessitates a doubling down on clean energy, heralding that “the era of fossil fuel security is over, and the era of clean energy security must come of age”.²⁶

20 [Q132](#) [Andrew Sissons]

21 HC Deb, 2 June 2026, [col 976](#)

22 HC Deb, 2 June 2026, [col 976](#)

23 [Q11](#) [Luke Tryl]

24 [Q11](#) [Luke Tryl]

25 DESNZ, [The era of clean energy security: Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband’s speech at the Good Growth Foundation’s National Growth Debate](#), 21 April 2026

26 DESNZ, [The era of clean energy security: Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband’s speech at the Good Growth Foundation’s National Growth Debate](#), 21 April 2026

19.

CONCLUSION

Recent events, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the conflict involving Iran and the cost-of-living crisis, have increased the importance the public places on energy security including the physical security of energy infrastructure which has been raised during the Committee's inquiry sessions on energy resilience. We welcome the Government's increasing focus on energy security as a rationale for the energy transition. The Government should continue to emphasise how transitioning to renewable energy enhances national energy security, reduces dependence on volatile international energy markets and strengthens the UK's resilience to future price shocks and should clearly demonstrate that slowing the transition means prolonging Britain's exposure to gas markets set by events in Ukraine and the Gulf. The Government should strengthen its commitment to the Clean Power 2030 mission in response to the Middle East crisis, and should say so.

National security and defence

20. We heard that the war in Ukraine demonstrates the benefits of decentralisation of the energy mix and the shift to renewables. Professor Hugh Montgomery, Director, Centre for Human Health and Performance, University College London (UCL), noted that distributed renewable energy systems "provide energy security" because "it is very much harder to take out every single wind turbine and every single solar and every single battery", citing Ukraine's increased resilience to Russian attacks through distributed renewables.²⁷

21. Professor Montgomery expressed concerns that climate action is too often dismissed as "fluffy nonsense" or "a bit tree huggy", whereas framing the transition through the lenses of security, defence and economic resilience can make the case for action be "taken more seriously".²⁸ Professor Neil Morisetti from University College London agreed, telling us:

At the end of the day, energy security is national security. Few nations are going to abdicate responsibility for that, because the chances are that the Government would find themselves out of office pretty quickly.²⁹

22. We note the previous administration had begun to highlight the national security dividends of transitioning to renewable energy. The Minister for Energy, Michael Shanks has noted "building a decentralised power system

27 [Q291](#) [Professor Hugh Montgomery]

28 [Q291](#) [Professor Hugh Montgomery]

29 [Q509](#) [Professor Neil Morisetti]

with a whole series of assets is less of a risk of physical attack than large-scale power stations”.³⁰ While, the former Energy Secretary has remarked in the wake of the crisis in the Middle East, that clean energy is the only route to national security.³¹

23.

CONCLUSION

National security is a strong and increasingly important lever for making the case for the energy transition. The transition to renewable energies offers significant national security benefits, including increased resilience in an increasingly volatile geopolitical environment and reduced exposure to fossil fuel price shocks. These links are not yet being communicated consistently or prominently enough across Government.

24.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should better communicate the national security dividends of transitioning to renewable energies and the opportunity to increase the UK’s resilience in an increasingly volatile geopolitical world. It should more consistently draw out the links between low carbon energy sources, infrastructure delivery and lower exposure to fossil fuel price shocks across departmental communications. DESNZ should strengthen cross-government messaging so that the energy transition is not treated as a single-department issue, but is reflected in announcements across transport, housing and wider infrastructure policy. This should be delivered as a sustained and coordinated cross-government effort.

Public health

25. It was put to us that framing climate change through a lens of its impact on health significantly increases public engagement, with studies showing people are more likely to support and take climate action when health links and co-benefits are made explicit.³² Dr Romanello also noted evidence from the US that climate-sceptic groups are more likely to support mitigation when they understand benefits such as improved air quality, healthier diets, and reduced health risks.³³

30 The Guardian, [Renewable energy will boost national security and protect UK from sabotage, minister says](#), 27 April 2026

31 DESNZ, [The era of clean energy security: Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband’s speech at the Good Growth Foundation’s National Growth Debate](#), 21 April 2026

32 [Q497](#) [Dr Marina Romanello]

33 [Q497](#) [Dr Marina Romanello]

26. Climate change is already having a material impact on public health in the UK. This has been evident in the heatwaves experienced this summer which have led to at least 35,000 more deaths than would normally be expected across Europe.³⁴ We heard that, in 2024, people in the UK were exposed to almost seven days of heatwave exposure on average and that 88% of those would not have occurred were it not for climate change.³⁵ The Climate Change Committee's (CCC) most recent independent assessment of climate risks to the UK identifies the effects of intensifying heat on health as one of three key climate change related hazards to the functioning of the UK.³⁶ The CCC outline that in summer 2022 unprecedented high temperatures, including record-breaking 40°C heat, caused the early deaths of over 3,000 people in England and Wales. Combined with widespread wildfires, emergency services experienced a 500% spike in 999 calls, with the CCC expressing concern at the huge pressure this put on emergency services ability to respond.³⁷
27. The Royal Society and the Academy of Medical Sciences have recommended incorporating health further into climate narratives, suggesting that the “UK Government has a key role to promote a stronger focus on health within the international climate narrative”.³⁸ We also heard that the NHS has a “huge responsibility” to communicate the health threats of climate change, “being able to first raise the alarm on the threats that the NHS itself, in its provision of service, will continue to face”, but also how rising climate-driven disease will significantly increase demand and reshape the UK’s epidemiological profile.³⁹
28. **CONCLUSION**
Public awareness of the health impacts of climate change remains low, although it remains to be seen whether the experiences of heatwaves this summer begins to increase awareness of the ways that climate change is already affecting both public health and the delivery of health services. Information on these risks should be more accessible to enable people to better understand the impacts they face now and in the future.

34 The Guardian, [At least 35,000 excess deaths recorded in Europe’s back-to-back heatwaves](#), 25 August 2026

35 [Q495](#) [Dr Marina Romanello]

36 The Climate Change Committee, [A Well-Adapted UK: The Fourth Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk \(CCRA4-IA\)](#), 20 May 2026

37 The Climate Change Committee, [A Well-Adapted UK: The Fourth Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk \(CCRA4-IA\)](#), 20 May 2026

38 The Royal Society & The Academy of Medical Sciences, [A healthy future – tackling climate change mitigation and human health together](#), September 2021

39 [Q500](#) [Dr Marina Romanello]

29.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should use the evidence of this summer's heatwaves to make the case for the transition directly and without hedging, including publishing UKHSA's attribution of heat-related deaths and NHS pressures to climate change as they become available, and stating clearly that the alternative to the transition is more of the same. The NHS should communicate the health impacts of climate change clearly and consistently, and strengthen its role in raising awareness of the risks climate change poses to health outcomes and delivery of health services. Relevant public bodies should also communicate the health benefits of action on climate change and related issues.

Food security

30. Climate change is increasingly recognised as a systemic risk to food production, with impacts already visible through flooding, extreme weather, and land-use pressures. As a result, there is growing recognition across the farming and land-use sector that the energy transition is not an abstract policy shift, but one already being shaped by changing environmental and economic conditions on the ground.
31. The Country Land and Business Association (CLA) told us that climate change is already having a significant impact on food production, citing the increasing prevalence of flooding in recent years.⁴⁰ The CCC found in 2019 that “changes to land use and farming practices that cut GHG emissions can also improve air quality and water quality and benefit biodiversity”, with benefits partially or fully offsetting costs.⁴¹
32. Awareness of climate change impacts, and of the need for the energy transition, is increasing within the farming community, driven by greater direct exposure to weather volatility and extreme events.⁴² Judicaelle Hammond, Director of Policy and Advice at the CLA, dismissed the myth that solar energy threatens food security, with current solar deployment using only around “0.1% of UK land”, meaning its land impact remains minimal.⁴³ She told us that even under an expanded rollout and a “fivefold” increase in solar deployment, as recommended by the CCC, impact on land use would remain limited and manageable at a national scale.⁴⁴ She stressed that “the best and most versatile land [...] is already protected under planning system”.⁵¹

40 [Q487](#) [Judicaelle Hammond]

41 The Committee on Climate Change, [Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming](#), May 2019

42 [Q490](#) [Judicaelle Hammond]

43 [Q491](#) [Judicaelle Hammond]

44 [Q491](#) [Judicaelle Hammond]

33. In its evidence to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, the CLA warned that “there are a lot of perceptions out there that are potentially misinformation” and stressed that rural communities “cannot afford to be isolated from communications”.⁴⁵ Harry Greenfield, then-Senior Land Policy Advisor at the CLA argued that farmers need support to “tell a more positive story about what they are doing and what they intend to do to help solve these big problems”.⁴⁶

34. **CONCLUSION**

We heard compelling evidence that climate change poses a growing threat to UK food production and food security. Yet public concern about the use of farmland for solar development appears to be greater than concern about the impact of climate change on the land itself. Those opposing renewable infrastructure have been more effective at mobilising concerns about food security than those making the case for climate action.

35. **RECOMMENDATION**

Farming organisations should be more vocal in communicating the impact of climate change on food production and the role of the energy transition in safeguarding long-term food security. Government should work with the sector to ensure the case for climate action is communicated more clearly and persuasively than arguments are made against renewable infrastructure.

45 Oral evidence taken by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee on 26 October 2012, [Q78](#) [Harry Greenfield]

46 [Q78](#) [Harry Greenfield]

3 Mainstreaming the energy transition

Communicating with households

- 36.** Households are subject to constant communication from energy companies, the Government and a range of other providers on the actions that would contribute to delivering the energy transition. They are encouraged to switch to heat pumps, to adopt electric vehicles, insulate their homes, use energy efficient appliances and to potentially utilise appliances at different times in the day. Some of these are gaining traction due to government regulation, some due to government funding but the most traction comes when there are obvious direct benefits to the consumer.⁴⁷ Conversely, the most effective lobbying against the energy transition is when actions can be suggested as expensive and inconvenient. For example, it can be cheaper to shift the use of domestic appliances to off-peak hours but this is often considered or portrayed as not being cheap enough to overcome the inconvenience.⁴⁸ Uncertainty over costs, maintenance and supply chains is reinforced by “myths in the media” that have made people wary of low-carbon technologies.⁴⁹
- 37.** We heard from Dr Amanda Slevin, Co-Director, Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action, Queen’s University Belfast, that household communication on the energy transition should emphasise clear personal benefits. Statements such as “You will save money”, “Your house will use less energy in winter”, and “this will make my community better” will appeal more to the individual.⁵⁰
- 38.** Witnesses emphasised the need to move away from abstract or technocratic framing, particularly terms such as “Net Zero”, in favour of language that resonates with everyday priorities, such as “Warm Homes” and “Clean Power”. Claire Chappell stressed that “the public do not understand in detail what net zero is”, and is more concerned with “how it will affect them and their communities”.⁵¹ Miscommunication also stems

47 [Q13](#) [Professor Karen Bickerstaff] and [Q453](#) [Ben Golding]

48 [Q91](#) [Euan Sinclair Elliot]

49 [Q14](#) [Rachel Brisley]

50 [Q62](#) [Dr Amanda Slevin]

51 [Q43](#) [Claire Chappell]

from how, by whom and in what context these terms are used, signalling a need for clearer, audience-aware language to build shared understanding and support.

39. Chris Stark, Head of Mission Control at DESNZ, agreed that net zero has “lost its impact and its positive association”, with people increasingly hearing it framed as a “net zero agenda” rather than “a scientific target”.⁵² Reflecting on the UK Climate Assembly, he noted that participants were often turned off by the language but “excited about some of the things that need to be done” to achieve climate objectives.⁵³ He also acknowledged that, while the Government’s initial focus had been on industry and infrastructure delivery, “the next phase needs to be much more about communicating to people the benefits of this transition”, recognising that “there is more to do”.⁵⁴
40. Communication on all Government action should give thought on how that is communicated to ordinary households. An example raised by Chris Stark was new offshore wind investment, he argued that Government should communicate not just “gigawatts”, but what this means in reality, e.g. “£22 billion of new investment” and the delivery of an estimated “7,000 jobs”.⁵⁵

41. **CONCLUSION**

The Government will only secure buy-in to the energy transition if it means reduced cost and less inconvenience. Support for the Clean Energy Mission and the broader energy transition will only build if people can see not just the broader environmental and health benefits discussed earlier but also the personal benefits it will deliver.

Communicating with businesses

42. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors told us that SMEs often view the energy transition as “complex and financially burdensome”, with limited access to tailored advice, which constrains their ability to engage effectively with decarbonisation measures.⁵⁶ Nesta wanted to see the Government develop a more collaborative partnership with business to “raise awareness” and build confidence, supported by clearer and more consistent messaging.⁵⁷ Geraldine Bolton, Chief Executive of the Confederation of British Metalforming, told us that there was a need for supply chain

52 [Q444](#) [Chris Stark]

53 [Q444](#) [Chris Stark]

54 [Q420](#) [Chris Stark]

55 [Q421](#) [Chris Stark]

56 The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors ([BSE0112](#))

57 Nesta ([BSE0076](#))

businesses to be more closely involved in the development of Government strategy and the communication of the potential benefits to the wider public. We will be considering how the Government can further involve SMEs in the energy transition as part of our new inquiry on Business and energy.

43. Geraldine Bolton also argued that government engagement often focuses on big trade associations and large companies, overlooking SMEs across the wider supply chain.⁵⁸ She further argued that supply chain SMEs are not adequately represented in key industrial forums, including sector councils, limiting their ability to influence policy and access support.⁵⁹ We have also heard that there is a need for better advocacy from businesses who are already taking advantage of demand flexibility to further build understanding and support for the energy transition within industry. This could be through publication of case studies of good practice and would help demonstrate confidence in the transition among business and domestic energy users.
44. We were told about a number of structural barriers that businesses face when considering how they might engage with the energy transition. Geraldine Bolton was concerned about the exclusion of some energy-intensive businesses from policy support measures such as the energy levy relief schemes.⁶⁰ Andrew Sissons told us that the Government needs to give more thought to how it engages with SMEs that sit outside trade associations.⁶¹ He argued that a lack of local, trusted intermediaries, as well as limited advisory capacity, can leave businesses unable to “demystify” energy decisions, such as how to manage long-term contracts.⁶²

45. **CONCLUSION**

Most consumers get advice on heating solutions and other energy saving devices from the local tradespeople that would be employed to install them in houses. If those small businesses are not convinced to engage in the energy transition, then they will not be part of convincing the wider population to do the same, nor investing in the skills to deliver it.

46. **CONCLUSION**

SMEs are being overlooked in the energy transition. As trusted local voices and the primary source of advice for many consumers, they have significant potential to build public confidence in the transition. The previous administration did not make sufficient use of this opportunity.

58 [Q145](#) [Geraldine Bolton]

59 [Q146](#) [Geraldine Bolton]

60 [Q121](#) [Geraldine Bolton]

61 [Q152](#) [Andrew Sissons]

62 [Q152](#) [Andrew Sissons]

47.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should develop a dedicated strategy to engage SMEs in the energy transition. This should provide tailored support, improve SME representation in policymaking, and equip trusted local businesses, tradespeople and installers to communicate the benefits of the transition to their customers and communities.

Making the energy transition affordable

48. Affordability remains the main determining factor in both business and household decision-making.⁶³ Emma Pinchbeck, Chief Executive at the CCC, repeatedly told us that “communication will not be enough for the energy transition” arguing that it was vital to get the incentives right and reduce the cost of electricity. It was argued that “there is a lot of information you can give people about energy technologies, but [...] if the technologies are cheaper, then people will buy them”.⁶⁴
49. The MCS Foundation indicated that public support for low-carbon heating is strongly dependent on affordability, with “upfront costs” being more important than long-term savings in household decision-making.⁶⁵ The CCC Citizens’ Panel reinforced that affordability concerns must be addressed through proactive state intervention, including support schemes for purchasing low-carbon technologies.⁶⁶
50. The costs of the transition are not just about the costs of new technology such as heat pumps, but that electricity is too expensive. In our Cost of energy inquiry, we have heard that while the transition to renewables will result in significantly cheaper electricity in the decades to come, the investment needed, now, to deliver that is increasing the cost of electricity to consumers. Ofgem acknowledged a continued challenge in communicating these trade-offs clearly to the public.⁶⁷
51. The Government published its flagship Warm Homes Plan in January 2026. It will be crucial that this is rolled out in a way that enables consumers to more easily access the benefits of the energy transition and take advantage of low carbon technologies available to them on the market. We have launched our Warm and Comfortable Homes inquiry to consider how the Government can best deliver and communicate the Warm Homes Plan.

63 [Q213](#) [Stephanie Draper] and [Q291](#) [Emma Pinchbeck]

64 [Q295](#) [Emma Pinchbeck]

65 The MCS Foundation ([BSE0048](#))

66 [Citizens’ Panel for an accessible and affordable household vision of Net Zero](#), Climate Change Committee, 26 February 2025

67 [Q386](#) [Priya Brahmhatt-Patel]

52. Neither SMEs nor households are consistently seeing or feeling the benefits of the energy transition in their bills. Chris Stark noted that, while measures such as £150 bill support and the Warm Home Discount are important, “if it ends there, that is not enough”. He said that in the next phase of the energy transition there was a need to extract as much value as possible for the consumer and ensure the opportunities to save money as a result of the new energy system can be accessed by “the people who most need them rather than those who are most able to afford the technologies”.⁶⁸ We have heard calls for the introduction of a salary sacrifice scheme for the installation of solar, battery storage and heat pumps, similar to that used to boost EV adoption, to encourage and enable easier adoption of these technologies.

53. **CONCLUSION**

The biggest barrier to households and SMEs moving to low carbon technologies is cost rather than a lack of desire to do so. Three quarters of householders were interested in making upgrades, but there were concerns over costs and low levels of awareness of support schemes available. It will be critical that the Warm Homes Plan is rolled out effectively and that the Government sends clear signals to the public of the benefits of uptake of the technologies which are available as part of the plan.

54. **CONCLUSION**

The costs of the transition are not currently falling fairly. Policy costs recovered through electricity bills are regressive, taking a larger share of income from poorer households. Those in poorly insulated or privately rented homes are least able to act and most exposed to high prices, yet they are the people who stand to gain most from cheaper clean power and warmer homes. A transition whose upfront costs fall on those least able to pay, while its benefits accrue first to those who can afford a heat pump or an electric vehicle, will not command public support and does not deserve to.

68 [Q456](#) [Chris Stark]

55.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should act on recommendations we made in our Report on Tackling the energy cost crisis to reduce electricity prices and improve the competitiveness of UK businesses. In particular, it should accelerate support for energy-intensive industries, extend support to SMEs, and set out a clear plan for ensuring that households and businesses share in the long-term benefits of cheaper clean power. It should also improve awareness of the support available to adopt low-carbon technologies, through the Warm Homes Plan. Salary sacrifice for the installation of solar, battery storage and heat pumps should also be explored by the Government as part of its efforts to improve the affordability and accessibility of low carbon technologies.

56.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government should adopt and publish an explicit fairness principle for the transition in that no household in or at risk of fuel poverty should be left worse off by the costs of decarbonisation. It should publish an annual assessment of the distributional impact of energy policy costs. Fairness should be built into the design of the transition, not retrofitted through communications.

4 Building trust for the future

57. The UK's progress on meeting climate commitments has advanced since the 1990s because there has been a cross-party consensus on climate; both major parties drove the agenda to reduce emissions. While there were arguments on the detail of how emissions might be cut, there was little dissent on the need to address the challenges of climate change.
58. That political consensus has worn thin. The last Conservative Government began rowing back on measures meant to address climate change and provide a regulatory drive to move away from fossil fuel technology such as internal combustion engines and gas central heating. In September 2023, the then Prime Minister, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP delayed the phase-out date for the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035, weakened plans to phase out fossil fuel heating, delayed the phase-out of oil boilers in off-grid homes, and scrapped energy efficiency requirements plan for rented properties, arguing that some net zero policies imposed “unacceptable costs” on households.⁶⁹
59. The then Shadow Energy Secretary of State, Claire Coutinho MP, has argued for continued domestic oil and gas production, including in the North Sea, and has emphasised the importance of maintaining energy security and affordability in the context of net zero policy choices.⁷⁰ The Reform Party is adamantly opposed to net zero, with “Scrap Net Zero to Cut Energy Bills” listed as one of twenty core policies on the party's website.⁷¹ Opposition to the energy transition has moved from scepticism about pace to active efforts to deter investment in British energy infrastructure. Telling international investors to withdraw from UK contracts is an attack on the national interest and on the jobs of British workers.
60. Dr Tom Franklin wrote to tell us that misleading narratives surrounding the energy transition, fuelled by misinformation, are gaining traction and require proactive, fact-based counter-campaigns, including targeted myth-busting (e.g. on heat pumps and EVs) and the use of trusted third-party voices such as scientists and community leaders.⁷² The Dalton Nuclear

69 [PM speech on Net Zero](#): 20 September 2023

70 HC Deb, 19 May 2026, [col 432](#)

71 Reform UK, [Our Policies](#) [last accessed on 22 June 2026]

72 UKRI National Interdisciplinary Centre for Circular Chemical Economy ([BSE0012](#))

Institute, University of Manchester told us it believed that fragmented Government communications lack impact and must be reinforced by clear, evidence-based messaging delivered alongside trusted voices from science and public life.⁷³ The Government has launched a public participation strategy, *Energising Britain: Your voice in our Clean Energy Superpower Mission*.⁷⁴ The main thrust of which is to ensure reliable information is available in the public sphere to facilitate greater access to, and engagement with, the energy transition.

61. We were interested in discussing the energy transition with those involved in the public discourse and to understand the impact that information might have on opinions of those both for and against the energy transition. We canvassed people that engaged in e-petitions on the Parliament website to ask questions on the transition and, from those 250 that responded, invited 21 to attend a round table session with the Committee. Those who attended spoke to Members and heard from people that could provide informed advice on the details of the energy transition and the impacts of climate. Details of that event are published in annexes to this Report.
62. Our key takeaway from the session was that, contrary to expectations, the provision of information did not bring attendees towards a consensus, instead it seemed to further polarise opinions. It became very apparent that there was little overlap on sources of information, agreed facts or which organisations might be trusted to provide advice.

Trusted voices

63. The lack of “trusted messengers” independent from Government to help convey accurate and pertinent information on the energy transition and net zero, was highlighted to us and we were told that the Government needed to capitalise on high trust where it can be found.⁷⁵ A plethora of voices on the key issues, should be marshalled to reinforce common narratives and speak to a broad array of audiences.⁷⁶
64. Claire Chappell emphasised the role of intermediaries; industry, media (e.g. Autotrader), and wider “middle players”, in effectively communicating the benefits of transition.⁷⁷ Dr Amanda Slevin presented examples of scaling

73 The Dalton Nuclear Institute, University of Manchester ([BSE0084](#))

74 UK Government, [Energising Britain: Your voice in our Clean Energy Superpower Mission](#), December 2025

75 [Qq63–64](#)

76 [Qq215–218](#)

77 [Q63](#) [Claire Chappell]

community-based models such as climate action hubs and mobilising existing networks (e.g. Northern Ireland Community Energy, Drumlin Wind Energy, Rural Community Network, NICVA) as trusted messengers.⁷⁸

65. Evidence from the Department indicates that steps are being taken to improve public engagement on the energy transition, but progress remains uneven and dependent on better coordination and clearer delivery. Minister White pointed to polling showing “79% of the public support taking action on tackling climate change”, and said effective communication must be built on a really good strategy, including the clean energy mission and a public participation plan.⁷⁹ She highlighted the Net Zero Council as a mechanism for engagement, bringing together “trade union leaders”, “corporate leaders” and “leaders of NGOs” to help carry the message.⁸⁰ The Department acknowledged the importance of trust in information and told us they had sought to address that through communication toolkits and shared messaging.⁸¹

66. **CONCLUSION**

The previous administration hoped that better information through the usual channels would tackle the rise of misinformation about climate and the energy transition. We are concerned that simply providing information will not be enough. For those already opposed to the transition, further information may simply entrench that opposition.

67. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Net Zero Council was identified as a useful model for structured partnership between Government and business to support delivery of the energy transition and focus outreach to the business community. The Government should mirror this process by establishing a council focusing on a partnership with civil society, which should also include public institutions and national academies, as part of attempts to build up trusted voices.

78 [Q66](#) [Dr Amanda Slevin]

79 [Q529](#) [Minister Katie White]

80 [Q533](#) [Minister Katie White]; The [Net Zero Council](#) is a partnership between government, business and civil society, providing strategic leadership to support delivery of the government’s Clean Energy Superpower Mission.

81 [Q579](#) [Ryan McLaughlin]

68.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Government tasks the national academies to raise their profile with the nation at large. These bodies should be the basis for people seeking clarity on complex issues, like climate, rather than being remote, elite organisations that are slow to engage beyond their specialist audiences.

Tackling online misinformation

69. A recurring theme across our inquiry was how information quality affects public support for the energy transition. Dr. Roger Harrabin, journalist and former BBC Energy and Environment Analyst, highlighted a significant gap between public concern about the climate crisis and its visibility in mainstream broadcasting. He noted that while 58% of people describe climate and environmental issues as a major concern, they appear in only 35% of TV and radio programmes to which it is relevant. Often coverage is only through passing references that do not provide context.⁸² He cited the Valencia floods in 2024, in which only 4 of 15 “News at Ten” programmes explicitly connected the event to climate change. Dr Harrabin contended that climate change is underreported by broadcasters compared to other topics with similar levels of public concern such as crime, which he argued broadcasters covered much more regularly and prominently than they did climate change.⁸³
70. Bob Ward warned that online misinformation around net zero is increasingly driven by ideological division and politically amplified narratives, contributing to a wider “culture war” framing of the energy transition:

... it is the manufacture of fake news and the false information that they are putting out there that is leading to essentially undermining democracy. Democracy depends on people having access to accurate information.⁸⁴

We were told that inaccurate or selectively repeated claims by politicians and commentators are reinforcing false narratives making it difficult for the public to distinguish fact from misinformation. Bob Ward cited one such instance to us:

An article by Andrew Neil last July claimed that the Committee on Climate Change had said that at net zero 25% of our energy would still be coming from fossil fuels. That is categorically untrue, but Andrew Neil has managed to get away with it, IPSO told me, because the Prime

82 [Q283](#) [Dr Roger Harrabin]

83 [Q283](#) [Dr Roger Harrabin]

84 [Q246](#) [Bob Ward]

Minister and the Energy Secretary at the time had made that claim and, therefore, Andrew Neil was entitled to make that claim as if it were true.⁸⁵

Ofcom confirmed that while misinformation is prevalent, it is not currently defined as a specific harm under the Online Safety Act unless it falls within existing illegal categories.⁸⁶ Ian Macrae, Ofcom's Director of Market Intelligence, stated that approximately 4% of those who reported encountering misinformation identified climate change as the subject.⁸⁷

71. Professor Hugh Montgomery warned that widespread misinformation and deliberate disinformation are undermining support for the energy transition, including activity by state-linked “malign actors” identified in the United Nations and NATO reports (2022–2024).⁸⁸ He argued that Government must “inoculate with information first” by proactively improving public understanding before false narratives take hold.⁸⁹
72. Ian Macrae told us “the corollary to having a whole load of, frankly, misinformation and rubbish out there is that people have access to trusted news and information”.⁹⁰ Under the public service media review, Ofcom has recommended to Government that public service broadcasters’ news services are given due prominence on YouTube and other video service platforms.⁹¹ Ian Macrae made that the argument that “a meaningful way of addressing misinformation online is to make sure that trusted news providers have due prominence online”.⁹²

Box 1: Prominence

The concept of ‘prominence’ in media regulation relates to ensuring that public service content is both easy to search for and easily discoverable by browsing and therefore given due prominence on media platforms. For example, this is currently achieved in TV broadcasting through rules set out by Ofcom that affect the position (channel numbers) of designated channels when accessed via an electronic programme guide. The current legal framework guarantees that the first five channels audiences find when they switch on their TVs are operated by public service media providers. The Government has recently announced that it will explore legislative options to require social media to

85 [Qq250–251](#)

86 [Q382](#) [Ian Macrae]

87 [Q384](#) [Ian Macrae]

88 [Q291](#) [Professor Hugh Montgomery]

89 [Q291](#) [Professor Hugh Montgomery]

90 [Q384](#) [Ian Macrae]

91 [Q384](#) [Ian Macrae]

92 [Q384](#) [Ian Macrae]

make news content from public service media providers more prominent and easily discoverable, as part of efforts to counter misinformation.

Source: Department for Culture, Media & Sport, Watch this space: a new strategic direction for UK media - green paper and public consultation, 23 June 2026

- 73.** We were told that in the absence of direct regulatory powers over misinformation, Ofcom’s approach relies significantly on media literacy initiatives. These include partnerships with over 700 organisations and engagement with online platforms, with five major platforms having signed up to best practice principles for media literacy. However, Ian Macrae acknowledged that the measures are “a bit softer” than regulatory interventions.⁹³ While Ofcom has a role in online safety and media literacy, we questioned Ofcom on concerns that regulatory frameworks may not fully capture the scale of digitally enabled misinformation platforms and their impact on public perceptions of energy policy.⁹⁴ This included raising concerns regarding the apparent lack of aggregated analysis by Ofcom on the volume and nature of complaints relating to energy issues.⁹⁵
- 74.** Laura Rhea, Ofcom’s Director of Standards and Audience Protection, responded that “the fact that there have been no investigations [...] probably speaks to the fact that broadcasters... are complying broadly with our rules”.⁹⁶ She emphasised that Ofcom is “a post-broadcast regulator”⁹⁷ and that its role is constrained by “freedom of expression”⁹⁸ and “editorial freedom”,⁹⁹ while still enforcing standards on due impartiality.¹⁰⁰ We were concerned that Ofcom was unable to estimate the length of time it typically takes to reach a determination on complaints, with Laura Rhea telling us that assessments were made “very much on a case-by-case basis”, but sometimes these cases could take months if not years to come to a resolution.¹⁰¹

93 [Q382](#) [Ian Macrae]

94 [Qq382–383](#) [Ian Macrae]

95 [Q369](#), [Q377](#) [Laura Rhea]

96 [Q350](#) [Laura Rhea]

97 [Q355](#) [Laura Rhea]

98 [Q353](#), [Q354](#) [Laura Rhea]

99 [Q349](#), [Q353](#), [Q356](#) [Laura Rhea]

100 [Q348](#) [Laura Rhea]

101 [Qq360–363](#) [Laura Rhea]

75.

CONCLUSION

While we recognise that the current remit of Ofcom may not allow it to intervene in matters of climate misinformation raised during this inquiry, we are concerned that exposure to misinformation online and broadcast narratives can erode overall confidence if not countered by credible communication and regulatory clarity. Indeed stories from the wilder parts of the internet can gain credibility by being repeated in Parliament and then reported in more established media outlets. While we appreciate Ofcom is a post-broadcast regulator, we are concerned about the lack of speed and transparency displayed by the regulator in reaching determinations on complaints and the concurrent impact this may have on enabling the spread of misinformation.

76.

RECOMMENDATION

In response to this Report, the Government should set out its assessment of the merits of granting Ofcom further legislative powers and resources to more effectively regulate misleading information online regarding the energy transition, especially on the “credibility laundering” of information. The Government should also explore the merits of tasking Ofcom with producing speedy, interim decisions on complaints, as part of its efforts to counter the spread of misinformation.

77.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that Ofcom should explore how to ensure information on climate change and energy transition from trusted sources is prominent and easy to find on social media platforms, specifically on how authoritative information might be given greater prominence within the algorithms of social media platforms and search engines.

Conclusions and recommendations

The case for the energy transition

1. There is a danger that the politics of the energy transition has replaced the previous consensus with a stale discussion on the cost and feasibility of achieving an emissions target. That is reflected in the public debate which fails to reflect the full range of benefits of engaging with the transition or the costs of not tackling climate change. The evidence to this inquiry, and to our concurrent inquiries on energy resilience and the cost of energy, is that the transition is the route to lower bills and greater security, and that the costs of delay are borne by the public in higher prices, colder homes and lost jobs. The question for the country is not whether to make the transition but how quickly and how fairly. (Conclusion, Paragraph 12)
2. The Government should urgently supplement the work of Energising Britain by developing and implementing a cross-departmental, benefit-led communications strategy for energy transition, ensuring consistent messaging on its health, economic, national security, food security and social co-benefits. This should prioritise the benefits most salient to the public, particularly health outcomes, cost savings, and job creation. The Government should also strengthen evaluation of public understanding and commission further analysis, including from the Climate Change Committee, on the costs of inaction, in order to improve public understanding of the economic and social consequences of failing to act. (Recommendation, Paragraph 13)
3. The term net zero has lost much of its significant positive association. It increasingly acts as a distraction from the broader aims of the energy transition and as a lightning rod for opposition to climate action. As part of efforts to communicate the energy transition effectively, the term net zero should be dropped from the Department's name and reduce its use in regular communications and public statements, instead focussing on wider societal benefits. (Recommendation, Paragraph 14)
4. Recent events, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the conflict involving Iran and the cost-of-living crisis, have increased the importance the public places on energy security including the physical security of energy

infrastructure which has been raised during the Committee's inquiry sessions on energy resilience. We welcome the Government's increasing focus on energy security as a rationale for the energy transition. The Government should continue to emphasise how transitioning to renewable energy enhances national energy security, reduces dependence on volatile international energy markets and strengthens the UK's resilience to future price shocks and should clearly demonstrate that slowing the transition means prolonging Britain's exposure to gas markets set by events in Ukraine and the Gulf. The Government should strengthen its commitment to the Clean Power 2030 mission in response to the Middle East crisis, and should say so. (Conclusion, Paragraph 19)

5. National security is a strong and increasingly important lever for making the case for the energy transition. The transition to renewable energies offers significant national security benefits, including increased resilience in an increasingly volatile geopolitical environment and reduced exposure to fossil fuel price shocks. These links are not yet being communicated consistently or prominently enough across Government. (Conclusion, Paragraph 23)
6. The Government should better communicate the national security dividends of transitioning to renewable energies and the opportunity to increase the UK's resilience in an increasingly volatile geopolitical world. It should more consistently draw out the links between low carbon energy sources, infrastructure delivery and lower exposure to fossil fuel price shocks across departmental communications. DESNZ should strengthen cross-government messaging so that the energy transition is not treated as a single-department issue, but is reflected in announcements across transport, housing and wider infrastructure policy. This should be delivered as a sustained and coordinated cross-government effort. (Recommendation, Paragraph 24)
7. Public awareness of the health impacts of climate change remains low, although it remains to be seen whether the experiences of heatwaves this summer begins to increase awareness of the ways that climate change is already affecting both public health and the delivery of health services. Information on these risks should be more accessible to enable people to better understand the impacts they face now and in the future. (Conclusion, Paragraph 28)
8. The Government should use the evidence of this summer's heatwaves to make the case for the transition directly and without hedging, including publishing UKHSA's attribution of heat-related deaths and NHS pressures to climate change as they become available, and stating clearly that the alternative to the transition is more of the same. The NHS should communicate the health impacts of climate change clearly and consistently, and strengthen its role in raising awareness of the risks climate change

poses to health outcomes and delivery of health services. Relevant public bodies should also communicate the health benefits of action on climate change and related issues. (Recommendation, Paragraph 29)

9. We heard compelling evidence that climate change poses a growing threat to UK food production and food security. Yet public concern about the use of farmland for solar development appears to be greater than concern about the impact of climate change on the land itself. Those opposing renewable infrastructure have been more effective at mobilising concerns about food security than those making the case for climate action. (Conclusion, Paragraph 34)
10. Farming organisations should be more vocal in communicating the impact of climate change on food production and the role of the energy transition in safeguarding long-term food security. Government should work with the sector to ensure the case for climate action is communicated more clearly and persuasively than arguments are made against renewable infrastructure. (Recommendation, Paragraph 35)

Mainstreaming the energy transition

11. The Government will only secure buy-in to the energy transition if it means reduced cost and less inconvenience. Support for the Clean Energy Mission and the broader energy transition will only build if people can see not just the broader environmental and health benefits discussed earlier but also the personal benefits it will deliver. (Conclusion, Paragraph 41)
12. Most consumers get advice on heating solutions and other energy saving devices from the local tradespeople that would be employed to install them in houses. If those small businesses are not convinced to engage in the energy transition, then they will not be part of convincing the wider population to do the same, nor investing in the skills to deliver it. (Conclusion, Paragraph 45)
13. SMEs are being overlooked in the energy transition. As trusted local voices and the primary source of advice for many consumers, they have significant potential to build public confidence in the transition. The previous administration did not make sufficient use of this opportunity. (Conclusion, Paragraph 46)
14. The Government should develop a dedicated strategy to engage SMEs in the energy transition. This should provide tailored support, improve SME representation in policymaking, and equip trusted local businesses, tradespeople and installers to communicate the benefits of the transition to their customers and communities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 47)

15. The biggest barrier to households and SMEs moving to low carbon technologies is cost rather than a lack of desire to do so. Three quarters of householders were interested in making upgrades, but there were concerns over costs and low levels of awareness of support schemes available. It will be critical that the Warm Homes Plan is rolled out effectively and that the Government sends clear signals to the public of the benefits of uptake of the technologies which are available as part of the plan. (Conclusion, Paragraph 53)
16. The costs of the transition are not currently falling fairly. Policy costs recovered through electricity bills are regressive, taking a larger share of income from poorer households. Those in poorly insulated or privately rented homes are least able to act and most exposed to high prices, yet they are the people who stand to gain most from cheaper clean power and warmer homes. A transition whose upfront costs fall on those least able to pay, while its benefits accrue first to those who can afford a heat pump or an electric vehicle, will not command public support and does not deserve to. (Conclusion, Paragraph 54)
17. The Government should act on recommendations we made in our Report on Tackling the energy cost crisis to reduce electricity prices and improve the competitiveness of UK businesses. In particular, it should accelerate support for energy-intensive industries, extend support to SMEs, and set out a clear plan for ensuring that households and businesses share in the long-term benefits of cheaper clean power. It should also improve awareness of the support available to adopt low-carbon technologies, through the Warm Homes Plan. Salary sacrifice for the installation of solar, battery storage and heat pumps should also be explored by the Government as part of its efforts to improve the affordability and accessibility of low carbon technologies. (Recommendation, Paragraph 55)
18. The Government should adopt and publish an explicit fairness principle for the transition in that no household in or at risk of fuel poverty should be left worse off by the costs of decarbonisation. It should publish an annual assessment of the distributional impact of energy policy costs. Fairness should be built into the design of the transition, not retrofitted through communications. (Recommendation, Paragraph 56)

Building trust for the future

19. The previous administration hoped that better information through the usual channels would tackle the rise of misinformation about climate and the energy transition. We are concerned that simply providing

information will not be enough. For those already opposed to the transition, further information may simply entrench that opposition. (Conclusion, Paragraph 66)

- 20.** The Net Zero Council was identified as a useful model for structured partnership between Government and business to support delivery of the energy transition and focus outreach to the business community. The Government should mirror this process by establishing a council focusing on a partnership with civil society, which should also include public institutions and national academies, as part of attempts to build up trusted voices. (Recommendation, Paragraph 67)
- 21.** We recommend that the Government tasks the national academies to raise their profile with the nation at large. These bodies should be the basis for people seeking clarity on complex issues, like climate, rather than being remote, elite organisations that are slow to engage beyond their specialist audiences. (Recommendation, Paragraph 68)
- 22.** While we recognise that the current remit of Ofcom may not allow it to intervene in matters of climate misinformation raised during this inquiry, we are concerned that exposure to misinformation online and broadcast narratives can erode overall confidence if not countered by credible communication and regulatory clarity. Indeed stories from the wilder parts of the internet can gain credibility by being repeated in Parliament and then reported in more established media outlets. While we appreciate Ofcom is a post-broadcast regulator, we are concerned about the lack of speed and transparency displayed by the regulator in reaching determinations on complaints and the concurrent impact this may have on enabling the spread of misinformation. (Conclusion, Paragraph 75)
- 23.** In response to this Report, the Government should set out its assessment of the merits of granting Ofcom further legislative powers and resources to more effectively regulate misleading information online regarding the energy transition, especially on the “credibility laundering” of information. The Government should also explore the merits of tasking Ofcom with producing speedy, interim decisions on complaints, as part of its efforts to counter the spread of misinformation. (Recommendation, Paragraph 76)
- 24.** We recommend that Ofcom should explore how to ensure information on climate change and energy transition from trusted sources is prominent and easy to find on social media platforms, specifically on how authoritative information might be given greater prominence within the algorithms of social media platforms and search engines. (Recommendation, Paragraph 77)

Annex: Summary note of Building Support for the Energy Transition public engagement event

Background to the event

As part of its inquiry into Building support for the energy transition, the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee held a roundtable event to greater understand public perceptions regarding the energy transition. The inquiry is assessing whether the Government is communicating effectively and adequately informing public understanding of the objectives of the energy transition.

The aim of the event was to provide insight into how people engage with the Government's policy of shifting away from the use of fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and better understand how the public are responding to Government communication of the energy transition. The purpose of the event was for Committee Members to experience a range of opinions held by those with an interest, discuss the fundamentals of the policy, and to explore whether opinions shifted when presented with information, as an example of what the Government might need to consider if it wants to better build a case for the energy transition.

To identify attendees, signatories of two contrasting parliamentary petitions on related topics were invited by the Committee to express their interest in attending the event. Interested individuals completed a short form which asked about their levels of concern about climate change, support for renewable energy, and whether they believe climate action should be immediate or delayed until economic conditions improve. Participants were also asked if they thought the Government has properly explained the objectives of the energy transition and who they trust when looking for information on climate change and the transition to renewable energy. A small group of people who expressed interest in the event were invited to attend. Participants were chosen to reflect a diverse range of perspectives.

The event was attended by 21 members of the public. Those attending came from different regions across the UK and represented a range of age groups. The aim of the session was to bring together a small number of members of the public, reflecting a diverse range of perspectives, to discuss key topics to inform the inquiry. At the event, participants were seated in five roundtable groups with members of the committee leading discussions at each table.

Three expert speakers delivered two short presentations to provide context and insight into the discussion topics, these were intended to ground the roundtable discussions, and allow participants the opportunity to reflect on them during the conversation. The first topic focused on exploring the economic trade-offs involved in the energy transition. The second topic of discussion considered the extent to which hearing about the effects of climate change affected views on whether more or less should be done to support the energy transition.

Table discussions were led by Members of the Committee who asked participants to share their views on these topics after listening to the presentations, and to explain why they held a particular point of view. A key purpose of the event was to ensure that Members of the Committee heard directly from members of the public, to understand more about their views and opinions. This included hearing the views of people who were supportive of the energy transition and those who were not. The discussions across tables were wide-ranging and extremely varied, it was obvious during these discussions that there were deep divisions on the energy transition between participants attending the event. This note is intended to give a high-level summary of key themes from the discussions during the event but is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of everything discussed during the session.

Below is a high-level summary of discussions had during the event.

Discussion on economic trade-offs involved in the energy transition

After introductions, participants received a short presentation from **Madeleine Gabriel, Director of Sustainable Future and Andrew Sissons, Deputy Director of Sustainable Future, both from Nesta**. This presentation gave an overview of the economic trade-offs involved in the energy transition, including short and long-term costs and benefits of moving to renewable energy.

Participants discussed whether the Government has clearly communicated the reasons for moving to renewable energy and away from fossil fuels. At one roundtable, there was a general consensus that government had “done a bad job” making a compelling argument for the energy transition. Many people felt the Government and politicians were not being fully honest and frank about the trade-offs involved with the energy transition, while some participants felt that communication with young people is particularly poor.

Some felt that there had been a lot of messaging, but that people were sceptical of it and support for the transition was waning. They cited both the financial costs of the energy transition and opposition within communities to energy infrastructure being built in their locales, such as on-shore wind farms. Some roundtable discussions reflected on whether rural areas bear the brunt of the impact of the renewable grid roll-out and some participants argued that communities need to see more benefits, especially for those who decide not to sell up and move out. Some felt communities should be more involved in the transition and the benefits should be meaningful for every member of the community and compensate for the disruption and noise. Others thought community-owned renewable energy schemes are a good way to get communities to support renewable energy generation. They argued that such schemes can help reduce opposition to commercial generation, but noted grid capacity as a barrier to community energy schemes, especially larger ones where a community scheme would generate surplus electricity that it could sell.

Some participants were supportive of solar PV on rooftops, but were more concerned about their use on agricultural land, feeling it could reduce the amount of farmland thus increasing higher carbon imports of food. There were concerns that the cost of replacing older wind farms isn’t being considered enough.

One viewpoint articulated was that a cause of distrust among the public is that what is published is different to what people are seeing in real life, participants argued that they want to see the full picture of the energy transition being better communicated. They said that they thought “honesty is the best policy” and wanted the full story to be told, including for government to be “open and upfront about costs”. They felt that the public are told about the benefits, but not the negatives, citing for example, concerns over risks with electric vehicles (EVs).

At times, there were disagreements about the merits and effectiveness of EVs and heat pumps. Others wanted there to be a bigger business perspective on the energy transition, with set outcomes for investment. Some attendees felt that some externalities with regards to electric vehicles

were not being addressed, such as higher car insurance for all drivers and greater damage to road networks (EVs being heavier). It was submitted that attention should switch from the transition to adaptation.

Others were more positive about the Government's communication of the energy transition, praising its direct messaging, but felt that there was miscommunication about the term Net Zero and that the term had become politicised. It was argued that the goal has been communicated, but that the economic trade-offs have not been clearly explained, as well as the cost of inaction and impact on future generations. Many participants did not believe that the transition would bring down costs, however some mentioned that they believed the cost of doing nothing is much greater.

Some participants called for there to be more emphasis on climate change, rather than Net Zero, as well as on 'energy security' rather than 'energy transition'. Participants mentioned that there should be more focus on the economic damage climate change would cause if the UK does not transition, and there was a desire for long term economic forecasts to reflect this. Others also called for there to be more messaging on air quality and public health impacts of transitioning to renewable technologies.

There was often consensus that climate change is real, but opinion on the significance and urgency of it was mixed. Some argued that its magnitude is overstated, while others believed that climate change is so urgent that they fear that it is an intractable problem and cannot be overcome.

Participants also felt that there was a need for the Government to better communicate its strategy for engaging with high emitting countries. Among some participants, there was an exchange of views on the merits of UK action to mitigate climate change, with some citing that the US and other countries are not proceeding at the same pace as the UK and have a far larger impact due to higher emissions.

Discussions within groups also focused on reasons to move away from fossil fuels to renewables, as well as concerns participants had with the energy transition. Some participants thought that the Government was endangering the country's energy security by importing gas and not extracting more gas domestically from the North Sea. They also argued renewables didn't contribute to energy security due to materials being imported to build them. The reliance on China for supply chains was a concern in this regard.

Others argued that renewables helped to increase the UK's energy security, as the wind farms are here once built and will continue to produce energy for the UK. Some participants argued that the move away from fossil fuels

was complex and argued for a pragmatic approach to extraction of oil and gas in the North Sea. On the other hand, it was argued that fossil fuels will run out in the lifetimes of today's youth, posing a security risk.

There was some discussion of the Government's policy in regard to nuclear energy generation. Some participants were strong proponents of pivoting towards investing more in nuclear energy generation, so that it could make up a bigger proportion of the country's energy mix. One participant said that they were "inherently distrustful of nuclear, but have heard people that they trust talk positively about it".

Some thought the cost of nuclear energy regulation needs to come down. While others thought nuclear would be a better choice than fossil fuels but would ideally avoid it and some thought that relying on nuclear power generation seemed "idealistic" and that there was a need for Government to be clearer about its policy on it.

Other participants cited environmental reasons and the impact on future generations as the main benefits for moving away from fossil fuels. They argued that the UK should be a climate leader and advocate on the global stage about the need to protect the environment for future generations. One participant felt that "It is the Government's responsibility to look after the health of our grandchildren, not just us".

When questioned about costs on bills of investing in renewables, one participant noted that "Yes, it is worth investing more now for the future ... [it] makes sense to pay more now to prevent climate breakdown". However, another felt that it "Won't save us money".

Discussion on climate change and the energy transition

Following the conclusion of discussions on the economic trade-offs involved in the energy transition, there was a short presentation from **Dr Marina Romanello, Executive Director at the Lancet Countdown, based at University College London's Institute for Global Health**. This presentation examined climate change and the energy transition, including the impacts of climate change on weather events and public health in the UK.

Some felt that hearing about the current threats to public health increased the speed and urgency that the energy transition is needed. Others felt it reinforced their view, but from a perspective they hadn't considered, commenting that they hadn't previously known that deaths were already happening due to heat waves. While others were more sceptical and felt that it did not influence their views.

Some said they separated themselves from the data and saw themselves as an individual. They remarked that the feeling was similar to the mindset of being in a traffic jam, you are cross because you can't get anywhere but you do not think of yourself as part of the jam. Others opposed the Government's communication of the energy transition but noted they do make changes personally: focussing on recycling and transport. They argued that the moment you make certain steps an obligation it is "human nature" to push back. Another, noted that they felt the UK hasn't fundamentally changed its consumption patterns, and that there was still a need for oil due to its use in many products. Others felt that younger people have grown up with projections that indicate that climate change is inevitable and so that action now seems pointless.

Some participants thought that it was powerful to depict the influence of climate change on the weather events in the UK and argued that it demonstrated it is becoming our problem; arguing this is a good way to engage the public. They recounted experiences of a loss of productivity during heatwaves, and referenced deaths caused by hurricanes and other natural disasters abroad, as reasons to support the energy transition.

However, others disagreed with data about weather events linked to climate change and felt that it was a technique used by scientists to link natural disasters to climate disasters. Some participants were sceptical that weather events, such as flooding for example, can be attributed to climate change, though did stress the importance of protecting the local environment.

A viewpoint put forward was that climate policy isn't an exact science and that the media is attributing disasters to climate change too readily. Participants arguing this said that they did not deny that human activity probably does impact on climate change. But they questioned the impact the UK could have on affecting climate change, arguing that until there was a global response, the impact would be limited.

Many participants referenced the challenge that other countries will still emit despite the UK's energy transition and were also concerned that the UK is offshoring its emissions and moving them to other countries at the expense of domestic industries. Some also called for the Government to "practice what you preach", raising what they felt was a hypocrisy in flying to COP30.

Some participants discussed how they thought the energy transition should be funded and here the importance of ensuring a fair transition was raised. Some called for increased taxes arguing for example to "increase income tax on those above an average income", with other adding that they "don't

necessarily think that the poor should be paying for things”. Others though were sceptical of the ability of the Government to sell the future benefits on the energy transition.

Overall support for the energy transition was mixed. Some thought that the energy transition is happening regardless of their opinion and felt that they are being forced into the transition. While participants who supported the energy transition fear that adaptation hasn’t been considered enough, and that there was a need to be more prepared from that perspective. There was also disagreement over whether Net Zero by 2050 was a useful goal, with some commenting that “net zero is a meaningless target”, while others felt it was crucial to set a target.

Concluding comments and recommendations

At the conclusion of the event, participants were asked if they had any final recommendations or concluding remarks for the Committee that they would like to see reflected in the remainder of the inquiry.

Many participants agreed that it is important to ensure a just transition and placed an emphasis on supporting more socio-economically deprived groups. Others called for a single source of truth from an easily available, accessible portal for information on the energy transition. There was also a recommendation for Government to get local coordinators and local groups more involved in information sharing about the energy transition, with some referencing that local actors have been useful at spreading messages on retrofitting.

Participants recommended that it was vital communities were more involved in the transition and argued that the benefits should be meaningful for every member of the community. They argued that in locations where renewable energy infrastructure is being built, communities should be compensated for the disruption and noise, and that funding a community facility is not enough. Some participants also argued that farmers should be better supported to grow food rather than lease their land for solar farms.

There were calls for greater transparency in modelling on the energy transition. There was also a call for the Climate Change Committee to be renamed the ‘Energy Facts Committee’, rather than the ‘Climate Change Committee’, with participants arguing it would lead to greater support for its work.

Some participants called for more discussion of energy security and how the Government is aiming to ensure it rather than of Net Zero. There were calls for the Government to pursue more nuclear power generation. There was also support for carbon pricing, with some present arguing that there was a need for the Government to consider the country's carbon footprint.

Participants criticised the Government's current use of language and called for the energy transition to be framed in how it would help future generations. Some participants also argued that they thought young people cared more about bills and the cost of living than climate and argued for the transition to be framed in those terms. Others thought the Government could communicate the energy transition through a TikTok/social media campaign.

Participants supportive of the energy transition argued that it didn't matter to them the language used by the Government, as they just wanted to see the changes and called for the Government focus on language that would persuade those more sceptical.

Comments from participants

The summary note was sent to participants ahead of publication. Participants were invited to contact the Committee if they felt there was anything that the note did not capture accurately. The Committee received some minor points of feedback which have been incorporated in the summary note. We also received some more substantive comments which are detailed below.

One participant responded:

I want to place on record that the published summary does not accurately reflect either the nature of the discussion or the way the session itself was structured.

The session was not a neutral, open-ended evidence-gathering exercise. It was clearly directed. The framing of the discussion, the structure of the questions, and the way topics were introduced were all aligned toward a particular policy outcome. The questions were not exploratory; they were, in large part, designed to elicit responses that supported a pre-existing direction of travel.

This matters, because the summary note now presents the outcome as if it were the product of balanced deliberation and broadly shared conclusions. That is not an accurate characterisation of the process I took part in.

In particular:

First, the scope of the discussion was constrained by the way the questions were set. Fundamental issues—especially around deliverability, grid constraints, system risk, cost exposure, and infrastructure timescales , were not treated as open questions of principle, but implicitly framed as secondary “implementation challenges” to an assumed strategy.

Second, the structure of the session made it difficult to challenge the underlying premises. When the starting assumptions of a discussion are fixed in advance, and the questions are designed around those assumptions, the range of permissible answers is inevitably narrowed. That is not genuine consultation.

Third, the summary itself smooths over disagreement and uncertainty. It gives an impression of alignment and confidence that simply does not match the reality of either the system or the discussion. Real, substantive tensions were present. They have not been faithfully represented.

Having been in the room, I do not believe it is accurate to describe this as an open engagement whose purpose was to test policy direction. It was, in effect, a guided discussion about how to proceed with a largely predetermined approach.

If this document is to be used to inform ministers, Parliament, or wider stakeholders, then I think it is important to be honest about what it is and what it is not.

It is not a neutral summary of unconstrained stakeholder views. It is a narrative shaped by the way the engagement was designed and steered.

I would therefore strongly urge the department to reconsider how this exercise is being presented, and to reflect more transparently:

how the questions were framed,

what assumptions were treated as fixed, and

what substantive disagreements and risks remain unresolved.

Without that, the document risks being read , entirely reasonably , as policy-based evidence making, rather than evidence-based policy making.

Another commented:

Thank you for sharing this.

I do feel, however, that the language as it currently stands is too soft and does not fully reflect the strength of feeling expressed at my table. There was not merely disagreement with the government's drive toward 'Net Zero'; there was with some absolute, though controlled anger about the policies and messaging being pursued. This sentiment was shared across all age groups represented at the table.

There was a clear consensus that the focus should be on mitigating the impacts of climate change, rather than attempting to "fix" what many regarded as so-called climate change through rigid and ideologically driven targets. In particular, there was deep concern about the loss of employment and national profit from the North Sea, especially given the perception that we are increasingly exporting both jobs and profits overseas.

Members from rural communities expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the proliferation of large-scale solar farms. These were seen as actively damaging communities, heritage, and biodiversity, all in pursuit of what was widely viewed as a spurious target. Strong concern was also raised about the erosion of local democracy, particularly through the designation of such projects as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

From the younger, more urban participants, there was a different but equally troubling concern. Many felt that the relentless emphasis on 'Net Zero' and climate change messaging has created a deep anxiety about the future. Some questioned their own responsibility for the situation and expressed genuine fear about bringing a new generation into what they described as an increasingly dystopian world.

I hope these points can be more clearly and robustly woven into your final submission, as they better capture both the breadth and intensity of the views expressed.

Another participant commented:

The presentations were unintentionally biased because they described the costs of transition without including the costs of not transitioning. To make a fair judgement about the cost, you need to give not the **gross** cost of transition, but the **net** cost of transition i.e. include the cost of no transition on the other side of the equation. As Lord Stern argued years ago, and climate scientists and economists repeat consistently, the costs of inaction are higher than the costs of action.

Another commented:

Thank you for organising and facilitating the engagement event. I agree that the summary note reflects the existence of deep divisions of opinion around the climate crisis, the energy transition and Net Zero. However, I would like to place on record several substantive concerns about how the discussion at my table was conducted and how it is reflected in the published summary.

I was seated at a table with three other members of the public, a note-taker, and a Member of Parliament who was both facilitating discussion and, at times, taking notes. As I was only present at one table, my comments relate solely to that experience. Not all of the views expressed at our table were fully captured in the summary, indicating that some selection and filtering necessarily occurred in the process of summarising discussions. While this is understandable given the number of participants and simultaneous conversations, it does highlight certain limitations in the methodology.

In response to a question about how people we know perceive the climate crisis and the energy transition, I spoke about the experiences of many people in my generation. As a millennial, I described how many of my peers feel deep despair about the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, alongside a growing distrust that governments will act in line with scientific evidence due to the influence of corporate and fossil fuel lobbying. I explained that, for some, this has led to decisions not to have children, as well as feelings of hopelessness about the future. I also highlighted the material constraints people face: insecure or expensive housing, an inability to afford home ownership, and the resulting lack of agency to retrofit homes, install solar PV, or transition to heat pumps while renting. While making this point, I was cut off by the facilitator before I had finished.

More broadly, the format and facilitation at my table did not ensure that participants were able to contribute equally. I and another younger woman (a university student) spoke noticeably less than others. One older participant, who was more opposed to climate action, tended to answer first and frequently interrupted others. Although the MP sometimes attempted to go around the table, questions were often moved on before everyone had the opportunity to respond.

Due to time constraints and the structure of the discussion, I do not believe the event ensured that all voices were heard on an equal footing. This has implications for how the summary note may be

read. In particular, the summary does not indicate how widely held particular views were, which risks giving disproportionate weight to minority positions.

For example, at my table, three out of four participants were aligned on the urgency of the climate crisis, the need for an energy transition, and the credibility of institutions such as the Climate Change Committee, the IPCC, and peer-reviewed climate science. One participant, who in my view dominated the discussion, expressed distrust in peer-reviewed science and disputed factual points that the other 3 participants, the MP, and the expert speakers accepted. When I spoke about how the Government could communicate that the climate crisis will worsen displacement and result in more mass migration as many people are concerned about immigration, this person seemed angry and interrupted me to say what I was saying was not true.

While it is important to understand why some people oppose aspects of the energy transition, the format of this event and the way its outcomes are summarised do not adequately reflect the balance of views expressed or how facilitation influenced this.

In other contexts, such as surveys or polling, results are weighted to show how prevalent particular opinions are within a sample. Without similar context here, there is a risk that fringe views grounded in misinformation or conspiracy theories are afforded a prominence that does not reflect their level of support within the discussion.

Perspectives rooted predominantly in conspiracy theories or misinformation should not carry evidential weight in policy decisions, except insofar as they illuminate the mechanisms by which misinformation spreads and highlight the need to strengthen public understanding, trust, and critical thinking, particularly through media literacy initiatives that help people navigate social media and identify false information.

I offer these comments in the spirit of constructive engagement, and in the hope that the limitations of the event format and the uneven distribution of participation are more clearly acknowledged when the summary is considered as part of the Committee's wider evidence base.

Lastly, a participant commented:

I agree wholeheartedly with the well written comments published in the Annex.

The purpose of the meeting, as set out in the summary was, “to greater understand public perceptions regarding the energy transition”

and

“to provide insight into how people engage with the Government’s policy of shifting away from the use of fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and better understand how the public are responding to Government communication of the energy transition”.

“A key purpose of the event was to ensure that Members of the Committee heard directly from members of the public, to understand more about their views and opinions.”

Despite those honourable intentions, the Summary Note does not convey the views of a significant proportion of the public present so that Members of the Committee can ‘hear directly from the public’. It is effectively a sanitised and rather biased interpretation of public views and opinions aired at the meeting which gives minimal weight to views opposing or questioning the wisdom and speed of the current Net Zero transition strategy, or importantly, the actual purpose of having a Net Zero goal for the UK at all.

The anger about the economic burden on ordinary people for funding the extraordinary costs of meeting ideological, politically driven Net Zero targets were not resolved in round table discussions but were not mentioned in the summary.

From heated discussions there was certainly an impression that the significant environmental impacts of the UK’s Net Zero policies, which includes loss of biodiversity, were, to politicians and some urban dwellers, seemingly acceptable as collateral damage in the utopian goal to save the planet for future generations.

Whilst there is mention in the Summary Note of rural citizens feeling that they are bearing the brunt of the implementation of Net Zero policies, the summary does not convey the anger about the very real damage that is being inflicted upon rural Britain.

At my table, there were rural participants who had been seriously and directly affected by impacts from the imposition of renewable generation to provide ‘for the greater good’ of reaching Net Zero and providing electricity for urban dwellers who would never suffer from those impacts such as loss of, or pollution of their water supplies, noise and permanent visual intrusion from windfarm development.

Surely views and opinions from those with first hand experience of hosting ‘the transition to renewables’ should be one that Committee Members read in these Summary Notes.

Politicians should be exposed to a ‘warts and all’ truthful summary of the public’s perception of the implementation of Net Zero policies if there is to be any hope of honesty and engendering more public support for such policies.

The Summary Note highlighted the need expressed ‘by some’ for more community support and community benefit.

Without mentioning the discussion of the adverse consequences of Net Zero policies upon host rural communities, the environment and the huge loss of jobs to the fossil fuel and heavy industries in particular, the ‘need’ for mitigation in the form of financial benefit becomes simply a bribe and is disingenuous to those members of the public who actually bear the brunt of what is palpably an ‘unjust Net Zero transition’.

The Summary Note failed to give adequate weight to the views from many participants that the emphasis by the Government should be on mitigating the effects of climate change, not trying to stop climate change when, even if we reached Net Zero, the UK contribution to global carbon emissions is currently approximately 0.7%. Whilst the actual contribution of the UK to global carbon emissions was notably absent from the presentations, common sense logic of the insignificant contribution to global carbon emissions of the UK reaching Net Zero was clearly expressed in post presentation discussions, but has been completely omitted from this summary.

What evidence was presented at the meeting that the rest of the world would look on in admiration and follow the UK’s lead in attaining Net Zero at the expense of our economy, industry and in providing reliable and affordable electricity supplies? None that I was aware of.

Dr Marina Romanello spoke of the impacts of climate change on weather events and public health in the UK, including increased deaths from climate change induced heat waves. This presentation completely failed to recognise that more people die from the cold than from heat in the UK. Global warming is, to date, reducing not increasing deaths from extreme temperatures in the UK. Morbidity and decreased NHS expenditure also occurs when there are fewer falls on icy days. Why was this not mentioned? Why was there no opportunity to question the validity of any of the data presented?

This presentation was an example of how selective and skewed reporting of data is presented to the public to engender a sense of climate change hysteria and compliance with Net Zero ideology.

The narrow scope of the questions used to frame discussions and this public ‘consultation’ exercise basically confirmed that this meeting was designed not to obtain public views about the value or potential weaknesses of Net Zero targets and policies, but a meeting designed to see how Government communication could be improved to convert the sceptical public participants into believers and engender more public support for very expensive and unpopular Net Zero policies.

As highlighted both in the annex responses and in the summary, there is a repeated need for honesty and transparency from this Government in the presentation of climate change figures and the economic costs, subsidies and taxes which are needed to support the politically defined Net Zero transition.

I don’t feel the summary is a true and accurate representation of the dissenting views and opinions at the meeting and this is supported by the Annex responses which reflected similar views from other tables.

What is interesting is that participants were shielded from knowing the discussion and views of other tables as we were not allowed to mix. For that reason, the views expressed in the Annex are particularly valuable in providing personal reassurance that Net Zero sceptics, as opposed to climate change sceptics, are not that uncommon.

It would have been more transparent if the results of the post meeting questionnaire were published showing how many participants had changed their views and opinions as a result of the presentations and round table discussions.

Despite the lack of that published data, it is evident that the presentations and discussions failed in one aim of this meeting: to convert sceptics to supporting this Government’s Net Zero policies.

That is perhaps the best evidence that the Government’s communication strategy for Net Zero is not working.

And that is because the reality is that increasing numbers of the public are not seeing any tangible benefits of decarbonisation, despite figures which show significant reduction of UK carbon emissions over the past 20 years (mostly due to loss of heavy industry and fossil fuel generation).

Many members of the public are instead suffering the consequences of unmitigated effects of climate change, such as flooding, despite their own significant personal financial or employment losses in being made to support the 'green' Net Zero transition, regardless of their opinions and views.

As discussed at the meeting, significant personal investment in heat pumps and EVs, which in practice have real life limitations of effectiveness combined with increased cost, has added to disillusionment with Net Zero policies. The distrust and lack of honesty in information provided by the Government in published documents is alluded to in the summary , but almost in passing. The Committee Members need to understand why there is growing public resentment and scepticism about Net Zero and the Summary Note does not convey that.

If this Summary Note is to be used as true record of public opinion used to inform effective Government communication of Net Zero policies with the aim of building more support for those policies, then it's important that it properly reflects the public views of the successes, limitations and the critical problems of current policy.

Formal minutes

Tuesday 8 September 2026

Members present:

Bill Esterson (Chair)

Sir Christopher Chope

Torcuil Crichton

Graeme Downie

Wera Hobhouse

Mike Reader

Claire Young

Zero sum game: How the UK can reframe the energy transition

Draft Report (*Zero sum game: How the UK can reframe the energy transition*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Amendment proposed, “This Committee declines to give the report a second reading because it engages in a debate about Government propaganda and makes dangerous suggestions that there should be restrictions upon freedom of expression where views expressed are contrary to those being promoted by the Government.”.—(*Sir Christopher Chope.*)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 1	Noes, 5
Sir Christopher Chope	Torcuil Crichton
	Graeme Downie
	Wera Hobhouse
	Mike Reader
	Claire Young

Question accordingly negated.

Question put, That the Chair's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 5	Noes, 1
Torcuil Crichton	Sir Christopher Chope
Graeme Downie	
Wera Hobhouse	
Mike Reader	
Claire Young	

Question agreed to.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 77 read and agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Wednesday 9 September at 8.45am.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 18 June 2025

Luke Tryl, Executive Director, More in Common; **Rachel Brisley**, Director, Energy and Environment, Ipsos UK; **Professor Karen Bickerstaff**, Professor of Human Geography, University of Exeter and Chair of ACCESS Net Zero Taskforce [Q1–41](#)

Amanda Grimm, Policy Manager, Community Energy Scotland; **Dr Amanda Slevin**, Co-Director, Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action, Queen's University Belfast; **Claire Chappell**, Head of Climate Behaviour Change & Engagement, Welsh Government [Q42–72](#)

Wednesday 2 July 2025

Maria Booker, Head of Policy, Fair By Design; **Professor Sara Walker**, Co-Director, The Energy Demand Research Centre (EDRC); **Euan Sinclair Elliot**, Public Affairs Manager, Citizens Advice [Q73–111](#)

Geraldine Bolton, Chief Executive, Confederation of British Metalforming; **Andrew Sissons**, Deputy Director, Sustainable Future Mission, Nesta; **Professor Richard Fitton**, School of Science, Engineering and Environment, University of Salford and Fellow, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors [Q112–169](#)

Wednesday 3 September 2025

Angharad Hopkinson, Political Campaigner, Greenpeace UK; **Stephanie Draper**, Co-CEO and Director of Innovation and Practice, Involve; **Professor Lorraine Whitmarsh MBE**, Director, Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations [Q170–283](#)

Professor Rebecca Willis, Professor in Energy and Climate Governance, Lancaster University; **Bob Ward**, Policy and Communications Director, The Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment; **Dr Roger Harrabin**, Journalist and former BBC Energy and Environment Analyst

[Q170–283](#)

Wednesday 3 December 2025

Emma Pinchbeck, Chief Executive, Climate Change Committee; **Professor Eric Wolff**, Fellow, The Royal Society; **Professor Hugh Montgomery OBE**, Director, Centre for Human Health and Performance, University College London

[Q284–346](#)

Wednesday 14 January 2026

Priya Brahmhatt-Patel, Executive Director of Communications and Engagement, Ofgem; **Neil Kenward**, Director for Strategy, Economics, Research and Net Zero (SERN), Ofgem; **Laura Rhea**, Director, Standards and Audience Protection, Ofcom; **Ian Macrae**, Director of Market intelligence, Ofcom

[Q347–418](#)

Chris Stark CBE, Head, UK’s Mission for Clean Power 2030, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; **Ben Golding**, Director, Clean Power Unit, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

[Q419–479](#)

Wednesday 4 February 2026

Professor Neil Morisetti, Professor of Climate and Resource Security, University College London; **Dr Marina Romanello**, Executive Director, Lancet Countdown & Associate Professor, Institute for Global Health, University College London; **Judicaelle Hammond**, Director of Policy and Advice, Country Land and Business Association

[Q480–528](#)

Katie White MP, Minister for Climate, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; **Ryan McLaughlin**, Director of Net Zero Strategy, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

[Q529–579](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

BSE numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Abba Dabo, Dr Al-Amin (Senior Lecturer in Logistics and Supply Chain Management, University of Northampton); Dr Emmanuel Vanger (Senior Lecturer in Project Management, University of Northampton); Dr Ade Ige-Olaobaju (Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Management, University of Northampton); and Dr Olalekan Ismail Adisa (Senior Lecturer in project Management, York St. Johns University, London) | BSE0120 |
| 2 | Airlines UK | BSE0075 |
| 3 | Aldersgate Group | BSE0028 |
| 4 | Alexander, Mrs Cherry | BSE0044 |
| 5 | Allen, Mr Jonathan | BSE0003 |
| 6 | Anaerobic Digestion and Bioresources Association (ADBA) | BSE0130 |
| 7 | Anonymised | BSE0041 |
| 8 | Anonymised | BSE0061 |
| 9 | Anonymised | BSE0062 |
| 10 | Anonymised | BSE0060 |
| 11 | Anonymised | BSE0039 |
| 12 | Anonymised | BSE0011 |
| 13 | Arranz, Dr Carlos F A (Senior Lecturer in Business Operations, University of Greenwich); Prof Li Zhou (Professor of Operations and Supply Chain Management, University of Greenwich); Dr Quang Duong (Senior Lecturer in Business Operations, University of Greenwich); Dr Mao Xu (Lecturer in Business Operations and Supply Chain Management, University of Greenwich); and Dr Wenxian Sun (Associate Professor, University of Greenwich) | BSE0087 |

14	Arroyabe, Dr Marta F (Reader and Deputy Director of IADS, University of Essex); and Dr Carlos Arranz (Senior Lecturer, University of Greenwich)	BSE0066
15	Atkins, Dr Ed (Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, University of Bristol); Dr Sean Fox (Associate Professor in Global Development, University of Bristol); Dr Tom Cantellow (Research Associate, University of Bristol); and Dr Caitlin Robinson (Senior Research Fellow in Human Geography, University of Bristol)	BSE0027
16	B4NZ	BSE0129
17	Ban the Burn	BSE0113
18	Barnes, Mr Philip	BSE0057
19	Beinhocker, Professor Eric (Executive Director, Institute for New Economic Thinking at the Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford); and Professor Doyne Farmer (Director of Complexity Economics, Institute for New Economic Thinking at the Oxford Martin School University of Oxford)	BSE0105
20	Beiser-McGrath, Dr Liam F (Assistant Professor in International Social and Public Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science)	BSE0010
21	Bennett Institute for Innovation & Policy Acceleration, University of Sussex	BSE0019
22	Beran, Mr Max (Senior Principal Scientific officer, Natural Environment Research Council (retired))	BSE0122
23	Berry, Dr Annetta	BSE0005
24	Bickerstaff, Professor Karen (Professor of Human Geography, University of Exeter); Professor Alice Moseley (Associate Professor in Political Science, University of Exeter); Dr Jenny Hatchard (Research and Impact Fellow – ACCESS, University of Exeter); and Professor Patrick Devine-Wright (Professor of Geography, University of Exeter)	BSE0033
25	Blue Patch	BSE0088
26	Brighton & Hove Energy Services Co-operative (BHESCo)	BSE0090
27	Brown, Mr Charles Carron (Consulting Mining Engineer, CCB Mining Consultants)	BSE0002
28	Burbidge, Manon	BSE0018
29	Buss, Dr Grahame	BSE0038
30	Cadent Gas	BSE0140

31	Cadent Gas	BSE0055
32	Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales	BSE0063
33	Carrick, Dr Jayne (Post Doctoral Research Associate, University of Sheffield)	BSE0032
34	Centre for Sustainable Energy	BSE0125
35	Charles, Dr Hannah (University of Manchester)	BSE0045
36	Christiaanse, PhD Suzan (postdoc researcher, Erasmus University Rotterdam)	BSE0013
37	Climate Citizens research group, Lancaster University	BSE0074
38	Climate Outreach	BSE0114
39	Community Energy Scotland	BSE0064
40	Dale, Dr Gareth (Reader in Political Economy, Brunel University); and Marianne Brown (Communications and Community Engagement Manager, Bristol Energy Co-operative)	BSE0110
41	Dalton Nuclear Policy Group	BSE0084
42	Davidson, Louise	BSE0047
43	Denisova, Dr Anastasia	BSE0016
44	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero	BSE0132
45	Electric Vehicle Association (EVA) England	BSE0051
46	Electrify Britain	BSE0096
47	Energy Efficiency Infrastructure Group	BSE0101
48	Energy Networks Association	BSE0116
49	Energy Saving Trust	BSE0072
50	Fair By Design	BSE0052
51	Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland	BSE0102
52	Fuel Poverty Action	BSE0115
53	Future Energy Networks	BSE0108
54	Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment	BSE0139
55	Farrant, Mrs Amanda; Mr James Farrant; and Mr Colin Woollard	BSE0097
56	Green Cat Hydrogen	BSE0030
57	Greenpeace UK	BSE0136

58	Harrabin, Dr Roger	BSE0138
59	Harvey, Mr Paul (Group Member , Busby and Thorntonhall BESS Opposition Group); and Mrs Trisha Harvey (Group Leader , Busby and Thorntonhall BESS Opposition Group)	BSE0079
60	Heat Pump Association	BSE0068
61	Helmcke, Dr Cornelia (Senior Policy Fellow, Centre for Energy Ethics, University of St Andrews)	BSE0025
62	Hirst, Mr James	BSE0037
63	Holden, Laura	BSE0014
64	Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)	BSE0124
65	Institution of Civil Engineers	BSE0023
66	JUST (Joined-up Sustainability Transformations) Centre	BSE0070
67	LAND (Lincolnshire Against Needless Destruction); and No Pylons Lincolnshire	BSE0040
68	Lloyd, Dr Grace	BSE0034
69	Maxwell, Dr Gregor	BSE0035
70	Merchant, Dr Paul (Associate Professor in Latin American Film and Visual Culture, University of Bristol); Professor Daniela Schmidt (Professor of Earth Sciences, University of Bristol); and Dr Claire Cox	BSE0094
71	Mineral Products Association	BSE0069
72	Mullett, Mrs S	BSE0008
73	myenergi	BSE0026
74	NAPIT	BSE0024
75	NPC (New Philanthropy Capital)	BSE0089
76	National Grid	BSE0128
77	National Home Decarbonisation Group	BSE0111
78	Nesta	BSE0076
79	Net Zero Watch	BSE0020
80	North, Professor Peter (Professor of Alternative Economies, Department of Geography and Planning, University of Liverpool)	BSE0058
81	Northland Power	BSE0131
82	Nuclear Industry Association	BSE0100
83	OFTEC; and UKIFDA	BSE0049

84	OVO	<u>BSE0082</u>
85	Ofcom	<u>BSE0142</u>
86	Ofcom	<u>BSE0141</u>
87	Ofgem	<u>BSE0143</u>
88	Orbital Marine Power	<u>BSE0123</u>
89	Oxfam GB	<u>BSE0117</u>
90	Pearson, Rosie	<u>BSE0001</u>
91	Pennington, Mrs Jenny	<u>BSE0093</u>
92	Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP)	<u>BSE0098</u>
93	Pupils 2 Parliament	<u>BSE0103</u>
94	Quinn, Lisa	<u>BSE0007</u>
95	Rains, David	<u>BSE0107</u>
96	Reid, Miss Samantha	<u>BSE0009</u>
97	Reliable Media / Stop Funding Heat	<u>BSE0118</u>
98	RenewableUK	<u>BSE0133</u>
99	Roberts, Andrew	<u>BSE0059</u>
100	Robertson, Malcolm	<u>BSE0121</u>
101	Robinson, Carolyn	<u>BSE0004</u>
102	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors	<u>BSE0112</u>
103	Santander UK	<u>BSE0078</u>
104	Shaukat, Dr Amama (Reader in Accounting and Finance, Brunel University of London); Professor Grzegorz Trojanowski (Professor of Finance, University of Exeter); and Dr Quintin Rayer (Head of Research and Ethical Investing, P1 Investment Services)	<u>BSE0017</u>
105	Smith, Mr John Paul	<u>BSE0036</u>
106	Snook, Mr Martin	<u>BSE0071</u>
107	Social Market Foundation	<u>BSE0099</u>
108	Stainforth, Professor David (London School of Economics)	<u>BSE0077</u>
109	Statkraft	<u>BSE0127</u>
110	Streamer, Miss Samantha	<u>BSE0104</u>
111	Tanase, Ms Lisa-Maria (PhD Researcher, University of Cambridge)	<u>BSE0053</u>
112	Teach the Future	<u>BSE0119</u>

113	The Carbon Capture and Storage Association	BSE0091
114	The Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations (CAST)	BSE0031
115	The MCS Foundation	BSE0048
116	Thermal Storage UK	BSE0029
117	Tobin, Dr Paul (Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor in Politics, and Convenor of the Environmental Politics Group, University of Manchester)	BSE0134
118	Transport for London	BSE0067
119	UK Youth Climate Coalition	BSE0065
120	UK100	BSE0015
121	UKRI National Interdisciplinary Centre for Circular Chemical Economy	BSE0012
122	Umar, Dr Tariq (Senior Lecturer , University of the West of England)	BSE0022
123	United Kingdom National Nuclear Laboratory	BSE0086
124	University of Sussex	BSE0095
125	Utilita	BSE0056
126	Wade, Mr Brian	BSE0021
127	Wale, Will	BSE0050
128	Waller, Dr. Alexander (Visiting Professor, American University of Sovereign Nations)	BSE0046
129	Welsh Government	BSE0137
130	Wilkinson, Mrs Mauricette	BSE0006
131	Wiseman, Mrs Alison	BSE0043
132	Wright, Mrs Sharon	BSE0080
133	uSwitch	BSE0085

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

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1st Special	Get connected: How community energy can turbocharge the transition: Government Response	HC 583

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5th	Tackling the energy cost crisis	HC 736
4th	The new National Policy Statement for nuclear energy generation	HC 1212
3rd	Pre-appointment hearing for the Chair of the Climate Change Committee	HC 1186
2nd	Gridlock or growth? Avoiding energy planning chaos	HC 868
1st	Retrofitting homes for net zero	HC 453
6th Special	Tackling the energy cost crisis: Ofgem Response	HC 1789
5th Special	Workforce planning to deliver clean, secure energy: Government Response	HC 1704
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1st Special	Retrofitting homes for net zero: Government Response	HC 1260