

All Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group

Is a Cross-Party Consensus on Climate Change Possible – Or Desirable?

Report of First Inquiry 2006

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CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations Used	2
Foreword	3
Summary	4
1. Introduction	6
2. Is a Cross-Party Consensus on Climate Change Desirable?	10
3. Is a Cross-Party Consensus on Climate Change Possible?	18
4. Possible Points of Consensus	27
5. Conclusions and Recommendations	29
Annex 1: Joint Statement	31
Annex 2: Inquiry Announcement	32
Annex 3: Oral Evidence	34
Annex 4: List of Written Submissions	51

List of Abbreviations Used

APPCCG	All-Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group
C&C	Contraction and Convergence
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DTQ	Domestic Tradable Quota
EAC	House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee
ECCP	European Climate Change Programme
EE (formerly ENV)	Cross-departmental ministerial Cabinet Committee on Energy and the Environment
EU-ETS	European Union Emissions Trading Scheme
IEEP	Institute for European Environmental Policy
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Kyoto	The Kyoto Treaty on Climate Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ppmv	parts per million by volume
Tyndall Centre	Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research
UKCCP 2006	UK Climate Change Programme 2006

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Foreword

In life generally to be convinced that something is the right thing to do doesn't necessarily make it any easier to accomplish, but hopefully it helps. In the special and somewhat exceptional world of politics, 'doing the right thing' can be harder to pin down especially in a society that has famously dined out on tribalism, adversarial and confrontational processes of decision making. We look to the single tradition of the 'Mother of Parliaments' to determine our behaviour, no matter how in need of reform the system is, no matter how dysfunctional it is in the 21st century.

In the face of climate change our body politic has run out of steam. To coin an inelegant phrase but one which is no less apt for that, our way of doing politics is no longer fit for purpose. The All Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group (APPCCG) initiated this inquiry into the potential of a cross party consensus on climate change to try to look beyond the tendency of politics to dwell in the terrain of competition for short term advantage – and to see whether there could be space in which a fundamental sense of common purpose can prevail. I believe the report of our independent assessors shows that such space could exist, and moreover should exist – if not at our peril.

The APPCCG will return to this theme and try to respond to what seems to us a binding imperative, which many leading politicians have articulated. Climate change is the greatest threat humankind faces.

This APPCCG inquiry, our first, could not have happened without the dedication of the three assessors who have written the report: Dr Helen Clayton, Prof. Nick Pidgeon and Prof. Mark Whitby. Perhaps when I first asked them to help in this inquiry little did they (or I) anticipate quite how much commitment would be required to undertake the task. I feel guilty that I may have misrepresented the input required, so my thanks to them could never be overstated. They have produced a report of quality and integrity.

My thanks go also to *The Independent*, a newspaper which has championed the fight against climate change and which devoted much space to the launch of the inquiry; to the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust which made the inquiry possible with financial backing; to the RSA for its commitment to the debate on climate change, which is manifest not only in helping us launch this report, but in its determination to research new policies which could address climate change; and to Tina Davy who edited the oral evidence; and finally my thanks go to the APPCCG's secretariat, the Carbon Neutral Company, who have been an essential component in the success of the first year's activity of the group.

This report is presented in the hope that a bridge may be built – a sound and lasting structure over which policy vehicles may traverse. We need a new political structure which has the strength to withstand the strains of the democratic process but which will also address the wholly overriding imperative to tackle climate change.

Colin Challen MP
Chair
APPCCG

Summary

1. There is a wide and growing consensus that we are not moving fast enough nationally or internationally to address the threats posed by climate change, and that the UK Government must do more at home and abroad. The present inquiry, on the possibility and desirability in the UK of a cross-party consensus on climate change, asks whether cross-party agreement on climate change policy would help. The views expressed by contributors to the inquiry lead to the conclusion that it could.
2. There is a strong sense that we are approaching a tipping point for the world's climate. Current assessments suggest that the world faces rising mean temperatures of the order of 2-3 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the year 2100 – possibly even higher – and there could be serious effects even at the lower end of the range. A 3-degree increase could result in significant sea-level rise, ecosystem disruption, changes to oceanic circulation patterns, water shortage, and loss of agricultural production that might put up to 400 additional millions of people at risk of hunger.
3. It was widely recognised in evidence submitted to the inquiry that to avoid dangerous levels of climate change, greater action nationally and internationally, and on a faster timescale, will be required. This will mean a new way of working politically because short-term electoral politics are not compatible with the need to formulate long-term policies to meet climate change goals. Without at least some form of cross-party agreement, any party proposing the really tough measures needed to combat climate change will be open to challenge from others seeking electoral advantage. The result is likely to be chronic short-termism and a lack of effectiveness in climate policy. A critical issue in this regard is how to address the potential impacts on economic growth of policies to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. However, it is also clear that a number of far-sighted businesses share the view that a collective effort, across government, business and wider society to tackle climate change is needed now. A consensus might help to put in place the policy framework to support such an effort.
4. Having identified the urgent need and consistent support for a cross-party consensus, the inquiry examined how it might work. There was strong support for the view that any consensus should be concerned with targets and how they relate to the international picture and the post-2012 negotiations (referred to in this report as post-Kyoto, although the Protocol might be extended). In addition, consensus should wherever possible cover the means for achieving these targets, an approach which has been shown to work elsewhere in the developed world, but without stifling legitimate political and policy debate. A key recommendation, therefore, is that all the political parties seek a consensus on targets, and on a long-term policy framework including at least some of the principal means to tackle climate change.
5. Although there are potential barriers to arriving at a cross-party consensus, the report concludes that none of these is either too large or overwhelming to be successfully addressed, particularly given the scale of the climate-change problem we face. In taking this forward the Government and opposition parties should work together to draw up a strategy to support the development and implementation of effective consensus policies on climate change, and to ensure that, through those and other policies, the UK meets effective national and international targets. The strategy would incorporate a linked series of milestones to which all constituents could subscribe and be held accountable.
6. The need for leadership on this issue, from both the Government and opposition parties, is underlined. The report recommends that the Government seek to involve opposition MPs in a

cross-party climate policy group, and in the proposed new Office for Climate Change if and when this is set up. It also recommends that an independent body, analogous to the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee, be created and charged with agreeing UK climate change targets and the possible means for meeting those targets. It should also be charged with reporting annually on success in meeting them, and base its target setting, advice and monitoring on the best scientific assessments available. To be fully effective such a body would also need the ability to hold the government of the day to account on climate change matters.

7. In total the report presents 14 conclusions and recommendations.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

8. Numerous publications from scientists, the UK Government, international bodies and the media have acknowledged and described the potential threats from anthropogenic climate change. They have emphasised the need to act now to mitigate its seriousness and to adapt to unavoidable change. The UK Government itself has taken a leading role in international negotiations to address the issues that climate change poses. However, it has admitted in its own UK Climate Change Programme 2006 published in March (UKCCP, 2006)¹ that it may fail to reach its self-imposed target of a 20% cut in CO₂ emissions by 2010, suggesting that current action is not enough. Moreover, the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), in a report commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Environment Group, has concluded that “the Climate Change Programme fails to provide clear and proactive mechanisms to put the UK back on the path of significant reductions into the future”.²
9. Would a cross-party consensus on climate policy hold more promise? In UK parliamentary circles a first initiative to achieve such a consensus was taken in 2005 by Norman Baker MP and fellow Liberal Democrats. This led to a Joint Statement on a Cross-Party Approach to Climate Change, signed by the Liberal Democrats, the Conservatives, Plaid Cymru, the Scottish National Party and the Democratic Unionist Party. The Joint Statement appears at Annex 1.
10. Efforts to subsequently bring the Government on board have been made by Labour MPs and by Colin Challen MP in particular. The Government has shown some signs of being receptive to a consensus approach. In its Climate Change Programme 2006 it states that “Internationally we will: work to build consensus on the scale of action needed to stabilise the climate and avoid dangerous climate change, and build on the progress made at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles and the Montreal climate change conference to strengthen the international regime”.³ In May 2006 comments from the Shadow Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs Peter Ainsworth MP in the House of Commons prompted his new counterpart David Miliband to say “If we can forge a consensus and if the new model Conservative Party wants to see the light, I will welcome them to the consensus table”.⁴
11. Is a complete cross-party consensus really possible? Is it, in fact, desirable? Would it accelerate action to mitigate climate change? What would it include and how would it work? These are the principal questions addressed in the present inquiry. They were open to all to answer and elicited responses from a wide range of organisations (including businesses and NGOs) and private individuals, many eminent and expert in the field. Details of the call for evidence are included at Annex 2.
12. Illustrating some of the difficulties in achieving a genuine and lasting cross-party consensus, at the time of finalising this report in June 2006 the Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Menzies Campbell MP had just announced that his party was suspending its participation in the Cross-Party Approach. He stated that this was because of failure to reach agreement with the

¹ UK *Climate Change Programme 2006*, Norwich: HMSO. Available from www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/ukccp (accessed 15th June 2006).

² Bowyer, K., Skinner, I., MacKay, E. Anderson, J., Ferguson, M., Pallemarts, M. and Baldock, D. (2006) *Climate Change Action. The UK: Leader or Laggard*. London: Institute for European Environmental Policy.

³ UK *Climate Change Programme 2006*.

⁴ Hansard 18th May 2006.

Conservatives on the development of specific policies.⁵ These events, far from undermining the present inquiry, make it all the more important that the evidence and arguments that we present here are debated widely, both within and outside Parliament.

1.2 Approach

13. The officers of the All-Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group (APPCCG) decided that an inquiry into cross-party parliamentary working should involve external assessment of the evidence. We, the three assessors, were invited to consider both written and oral evidence and are grateful to everyone who contributed. The evidence was submitted on a self-selecting basis; its value is qualitative. The range of views is presented in this report, but we are not in a position to say how fully representative it is of wider UK opinion. We have seen our role as one of using the range of views expressed in both the evidence and in additional material not submitted to the inquiry, but which we have judged to be relevant, to make a series of recommendations.
14. The evidence considered by us also includes the input from the many individuals who were attracted by *The Independent's* coverage when the inquiry was launched. That coverage was welcome, and the volume of correspondence showed the considerable depth of interest and concern felt by *The Independent's* readership.⁶ Most of this evidence, however, addressed specific ideas about mitigating climate change rather than the desirability or possibility of political consensus.
15. The oral evidence witnesses were invited to reflect scientific and environmentalist perspectives (no business representative was available at short notice) and the views from across the main political spectrum in Westminster. Resource and time limitations precluded further such sessions.
16. A copy of all the written evidence received will become available when the APPCCG's website is constructed, the transcript of the oral evidence session appears at Annex 3. Annex 4 lists the written submissions received.
17. In the call for evidence several questions were posed under three headings (see Annex 2). We present our analysis of the responses under the two central questions of the 'desirability' and the 'possibility' of a cross-party consensus, preceded by a brief overview of the current science of climate change, and followed by a section on possible points of consensus.
18. Our conclusions and recommendations are listed at the end of the report.

1.3 The Consensus on the Science of Climate Change

19. Throughout the inquiry it was stressed in evidence that an important driver for political consensus is the level of agreement which now exists amongst scientists worldwide: that global climate is changing, that this is largely the result of current and past actions of people, and that the long-term impacts of this are likely to be profound for the UK, as well as for other nations and populations around the globe.
20. Anthropogenic climate change is caused primarily by increases in the concentration of 'greenhouse gases' in the atmosphere, which include CO₂ (the most prevalent other than water vapour), methane and nitrous oxide. Professor Hulme of the University of East Anglia

⁵ See *The Independent* 14th June 2006.

⁶ See *The Independent* 29th March 2006.

pointed out that while long-range climate prediction will always involve some uncertainty, we now have sufficient knowledge to make a realistic overall assessment of the extent and rate of change that we face. The assessment reports (1990; 1996; 2001; and 2007 forthcoming) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provide just this. In historical terms, concentrations of CO₂ in the atmosphere have varied between 180 and 280 parts per million by volume (ppmv) during the pre-industrial period of the last 100,000 years; but since the dawn of the industrial revolution these have been steadily rising to a concentration of about 381 ppmv today. If the current rate of increase continues, we may see atmospheric CO₂ concentrations of more than 500 ppmv before 2050. Analyses suggest that even if concentrations of CO₂ equivalent were ultimately stabilised in the region of 450-550 ppm the world would face rising mean temperatures of the order of 2-3 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the year 2100.⁷

21. A 3-degree increase, acknowledged by the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser as a possibility⁸, could result in significant sea-level rise, ecosystem disruption, changes to oceanic circulation patterns, water shortage, and loss of agricultural production that might put up to 400 additional millions of people at risk of hunger.⁹ Many of these effects would result in major social dislocation for populations around the world. Changes to oceanic circulation patterns might, paradoxically, make parts of Western Europe, including the British Isles, significantly colder than at present.
22. Recent evidence suggests that the extent of warming could be greater than assumed under current climate models because of complex climate feedback processes¹⁰, while witnesses suggested that the IPCC 4th Assessment Report, due to be published in 2007, will provide a more comprehensive assessment of climate change, impacts and response options than previous reports.
23. Regarding consequences for society, there remain many difficulties in assessing impacts over the long timescales involved, and in gauging the effects and response of different individuals, populations and social systems. There is also a legitimate policy debate about which impacts of climate change should be considered especially 'dangerous' for societies.¹¹ However, the witnesses, and almost all of the written submissions, were clear in their belief that enough is now understood to suggest that action on climate change is required, almost certainly very urgently, and at multiple scales of activity, including global, national and local/individual.

1.4 The Current Policy Position on Climate Change Targets

24. Regarding the UK Government's current international obligations, those countries that have signed up to the Kyoto Protocol are committed to reducing emissions of six main greenhouse gases collectively by about 5%¹² from 1990 levels in the period 2008-2012. Targets are set individually for most of the developed nations. Under the Protocol the UK is committed to a

⁷ O'Neill, B.C., Oppenheimer, M. and Peterson, A. (2006) Interim targets and the climate treaty regime. *Climate Policy*, 5, 639-646.

⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4888946.stm>

⁹ Schellnhuber, H.J., Cramer, W., Nakicenovic, N., Wigley, T. and Yohe, G. (eds.) (2006) *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Also available at www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/internat/pdf/avoid-dangercc.pdf

¹⁰ Scheffer, M., Brovkin, V. and Cox, P.M. (2006) Positive feedback between global warming and atmospheric CO₂ concentration inferred from past climate change *Geophysical Research Letters*, 33, L10702.

¹¹ See Lorenzoni, I., Pidgeon, N.F. and O'Connor, R. (2005) Dangerous climate change: the role for risk research. *Risk Analysis*, 25, 1387-1398. Also Oppenheimer, M. (2005) Defining dangerous anthropogenic interference: the role of science, the limits of science. *Risk Analysis*, 25, 1399-1409.

¹² The absence of USA and Australia from the Protocol actually reduces this collective reduction goal to about 3.5%.

12.5% cut in the six main greenhouse gas emissions by 2008-2012 and, according to the UKCCP 2006, is close to meeting this target, but is not on track to meet the more ambitious target the Government had unilaterally set of a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2012.¹³

25. Over the longer term the Government's aspiration is to achieve a target reduction in UK greenhouse emissions of 60% by 2050. However, drawing upon new data presented at the 2005 Exeter conference organised by the Hadley Centre¹⁴, Tyndall Centre researchers at Manchester University suggest that the UK might need to aim for a cut of the order of 80% or more, within the context of a global contraction and convergence regime, to significantly reduce the probability that mean temperatures will exceed 2 degrees of warming in total – the current EU-agreed maximum¹⁵. The need for a cut of this order was also noted in other evidence submissions, by organisations as diverse as National Grid and Greenpeace amongst others. Clearly, then, the challenge facing the UK and the world is large.

¹³ UK *Climate Change Programme 2006*.

¹⁴ Schellnhuber et al (eds.) 2006.

¹⁵ European Commission Environment Fact Sheet on Climate Change
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/pdf/cc_factsheet_aug2005.pdf

2. Is a Cross-Party Consensus on Climate Change Desirable?

26. With few exceptions, contributors favoured at least some degree of cross-party consensus. There was also broad agreement that any such consensus should stress the seriousness of the problem, and the need to tackle it upon the basis of the scientific evidence. Many felt consensus to be *essential* to achieve sufficient action on climate change, with one common concern being that if urgent action isn't taken the climate may reach a 'tipping point'. For some, climate change was seen as too big an issue for partisan dispute.
27. Many thought that there are already large areas of agreement between the parties, while others considered it to be quite limited, indeed less than the existing Joint Statement (Annex 1) would suggest. Where opinions differed this was on how far consensus should go, what form it should take, whether it should include means as well as targets for tackling climate change, and on whether consensus would result in policies with maximum impact or in a lowest-common-denominator outcome. The following analysis attempts to summarise, with the help of selected quotes from the submissions, the main reasons given for these different views on the desirability of a consensus.

2.1 A Consensus on Targets

28. There was very broad agreement in the submissions regarding the seriousness of the situation we face. This formed a common reason for favouring consensus, not least because of the implications for many of the world's poorest people. There was concern that the decisions we take now will shape the planet for future generations, and that if we don't take urgent action now, the consequences of climate change could become unmanageable, some risks uninsurable, and economies and societies in some parts of the world unstable. Several contributors expressly stressed the need to convey this seriousness to the UK population, and that Parliament and the Government should take the lead in this. Consensus amongst the parties would demonstrate such leadership, providing impetus for appropriate changes in cultural consensus/lifestyle and inspiration for united action accompanied by a sense of common purpose and collective responsibility.
29. Alongside agreement on the need to approach the climate change problem on the basis of the scientific evidence, submissions suggested that enough common ground already existed to agree upon binding national emissions reduction targets for the UK. Here, a 60% (for some an 80% or 90%) cut in 1990 greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 was sometimes cited. Many of the contributors who expressed this view seemed to be optimistic about the prospect of consensus at this level. Indeed, such a consensus in effect already exists, with the Government as noted above committed to the 60% reduction in its Climate Change Programme 2006, alongside all of the major opposition parties (Annex 1). Some submissions also suggested that a broad consensus exists on the importance of seeking an effective (concentrations-based) post-Kyoto international framework agreement.
30. Contributors considered that the target should refer to a maximum acceptable atmospheric CO₂ concentration – generally 400 or 450ppmv – or a maximum temperature increase – 2°C. A number also mentioned the need for a timeline for progress, such as a 2 or 3% decrease in emissions per annum. On targets, we wish to emphasise the need for greater clarity. Often, targets are expressed by policy makers in different units and there is significant room for confusion – reflected in some of the submissions. Consistent usage of either greenhouse gas or CO₂ emissions would be helpful.

31. While a number of contributors cited the statistic that the UK is responsible for only about 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions, most still thought we should take action to reduce emissions.¹⁶ And in a letter to *The Independent*, Douglas Parr, the Chief Scientist at Greenpeace, argued that the activities of, and consumption of products from, Britain's 100 largest companies account for up to 12% of emissions worldwide.¹⁷ Many contributors stressed that international agreement is critical for significant impact, and that future international agreements should be more effective than the Kyoto Protocol. Here, several contributors felt that the UK would be in a far better position in international climate negotiations if cross-party consensus could be reached first, and that this might in turn lead to stronger international agreements.
32. A number of contributors also suggested that a basic level of cross-party consensus could encourage more constructive engagement between industry and government, and allow decisions to be made more quickly and effectively. Instead of stifling debate, consensus on targets could create space for imaginative thinking about the means to meet those targets.

Box 1 – The Desirability of a Consensus

"In light of the urgency of the present situation, there is no doubt in my mind that a cross-party consensus is not only desirable, but necessary if the kind of actions to preserve life on earth are to be implemented."

Rt. Rev. Martin Wharton, The Bishop of Newcastle

"Without political consensus public opinion will potentially coalesce around inaction or very limited action." *Practical Action*

"...a cross-party consensus would ensure a sustained political commitment to implementing the long-term positive actions required to tackle climate change in the UK and to maintaining a global example for other countries." *Nuclear Industry Association*

"All-party agreement would be a significant step towards concerted international action on climate." *The Scarman Trust*

"Cross-party consent most urgently needed. There is *no* time to dither – climate change is *happening* already!" *Moirra Brown*

"We must find not the differences between us, but the common ground. We must find a constructive way forward that helps to reduce carbon emissions in this country.... a consensual approach would help the Government to take the decisions that they may want to take but fear to take because of public reaction.... If the three parties can reach consensus we have more chance of convincing the public...of the need to take action, and we shall take the public with us." *Norman Baker MP*

"Strategic consensus is crucial to the climate change debate in the UK: all parties agree with the severity of the issue and the strategic targets that need to be met over the years, and the need for real sustainable solutions to be found. However, this does not necessarily mean that consensus will be met over *how* to meet these targets, or what the levels of these targets should be." *Norwich Union General Insurance*

33. To counter the above, some submissions did state that *any* consensus, even one regarding targets, was not desirable, although it should be stressed that these were in a very small minority. Some suggested that consensus could stifle debate, and thus result in the *loss* of political attention and public awareness for the issue. There was also concern that the

¹⁶ This could of course be set against the moral argument, not mentioned in any submission, that Britain's historical contribution to the greenhouse gases that have already built up in the atmosphere is a higher proportion than this.

¹⁷ *The Independent* 1st April 2006.

electorate would have no choice, and that compromise would inevitably lead to the adoption of 'lowest-common-denominator' policies. A number of contributors felt that meaningful agreement would be impossible, and should not be attempted. For a few of such submissions, the need to focus effort on tackling poverty and inequality received a higher priority than mitigating climate change, and there were also – rare – expressions of the view that climate change is either not a problem or can't be stopped anyway.

- 34. To conclude, there was very broad agreement across the majority of submissions that a cross-party consensus on climate change would be desirable, that this should be grounded in the scientific evidence, and that the existing emissions targets provide important existing points of consensus. For some, the most recent scientific assessments make imperative the achievement of a consensus on even tougher emissions reduction targets than those already agreed to by the parties.**
35. **Regarding the latter point, we note that the existing political consensus on a target 60% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (UKCCP 2006 and Annex 1) may need to be revisited, in the direction of a cross-party commitment to even tougher action, when the 4th assessment report from the IPPC is published in 2007. We also note the need for an effective post-Kyoto international framework agreement that includes concentrations-based targets for stabilising atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations.**
36. **Given the almost overwhelming support for the principle of a cross-party consensus in the submissions, we recommend that the Government seek ways to take this forward in a constructive and practical manner and with some urgency.**
37. **In addition the opposition parties should not abandon their efforts to find common ground for building upon their initial consensus proposals.**

2.2 A Consensus on Targets Plus Some Means?

38. Although there was general agreement that a consensus on targets could be forged, there was far less agreement on whether this might extend to the means for delivering those targets. The greatest number of the submissions felt that consensus should, to a greater or lesser degree, cover means for reaching targets as well as the targets themselves. For many contributors this meant agreement on a broad framework and direction for policy, including, for example, a fiscal framework favouring a low-carbon economy. Others felt that consensus on means should encompass detail, for example on the choice of electricity-generating technology or transportation systems. However, contributors were often sceptical about the possibility of actually reaching consensus on means (see also the following section), with many also keen to see continuation of vibrant political debate, not least to "keep the issue in the limelight where it belongs" (Tim Chapman), because of the need to maintain a degree of electoral choice, and because "which set of measures, and which combination, is 'best', will most likely depend upon political values" (Greenpeace).
39. Agreement on means was considered important by many because of the need for specific policies, such as fiscal measures, that would survive across different administrations, and hence provide long-term stability and support long-term planning. This was seen as necessary to encourage business and public investment in appropriate research and development, new technologies and major infrastructure, especially in the energy and transport sectors.
40. Critically, consensus on means was also judged by many to be necessary to allow really effective, sometimes difficult, policies to be implemented which parties would otherwise not

propose or could not carry through because of fear of electoral unpopularity. The following submission from Colin Challen MP, the Chair of APPCCG, clearly expresses this dilemma:

“Until a binding consensus is reached, there will always be the danger that any party proposing the really tough measures necessary to tackle the problem will face a prisoner’s dilemma, with the strong likelihood that another party will present the electorate with a ‘get out of jail free card’ for their own electoral advantage.... There seems little point drawing together a consensus that is merely promoting motherhood and apple pie. It is clear that the purpose of the consensus is to overcome the severe tension between short-term electoral politics and long-term climate change goals, a tension which has to date resulted in the triumph of short-termism.”

41. In the absence of a consensus the UK’s regulatory systems for climate change (e.g. for various forms of carbon ‘rationing’) could change after every general election or in mid-course under external pressure from a particular lobby-group. The response of the present Government in reversing the fuel duty escalator in the face of the petrol protests of 2000 was cited by some as a clear case in point.
42. Many respondents noted that the need to cut emissions is so urgent that means probably do have to be agreed upon, one way or another, to achieve anywhere near the necessary targets. Indeed, a few contributors considered the issue too important for the electorate to be left *with* a choice, since in the long run climate change impacts could leave them with little or no choice anyway.

Box 2 – Extending the Consensus to Means

“For the country to successfully address the related issues of climate change and other aspects of energy policy, such as energy security and rising energy prices, the strongest possible political and public consensus is needed. This will be vital so that industry can rely on a stable framework when taking investment decisions.” *EDF Energy Plc*

“The crucial factors in enabling businesses like ours to develop the infrastructure that is needed to move to a more sustainable economy are (a) effective and fair instruments to internalise the externalities of fossil-fuel consumption, and (b) confidence in the longevity and stability of those instruments. Political consensus is a key factor in delivering that longevity and stability.” *Summerleaze RE-Generation Ltd*

“It is becoming very clear that some unpopular decisions will have to be made if we are to make real progress on implementing climate change mitigation measures and this will require all political parties to agree not to attempt to score political points off the Government, whichever it might be at the time, when such measures are proposed and implemented.” *The Railway Development Society*

“WWF welcomed the announcement by opposition parties in signing up to a consensus on climate change, not least the recognition that year-on-year reductions in carbon dioxide, in order to reach a target of at least a 60% reduction by 2050, were needed. Perhaps more significant was the announcement by politicians involved in the creation of the consensus, that it might prove successful at creating political space, in which tough decisions could be taken in order to tackle climate change, without fear of being exploited for political gain. At the time of its launch, WWF praised the intentions behind the consensus, whilst cautioning that it would only be worthwhile if indeed those policy tools which provided the means to reduce emissions were also put in place.” *WWF-UK*

“...it is not a question of leaving the electorate without choice of approaches. There is no choice if we are to make some real inroads on the problem.” *Rt. Revd Stephen Platten, The Bishop of Wakefield.*

43. A number of arguments were advanced which questioned the possibility of arriving at a consensus about means at all. These, whether technological innovations or measures aimed at changes to people’s behaviour, would be *inherently* political, and as such would need to be contested by the parties. Furthermore, if consensus covered means and debate were stifled, this could lead to less thorough consideration of alternative solutions. Some contributors commented that a variety of actions are needed – there being no ‘single’ solution – and that

consensus could inhibit policy innovation or fail to exploit competitive market forces to identify such solutions. For example:

“There is certainly an argument for healthy competition among political parties in advancing the most efficacious ways of addressing the problem. Tackling it will also require hard decisions to be taken....It will be difficult to remove the politics from these decisions.” *Campaign to Protect Rural England*

“A real problem is that any ‘consensus’ might be interpreted to mean that we must all agree with a given set of policies and technologies. But the study of the history of technology, and also policy studies on how to address environmental change, show that we have a number of options available to us at any one time.” *Alister Scott, Jim Watson and Raphael Sauter, University of Sussex*

44. Some contributors felt that it would, in practice, be impossible for parties to agree on really effective policies and that, if they did, the electorate would have much less choice in many areas hitherto subject to disagreement between the parties. A number of contributors expressed concern that consensus on means could result in something close to a totalitarian approach. A rather different argument here was that, to be effective, any consensus should allow for the proposal, and possible electoral popularity, of measures *more radical* than the parties can currently agree upon. Finally, because climate change policy will impact multiple areas of policy (fiscal, environment, transport, industry, housing and planning, health) consensus on particular means might unduly constrain choices in such areas where legitimate political differences exist, and always have existed.
45. **There is already common ground between the major parties on long-term targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But scope exists for a consensus that extends beyond targets to at least some means for meeting them.**
46. **It is obvious that a consensus on means does not have to be ‘all or nothing’. Accordingly, the best way forward would seem to be to seek a consensus on targets, and on a long-term policy framework including at least some of the principal means for achieving those targets, but without stifling legitimate and healthy political debate or opportunities for innovation. We recommend strongly that the parties pursue this course.**
47. As noted above, many contributors said that consensus should cover at least a broad policy framework, with fiscal measures providing an incentive to cut emissions. Norman Baker MP, in his submission to the assessors, suggested that agreement should attempt to go as far as possible from broad policies on targets through general and then on to more specific policies. As others contributors also suggested:

“The best safeguard is to leave some room for party difference and the opportunity to be *more green* than a competing party....But a consensus that goes little further than easily agreed headlines would create a dangerous illusion that the issue is being dealt with when, in reality, it is not.” *Peter Rainford*

“Of course there will be, and should be, debate about the detail of the response. However, these are primarily tactical discussions about short-range matters.” *Global Commons Institute*
48. **In the presence of an agreed long-term policy framework, each party’s detailed approach should offer a reasonable chance of meeting the targets. In this way, the electorate would retain some choice over detailed approach. Independent assessment of party policies could influence both the policies and the parties’ electoral chances. Such assessment could be part of the role of an independent expert body (discussed below).**

2.3 *Whether to Include Adaptation Policies*

49. It is important to be clear about the distinction between *mitigating* climate change (primarily actions to limit current and future greenhouse gas emissions) and *adapting* to it (the variety of actions needed to cope with change as it occurs). The targets and means discussed above relate primarily to mitigation strategies, although some measures for adapting to climate change do also mitigate it.
50. On the question of whether a consensus should cover adaptation policy, the evidence was generally supportive, but not unanimously so. Some contributors felt that including adaptation could distract from the important task of mitigation, others that it should receive a secondary focus, and others that adaptation is so essential it must be included, not least because it will take time.

Box 3 – The Balance Between Mitigation and Adaptation

“Too much emphasis on adaptation may distract us from the over-riding need to make deep cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases, and soon. It may suggest (falsely, I believe) that there is a meaningful trade-off between adaptation and mitigation. To maintain a strong focus on mitigation, it is probably best if adaptation did not fall within the remit of the cross-party coalition on climate change.” *Gerry Wolff*

“Action on climate change is not a choice between mitigation and adaptation. Both are imperative and urgent.”
Practical Action

“...there is growing realisation that it is essential to adapt to the changes that are already unavoidable....the Government needs to set a regulatory and legislative context in which the rest of society can adapt.” *Chris West, University of Oxford*

“For organisations like National Grid, where infrastructure changes and enhancements need a reasonably long lead time, agreement on the types of adaptation the all-party parliamentary group support would be useful.... Adaptation is (a) significant aspect of living with climate change and hence needs to be included. Likely risks such as flooding...can be calculated into the scenarios so that these key areas are considered ahead of time.”
National Grid

“...adaptive responses will inevitably be necessary.....this involves issues of advance preparation, for example how to deal with heat-waves or assist with future disasters in the third world and resettlement efforts.” *James Levy*

2.4 *The Importance of Public Involvement*

51. A number of submissions and witnesses pointed to the role that a cross-party consensus might play in helping to engage the wider public with climate change issues and the actions needed to address them. Governments can do much through legislation, fiscal incentives and international agreements, while business will be at the forefront in the development of new technology and energy systems. But the many decisions and activities of the everyday lives of ordinary people do much to influence the UK's ability to meet its emissions targets. There was broad agreement that a cross-party consensus would be a beneficial step in the process of convincing people about the actions that they could take. Some of the submissions suggested that having the party leaders make a consensus statement or declaration would be one way to demonstrate to people the urgency of the situation that we face and bring its consequences to the forefront in society. Others argued that a major government effort in public information was required (something which the UK Climate Change Programme 2006 does incorporate¹⁸).

¹⁸ See Ch. 9 of UK *Climate Change Programme 2006*.

The need to convince people of the environmental damage done by the recent growth in UK aviation, fuelled by cheap flights, was a particular concern for some contributors.

52. It is certainly the case that, in the past, members of the general public have been relatively unconcerned about climate change. That may now be changing, to the extent that the public may, in some respects, be ahead of many politicians and policy makers. An Ipsos-MORI survey conducted across Britain in October/November 2005 for the University of East Anglia and the Tyndall Centre¹⁹, found that 91% of respondents agreed with the statement that the world's climate was changing. The vast majority, fully 94% of the sample, also perceived the need for at least some action against climate change, while 62% were even more emphatic in agreeing that *every possible action* should be taken against climate change. However, whilst only 8% of the sample felt that the main responsibility for tackling climate change lay with individuals and their families, more felt that governments should act, with 39% suggesting it was the responsibility of the national government and 32% the international community.
53. What this survey evidence suggests is that ordinary people view governments as largely responsible for taking the first steps on climate change, most probably because they view it as too big a problem for them to personally tackle in their own lives, but are also likely to be open to properly presented arguments about the importance of climate change. It is also likely that many would be receptive to a clear demonstration of leadership on this issue from the Government and parties (see also comments on the issue of leadership below). A cross-party consensus would almost certainly help government to approach these questions in a more consistent and effective manner. However, people may still be unwilling or unable to fully acknowledge their own personal contribution to the problem. As noted by Douglas Parr of Greenpeace in his evidence, a considerable challenge is to ensure that mitigation of climate change becomes a part of the everyday lives of all of us in the UK (as it is in other countries in Europe), by ensuring that people's actions and the consequences of them have clear and transparent connections.
54. At this point it is worth mentioning the report "I Will if You Will: Towards Sustainable Consumption" published in May 2006 by the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable, jointly hosted by the National Consumer Council (NCC) and the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC).²⁰ The headline assessment of the Roundtable is "that a critical mass of citizens and businesses is ready and waiting to act on the challenge of sustainable consumption. But to act, they need the confidence that they will not be acting alone, against the grain and to no purpose....both the business world and citizens are increasingly willing to embrace key aspects of a smarter, more sustainable lifestyle, but on one reassurance: that others, whether your neighbour at home or your competitor in business, act likewise – the simple idea of 'I will if you will'".
55. The Roundtable concludes that government, at all levels, is best placed to co-ordinate a collective approach to change, through an enabling policy framework, but that people, business and government "each occupy a corner in a triangle of change.... Different corners lead at different times by doing what they can do best". Actions for mitigating climate change include sustainable consumption, as well as other actions to which similar arguments can be applied.

¹⁹ The full sample for the research was 1,491. See Poortinga W., Pidgeon, N.F. and Lorenzoni, I. (2006) *Public Perceptions of Nuclear Power, Climate Change and Energy Options in Britain: Summary Findings of a Survey Conducted during October and November 2005*. Technical Report (Understanding Risk Working Paper 06-02). Norwich: Centre for Environmental Risk. <http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/publications/EnergyFuturesFullReport.pdf>

²⁰ www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/I_Will_If_You_Will.pdf

56. A few of the submissions to the current inquiry recommended some form of multi-party stakeholder deliberations or dialogue to involve people more directly in the policy processes for climate change. Although there is much enthusiasm for such approaches in the science communication community at present²¹, it was not clear from the evidence presented to us how such a mechanism might form a part of a cross-party consensus.²²
57. The Cross-Party Approach at Annex 1 contains a commitment to work together to develop specific joint policy proposals, but to bear in mind “the right of the devolved administrations to make their own provisions”. Indeed, regional and local government initiatives are likely to be significant in providing leadership and motivation for individual action on climate change, and attention must be paid to the ways in which consensus at a national party level might be used constructively to foster or support such local efforts.

²¹ For example, both the Royal Society and the British Association have instigated extensive public engagement activities under their various ‘science and society’ initiatives held over the past 5 years.

²² Some government advisory bodies on environmental issues such as the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management (CoRWM), and the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission (AEBC) have utilised these approaches in the recent past.

3. Is a Cross-Party Consensus on Climate Change Possible?

58. The overwhelming view in the submissions and oral evidence was that some form of cross-party consensus on climate change would be helpful, and must be built. This should begin from the current points of agreement, emphasising targets for climate change mitigation and more widely a broad strategy and direction, but extending also to means where those can be agreed upon by the parties. The question then arises, how can an effective consensus on climate change be established given the political processes currently operating in the UK? Very few submissions said this would be too problematic to attempt. However, achieving consensus in practice was said to face a number of potential barriers, which we consider in the first part of this section.

3.1 Potential Barriers to Consensus

59. A very small number of the submissions suggested that a consensus *already existed* amongst the main parties, but one which would prove ultimately unhelpful to any realistic attempts to tackle climate change on the scale needed. Specifically, such commentators pointed to the operating assumption that has prevailed in the UK political system (and elsewhere) that economic growth is of necessity a primary objective of government policy. This assumption was seen as both an important contribution to the causes of current warming, as well as a potential barrier to taking effective action both now and in the future.

“It can be argued that there is already a consensus between the political parties, one which effectively prevents control over the factors which are creating climate change.” *The Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability (Feasta)*

“Transport policy in the UK has operated for decades on a de facto consensus principle that travel growth especially by car and plane is a measure of economic success and must be catered for.” *National Transport Round-table including Transport 2000*

60. Professor Andrew Dobson of Keele University argued that politicians’ reluctance across the mainstream of politics in the UK to intervene to change attitudes and behaviour, to constrain individual ‘choice’, or to formulate genuinely collective solutions, also represented a default ‘social consensus’ which would militate against taking many of the actions necessary to tackle climate change.
61. We noted that some individuals, in commenting on the connection between economic growth and climate change, expressed antipathy towards business and its interest in encouraging consumption whilst lobbying against possibly punitive or restrictive environmental legislation. However, we would also draw attention to the range of business support for cross-party consensus, both in the current submissions and elsewhere: support that appears to go beyond targets to also address means. In May 2005 a group of Chief Executive Officers and other senior executives called The Corporate Leaders Group, who had come together under the auspices of HRH The Prince of Wales’ Business and the Environment Programme, wrote to the Prime Minister arguing for urgent action, and offering to work in partnership with the Government towards strengthening domestic and international progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.²³ They also pledged to engage other British businesses, the UK public and governments and businesses internationally to back this effort. In June this year they made a further approach to the Prime Minister urging measures to promote the development of low-carbon technologies, the argument being that the initial impetus has to

²³ Corporate Leader Group, Letter to the Prime Minister, 27th May 2005, www3.cpi.cam.ac.uk/

come from outside of business itself to ensure certainty and an appropriate competitive environment.²⁴ We would question whether external stimulus should be necessary for all the mitigation actions that corporations could take individually now, but there are undoubtedly frameworks – not only national but international – that could further encourage business to engage in mitigation efforts, and the proposed cross-party consensus could help to put them in place. As Peter Ainsworth MP suggested during the oral evidence session: “. . . marrying the competing interest of industry and economic growth, with the constraints imposed by nature, is the biggest challenge for this generation of politicians.”

62. The submission of Summerleaze RE-Generation argued that a distinction should be made between a *party* consensus, where agreement on a number of fundamental issues might be relatively easy to arrive at for the major parties, and one which is designed to cross the spectrum of political *philosophies*. They stated that: “The major parties nowadays occupy such similar ground in the centre that there may be more scope for cross-party consensus than there is for consensus across the full range of mainstream political philosophies”. The implication of this argument is that while cross-party agreement on overall strategy or targets might indeed be possible, remaining tensions over differences in broad philosophy could still lead to hard-fought disputes over means.
63. A more potent barrier to securing agreement seems to be the day-to-day operation of the adversarial political culture in the UK, something which any mechanism for cross-party agreement must address. According to many submissions, the demands of the electoral cycle can promote short-term decision-making and the adoption of ‘soft options’ in environmental policy when difficult decisions arise. As noted earlier, while the present Government has done much to make the UK a leader in climate change negotiations on the world stage, its response to the domestic petrol crisis in 2000 was expedient. Equally, the need to be seen to accrue political points and electoral advantage are forces which constantly drive the parties to differentiate their positions, even where agreement on substantive or strategic issues might actually exist. It may well be – without making any judgement on the precise reasons for these developments – that the suspension in June of the bilateral Liberal Democrat / Conservative discussions on furthering the Cross-Party Approach and Joint Statement is just such a case. It certainly underlines the difficulty of reaching agreement on specific means.
64. In discussing many of the above issues, other submissions by contrast repeatedly argued that ‘politics as usual’ *would not suffice* to tackle the scale and nature of the climate change problem. There are a number of examples of good practice in other nations such as Sweden, The Netherlands, Denmark and Japan where various forms of negotiated consensus on means to address environmental issues, including action on climate change, have been agreed by the major parties.²⁵ Amongst the evidence offered to this inquiry were also repeated references to similar situations requiring a consensus policy that at the most extreme required a government of national unity in the UK, as in the case of World War II, or the less overt consensus which set the background to eventually delivering peace in Northern Ireland. Consensus has also been behind very specific policies such as the firearms legislation which followed in the wake of the Dunblane shootings.²⁶

²⁴ Corporate Leader Group, Letter to the Prime Minister, 6th June 2006, www3.cpi.cam.ac.uk/

²⁵ See Dryzek, J. (2005) *The Politics of the Earth*. Oxford University Press.

²⁶ Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1997

Box 4 – Forging a Political Consensus

“...climate change is to be considered a crisis, and in previous crises the British government have typically buried their differences to form coalition governments until the crisis was over (both World Wars etc., the 1930s National Government). Given that the crisis here is a slow-burning one....the mechanism must reflect that, being part of a two-stream process where government continues as normal for other matters but becomes consensual for the purposes of climate remedies. Hopefully this would affect other policy areas accordingly.” *Richard Lofthouse*

“This crisis is the greatest since World War II. We had a coalition government then. Why don’t we have one now?” *Rosemary Hall*

“Parliamentary consensus on executive action is traditional where the UK is at war or in a state of conflict or an otherwise agreed state of civil emergency. Then, it is traditional for opposition parties to support the government of the day’s campaign. Examples: World War II, Northern Ireland troubles, Falklands War.” *James Levy*

65. A number of submissions noted that it is regrettable that whilst the Government has begun to cite climate change as justification for emerging policy, it is made on a piecemeal basis and not as part of overarching policy. As a consequence it is clear that consensus on climate change can only have political credibility where it is linked to specific outcomes to which a succession of governments will commit. In many respects the Northern Ireland peace process demonstrates such an approach, there having been a succession of negotiations with promises and deliverables which were followed through from initial discussions to the present day with a high level of cross-party ownership. Northern Ireland, like climate change, was a problem which demanded a long-term and consistent approach to achieve various interim and long-term objectives.
66. **Our judgement here is that none of the presumed barriers to consensus is either too large or overwhelming to be addressed successfully. Furthermore, examples do exist in the UK where a consensus was forged (World War II, Northern Ireland) because of the pressing need to take long-term and durable decisions in the face of a major national challenge.**

3.2 Overcoming the Barriers

67. Climate change sets perhaps the ultimate long-term environmental challenge for systems of political governance, with global, national, regional and local implications, and hence requires a commensurate political response. What emerges is the need for a multi-layered political response: one which includes early agreement on the structures and steps needed to meet the challenge. As indicated above, these structures and steps need to allow politicians to address the pressures of short-termism imposed by day-to-day politics.
68. **We therefore recommend that the Government and opposition parties work together to agree a long-term agenda or strategy to support the development and implementation of effective consensus policies on climate change, and to ensure that, through those and other policies, the UK meets effective national and international targets. Ideally, a linked series of milestones would be set, to which all constituents could subscribe and be held accountable.**
69. Such a strategy needs to include steps such as developing a policy framework and setting up an independent monitoring body – as discussed in the sections below. A central aim would be to ensure a consistent policy environment for businesses and other stakeholders to enable them to make the step-change towards delivering a low-carbon future. Those stakeholders should be engaged in the process for developing the strategy to ensure widespread

endorsement. As with any strategy, timescales and objectives would have to be reviewed and adjusted at regular intervals.

3.3 Mechanisms for Achieving Consensus: How Would this Work in Practice?

70. As indicated above, the development of a consensus on a policy framework could be supported by a strategy, which could in turn exploit or include a range of formal mechanisms. Some contributors to the inquiry commented on the desirability of an electoral pact, or some form of joint manifesto statement, or that political leaders might share the same platform to argue the case for the seriousness of the issue. Above all, politicians needed to demonstrate a high level of *leadership*, and one which would be equal to the challenges faced:

“The important aspect is for the government to take initiatives and show leadership with long-term policies and cross-party consensus.” *Ray Newton*

“I can see that strong leadership is needed in Britain now....to convince the nation of the very real perils which lie ahead and to get its backing to start putting in place the measures we shall all need for survival.” *John Watkins*

“To make it work everyone needs to know where we are going and what we must do, this would require strong leadership from Government and not just the lead party.” *National Grid*

71. At a generic level there was a desire for something that went well beyond any single statement or written agreement. What was wanted was agreement on the *process* for taking the consensus on climate change forward in policy terms. However, few submissions addressed this important question in any detail, or how it might start. Several submissions, the Cross-Party Joint Statement (Annex 1), and witnesses in evidence, suggested the need for some form of independent body to monitor and possibly also enforce progress against climate change targets, which we consider in detail in a later section below.
72. The Chair of the APPGCC, Colin Challen MP, submitted the most detailed proposal for a process which might begin to take the consensus forward. This would involve:
- First, the setting up of a cross-party commission, to agree the parameters of policy making: on targets and an overall cap on emissions; on specific means and sectors of policy where agreement can be forged; and on parameters to judge whether a particular area of existing policy falls within the terms of the agreement.
 - Second, all discussions should be held fully in public, for the sake of transparency²⁷ and to avoid people concluding that decisions that affect them had been arrived at ‘behind closed doors’.
 - Third, once the parameters of the consensus were established, a referendum could be held to give it wider legitimacy.
 - Fourth, a joint-party platform might be used to promote the case for the consensus during any referendum.
 - Fifth, published rules are required on how remaining disputes between the parties might be settled, possibly involving a disputes panel or independent arbitration.
73. There is much merit in such proposals, particularly the idea of some form of cross-party commission or joint policy working group to get the process off the ground and take it forward. The Cross-Party Approach at Annex 1 similarly makes reference to establishing a

²⁷ Note that transparency and openness form an important part of the present government’s policy on managing risk issues more generally: see Cabinet Office (2002) *Risk: Improving Government’s Ability to Handle Risk and Uncertainty*. London: Cabinet Office Strategy Unit.

Climate Change Forum. An interesting first step, suggested in several of the written submissions, would be to convene a seminar or joint meeting of the Houses, where the importance of the issue and the current scientific assessments could be presented to MPs and Peers and debated in a non-partisan fashion. Throughout, many of the submissions stressed the need for policy and debates to be fully informed by the available science-base.

74. We should note, however, that when questioned none of the witnesses drawn from the three major parties was enthusiastic at the prospect of a referendum on climate change, and no other written submission made a detailed case for this unprompted. Joan Walley MP, a member of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), stated in evidence that “I think sometimes referendums can be very divisive because referendums are always incredibly likely to end up either being for or against something.”
75. It seems clear to us, as assessors, that only so much can be done by the opposition parties or by backbench MPs working alone. They can begin to set a new agenda, and indeed can take great credit for having done just that with the present consensus proposals. However, they cannot easily influence the direction of current policy. Accordingly, to be effective, a cross-party approach must have the involvement of the government of the day, and this means that the Prime Minister has to take a leading role in adopting the process, with endorsement also from the other party leaders. Responsibility for co-ordination might then be given to a senior government figure, in the same way that the current Leader of the House of Commons, Jack Straw MP, is exploring the possibility of a consensus on the issues of House of Lords reform and party funding. Such a process might also draw upon the existing cross-party expertise residing in the APPCCG and EAC.
76. **Accordingly we recommend that the Government, and the Prime Minister in particular, take joint ownership of the cross-party consensus process. This could involve convening a cross-party climate policy group of MPs and Peers, informed by the best scientific assessments, to agree areas of consensus and seek input from a wide range of stakeholders. The Prime Minister should also join with the leaders of the other parties in identifying a senior MP (preferably with both ministerial and consensus experience) to take responsibility for following through on the necessary negotiations.**

3.4 A Climate Change Cabinet?

77. We have noted above the way a number of contributors referred to World War II, when there was a coalition government. Comments in this area, some of which are reproduced in Box 5 below, extended to the immediate post-war period. The country “pulled together” and people accepted rationing “for the public good”. The seriousness of the threat posed by climate change would, many argued, justify a wartime-like approach to tackling it, although not everyone felt that people would easily accept the austerity associated with rationing.
78. One need not necessarily invoke a wartime metaphor to appreciate the advantages of a joined-up approach to climate change policy across government. Climate change touches almost all areas of current policy and departmental responsibilities. There has been much criticism, outwith the present inquiry, that government departments do not work closely enough together on climate change policy.²⁸ There exists a cross-departmental ministerial Cabinet Committee on Energy and the Environment (EE/ referred to in evidence as ENV) which is supposed to ensure that climate change is considered in all areas of policymaking. However,

²⁸ Bowyer et al (2006)

according to Peter Ainsworth MP “it does not work” and to Joan Walley MP “it does not have a profile”.

Box 5 – Climate Change Demands a ‘Wartime’ Footing

“Appeal to our self-image as the country that survived World War II because everyone ‘did their bit’. Now, as then, we must cut back on what we import, and rely on our own resources. And put heavy pressure on other countries to do the same. We may need to ration, or to go without, and accept some discomfort for the greater good. The stakes were high then: they are higher still now.” *Eleanor Sutton*

“...politicians should not underestimate people’s ability to be motivated into taking measures once they have been convinced of the need, or their readiness to accept changes in lifestyle if they can see the purpose. These changes have to be imposed; most of us would find it impossible to deny ourselves unilaterally! In the wartime and post-war years, people were able to lead active, fulfilled and healthy lives despite rationing and extreme restrictions on fuel and private travel.” *Elizabeth Skinner*

“The country needs to be on a war footing, much as it was in the Second World War. The threat is far greater. We need to put everything into preventing global warming and preparing for its consequences.... Our system of government and our way of living need to be completely restructured around this common goal. That is how closely our elected leaders must work.” *Ian Lander*

“The global deaths from climate change over the next decades will quite completely dwarf the 50 million killed in World War II. The sooner an all-party cabinet committee is formed, the more chance we will have to stem this hideous projected loss of life.” *Carbon Disclosure Project*

79. The new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, David Miliband, has been asked by the Prime Minister to look into the setting up of an Office for Climate Change²⁹, which could greatly increase the influence of climate change issues on wider policy. In his letter to David Miliband, the Prime Minister wrote “There is growing appetite from the public, particularly young people, and business to take action on climate change. You are particularly well equipped to help harness this energy and ensure the national consensus for action is turned into concrete measures that will have real impact.... I know domestic and international climate change policy is an important priority for several Departments and delivery of our environmental objectives requires DEFRA to work closely with them. We need to look at improving the institutional arrangements. I would like you to explore setting up an Office for Climate Change, to develop climate change policy and strategy, working across government. The Office would act as a shared resource for key Government Departments. I believe this sort of innovation would provide the basis for even more progress and focus within Whitehall.” Details of the new Office may well have emerged by the time, or shortly after this report is printed.
80. **The current EE (formerly ENV) Committee is solely a government committee, and there has been no suggestion that the proposed Office for Climate Change would call on other parties, but we suggest that its existence might provide scope for involving other parties in policymaking: perhaps even for exploring a coalition-like approach on climate change. Its likely high profile should, at a minimum, be accompanied by openness in its proceedings and a readiness to listen to ideas from outside government and outside the governing party. In setting it up, ministers could perhaps consider options for formally involving opposition parties, at least in the event of emergencies related to climate change.**

²⁹ www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/ministers/pdf/pm-miliband-0605.pdf (accessed 20th June 2006)

3.5 *An Independent Body to Monitor (and Enforce) Progress*

81. In its Climate Change Programme 2006, the Government commits itself to reporting annually to Parliament on its progress in reducing the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. This will be in addition to a number of other reporting commitments which are listed in Chapter 11 of the Programme. The new report will include data from the existing datasets but include other data to make it more comprehensive, and "it will also set out an indicative work plan for the following year".³⁰ The Programme does not indicate who will be involved in producing the new annual report.
82. The IEEP review of the Climate Change Programme 2006 comments that "There is a need to make the most of the proposed annual reporting to ensure that the opportunities offered are capitalised upon. This should not just be to report updated figures, but to proactively engage all political parties and stakeholders on a regular basis to identify a way forward on key issues, agreeing priorities and actions".³¹
83. The proposals in the joint statement on a Cross-Party Approach (Annex 1) go further than this. They propose that both monitoring and setting of binding targets should be conducted by a new, independent, authoritative body with a specific remit to:
- Set binding annual targets, to secure reductions in UK greenhouse gas emissions and monitor progress towards them.
 - Advance measures to achieve year on year reductions in climate change gas emissions;
 - Publish a report annually on its findings which will trigger an annual debate on the floor of both Houses of Parliament on the report: and
 - Develop policy measures in the light of changes in scientific evidence.
84. Such an independent body would operate much as the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England currently does with respect to interest rates. As one consequence, the implementation and continuity of policies aimed at meeting agreed UK greenhouse gas emission targets might be insulated, to some degree at least, from the day-to-day vicissitudes of politics.

Box 6 – Witness Comments on an Independent Body (see also Annex 3)

"... there is actually a role for some independent body to set these targets. The analogue, imperfect though it is, is the interest rate committee at the Bank of England. Something like that could undertake the role of setting the targets and actually ensuring that they were met. ..." *Chris West, University of Oxford*

"The independent body would analyse the science and the policies that a Government had put in place, and would tell us whether or not we are doing enough to meet the targets that we have all agreed to. The interesting and, potentially, very exciting thing about that is that it actually changes the way that Whitehall thinks about everything, because you then get a Government that is not only constrained by fiscal issues and monetary issues; you get a Government that is constrained by carbon issues as well." *Peter Ainsworth MP*

"... drawing on the evidence that Peter gave just now in terms of some of our Environmental Audit Select Committee inquiries, I think we have definitely identified the need for some kind of institution. ..." *Joan Walley MP*

"The legitimacy of an independent body is not something which has to come from the political process because the process sets it up. But the whole point of it is that it should be people who are seen to be above and beyond the political process and the common thrust of the political debate, and who have undoubted technical expertise and standing in the scientific community. That is the model which we have seen historically in the economic area, both in terms of the independent monetary policy committee at the Bank of England, and indeed at every other G8 Central Bank." *Chris Huhne MP*

³⁰ UK Climate Change Programme 2006.

³¹ Bowyer et al (2006)

85. As assessors we are in full agreement with such a proposal. Its establishment would counter one of the most difficult political barriers to achieving the action on climate change that many would like to see: the possibility that the electoral cycle or the action of powerful vested interests might lead to a reversal or modification of long-term progress to meet targets.
86. **We recommend that the Government establish an authoritative independent body, similar to the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee, to agree UK climate change targets and measures to meet these, and to report at least annually on progress towards meeting them, in a fully transparent manner and in the light of the best available scientific assessments.**
87. An important aspect to taking forward the Cross-Party Approach to climate change would be to further define the roles of the independent body and its composition. Witnesses and written submissions were clear that such a body would gain much of its stature and authority if it could represent the very best expertise in climate change science and related policy matters. The body would, at a minimum, need to include parliamentarians with appropriate expertise, relevant scientists (natural and social), and economic experts. The inclusion of other stakeholder perspectives such as business, NGO and lay members might also be considered desirable. In terms of its role, the Joint Statement (Annex 1) is clear that such a body should have the power to set binding annual targets and propose measures. There is merit in this suggestion because, as with the setting of interest rates currently, the independent body would then have the freedom to take the very long-term view. However, the precise details of how this might operate in practice would need careful consideration, not least to ensure that any such targets also met the UK's international obligations. In his evidence, Peter Ainsworth MP also touched upon some of the complexities involved in setting targets, which do involve both political (what is acceptable) as well as scientific (what is possible) judgments. He described target-setting as something 'for politicians to do' alongside the precise means for reaching those targets.
88. We also suggest that the independent body could be involved in assessing the consensus policies agreed by the parties, and their individual policies, to provide the parties – and the electorate – with advice on their likely effectiveness in meeting agreed national targets and international obligations.

3.6 Holding the Governing Party/Parties to Account

89. There is much scepticism in society about whether politicians can be trusted to do what they say they will³². Several contributors to the inquiry expressed this. Even with a cross-party consensus, there remains the question of how to ensure that policies are implemented and targets reached. There are at least two requirements: monitoring, and effective penalties in the event of failure. The proposed independent body would be charged with monitoring progress. But how might penalties be enforced?
90. Given that parties will almost certainly have different approaches to meeting targets (beyond the agreed consensus), failure to meet them could expose the governing party to failure at the next election. But the incoming party could similarly fail. Even a coalition arrangement, with a climate change cabinet, could fail to meet its objectives. Is there a more fail-safe way to enforce the implementation of effective policy?
91. The state of international agreement on climate change is well summarised in Chapter 2 of UK Climate Change Programme 2006. A limited enforcement framework is provided by

³² For example, Cabinet Office Strategy Unit (2002), p78.

agreement at European level. In 2000, the EU launched the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP), with the aim of helping the EU to meet its Kyoto obligations. It has since introduced the Directive setting up the European Emissions Trading Scheme (EU-ETS), as well as directives on the promotion of electricity from renewable energy sources, on the energy performance of buildings, and on the promotion of biofuels. The UK is obliged to translate directives into British law, and could be subject to penalties imposed by the European Court of Justice in the event of non-compliance. But these directives alone are not enough to achieve the targets the Government has set itself. Agreement on fiscal measures requires unanimity³³ within the European Council, which has militated against proposals for carbon and energy taxes at a European level. Of course, EU Member States are not prevented from maintaining or introducing more stringent measures nationally providing they are compatible with the EU Treaty.

92. At an international level, signatories to the Kyoto Protocol have legally-binding emissions targets, but non-compliance has no particular consequences, other than international disfavour/disgrace. In the view of Norman Baker MP, it could take years before any international agreement gains teeth; he considers that the United Nations Environment Programme would play a critical role in achieving this.
93. In June the new Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett, appointed a Special Representative on Climate Change to work with key international partners and government colleagues, and this could help the UK to negotiate a more effective, joined-up international agreement with more teeth than the Kyoto Protocol.
94. But in the current absence of strong enough external pressure, we come back to the need for internal enforcement of targets, and the need for any independent body to have sufficient powers to hold the government of the day to account. Ideally, those powers would need to go beyond those currently available to Parliamentary Select Committees. It is important to note that without such powers the independent body's influence could not match that of the Monetary Policy Committee, since the effect of setting greenhouse gas targets is not analogous to the effect of setting interest rates.
95. **We recommend that the proposed climate policy group try to obtain cross-party agreement on the powers that the independent body should have to hold the government of the day to account; i.e. on the form that these powers should take and how and when they would be exercised.**

³³ http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/dat/C_2002325EN.003301.html

4. Possible Points of Consensus

96. The earlier section on “A Consensus on Targets Plus Means?” outlines some of the points on which consensus would be desirable and on which it might be reached, ranging from targets through a broad policy framework to specific policy measures. In this section we list some of the areas in which measures might be agreed upon. We address two measures - Domestic Tradable Quotas (DTQs) and Contraction and Convergence (C&C) – in more detail, because they featured heavily in a number of submissions.
97. A good starting point for the proposed climate policy group in developing cross-party policies would obviously be the Joint Statement at Annex 1. Beyond that, there are indications that the parties could try to find agreement in areas such as building standards, electricity generation (including development of decentralised generation), vehicle fuel economy, emissions trading schemes (including measures for aviation), and the use of fiscal measures including carbon taxes.
98. Several of the suggestions for mitigating climate change made by contributors to the inquiry and in letters to *The Independent* could also form the basis for consensus policies; e.g. regulations on energy conservation and the efficiency of electrical appliances, the use of Combined Heat and Power systems, increased subsidy for installation of renewable energy technologies, more support for public transport, and enhanced awareness-raising.
99. Many contributors referred to the need for fiscal measures, including increased fuel duty, increased vehicle excise duty on larger vehicles, the introduction of tax on aviation fuel. While some favoured a general carbon tax, others favoured the introduction of some form of carbon rationing such as DTQs (also known as Tradable Energy Quotas, TEQs), others a combination of the two. DTQs, proposed by David Fleming and studied in detail by researchers at the Tyndall Centre³⁴, involve allocating emissions rights (electronically) to individuals on an equal per capita basis; these are surrendered whenever the individuals purchase fuel or electricity. DTQs were the subject of a Private Member’s Bill³⁵ in the 2003-04 Parliamentary session. Alternative rationing schemes exist, such as that presented by the NGO Feasta.³⁶
100. There is much debate about the relative merits of these measures, but this report is not the place for it, nor is it our role to recommend any particular measure. But these are obviously issues which should be debated by the proposed climate policy group and which would warrant further research. The evidence submitted to this inquiry suggests that the Government might receive unexpected public support for such measures.
101. Similarly, it would be appropriate for the Group to examine the merits of including support for an approach such as C&C in the cross-party agreement. C&C, proposed by the Global Commons Institute, was favoured by several contributors to the inquiry. It aims to stabilise atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at a ‘safe’ level by international sharing of a contracting global emissions budget; at the end of an agreed timeframe, during which per-capita emissions rights would converge, those rights would be equal. C&C is the subject of

³⁴ See Starkey, R and Anderson, K. (2005) *Domestic Tradable Quotas: A Policy Instrument for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Energy Use*. Tyndall Centre Technical Paper 39.

www.tyndall.ac.uk/research/theme2/final_reports/t3_22.pdf

³⁵ Domestic Tradable Quotas (Carbon Emissions) Bill

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmbills/136/2004136.pdf

³⁶ www.feasta.org/documents/energy/emissions2006.pdf

another Private Members' Bill³⁷ and associated Early Day Motion, and is supported by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution³⁸, EAC, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the German Advisory Council on Global Change among other bodies³⁹. However, the oral witnesses in this inquiry representing science and NGO perspectives were unanimous in the view that C&C, while attractive in principle, would face difficulties in practical implementation as an international agreement. And Richard Starkey and colleagues, based at the Tyndall Centre but writing in a personal capacity, outlined two alternative approaches to allocating emissions rights. They pointed out that "equity is undoubtedly a contested concept", and reported arguments that allocation could be based not on equal per-capita emissions (C&C) but instead on cumulative historical emissions (thus being lower for countries already industrialised) or on a "development perspective" (allowing developing countries to adequately develop their economies). All three allocation regimes could be adjusted for "natural factors" such as ambient temperature and the availability of renewable energy supplies, and would aim to provide "equality of opportunity for welfare". Further research could help to identify the most satisfactory approach.

102. Starkey and colleagues note that equity is also an issue in relation to the allocation of emission rights within nations, e.g. in relation to the allocation of DTQs.
103. Both DTQs and C&C (and similar mechanisms) would be consistent with the acknowledgement that there is probably a maximum "safe" atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration, and that staying below it necessitates a post-Kyoto concentrations-based international framework agreement for stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations. The trading of emissions rights under this agreement (a cap-and-trade system) could be based on the C&C and DTQ (or other global and domestic carbon rationing) proposals.
104. Again, it is not our role to judge the merits of C&C. **However, we recommend that the proposed climate policy group (Recommendation 10) and the independent body (Recommendation 12) consider whether cross-party support should be given (a) to C&C as an approach to setting international emissions targets, and/or (b) to some form of national carbon-rationing system, such as DTQs, alongside other means, as an instrument for achieving the targets that a C&C cap would impose on the UK. Consideration of these issues may require further detailed research.**

³⁷ Climate Change (Contraction and Convergence) Bill

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmbills/092/2006092.pdf

³⁸ Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (2000) *Energy – The Changing Climate*. Twenty-Second Report. London: The Stationery Office. www.rcep.org.uk/newenergy.htm

³⁹ GCI Briefing: *Contraction & Convergence* www.gci.org.uk/briefings/ICE.pdf

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1. There was very broad agreement across the majority of submissions that a cross-party consensus on climate change would be desirable, that this should be grounded in the scientific evidence, and that the existing emissions targets provide important existing points of consensus.**
- 2. We note that the existing political consensus on a target 60% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 may need to be revisited, in the direction of a cross-party commitment to even tougher action, when the 4th assessment report from the IPPC is published in 2007. We also note the need for an effective post-Kyoto international framework agreement that includes concentrations-based targets for stabilising atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations.**
- 3. Given the almost overwhelming support for the principle of a cross-party consensus in the submissions, we recommend that the Government should seek ways to take this forward in a constructive and practical manner and with some urgency.**
- 4. We also recommend that the opposition parties should not abandon their efforts to find common ground for building upon their initial consensus proposals.**
- 5. There is already common ground between the major parties on long-term targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But scope exists for a consensus that extends beyond targets to at least some means for meeting them.**
- 6. A consensus on means for tackling climate change (which extends beyond simple agreement on targets) does not have to be ‘all or nothing’. The best way forward would seem to be to seek a consensus on targets, and on a long-term policy framework including at least some of the principal means for achieving those targets, but without stifling legitimate and healthy political debate or opportunities for innovation. We recommend strongly that the parties pursue this course.**
- 7. In the presence of an agreed long-term policy framework, each party’s detailed approach should offer a reasonable chance of meeting the targets. In this way, the electorate would retain some choice over detailed approach. Independent assessment of party policies could influence both the policies and the parties’ electoral chances. Such assessment could be part of the role of an independent expert body (point 12, below).**
- 8. None of the presumed barriers to consensus is either too large or overwhelming to be addressed successfully. Furthermore, examples do exist in the UK where a consensus was forged (World War II, Northern Ireland) because of the pressing need to take long-term and durable decisions in the face of a major national challenge.**
- 9. We recommend that the Government and opposition parties work together to agree a long-term strategy to support the development and implementation of effective consensus policies on climate change, and to ensure that, through those and other policies, the UK meets effective national and international targets. Ideally, a linked series of milestones would be set, to which all constituents could subscribe and be held accountable.**

10. It is difficult to see how a genuine consensus could be taken forward without government involvement. Accordingly we recommend that the Prime Minister take joint ownership of the cross-party consensus process. This could involve convening a cross-party climate policy group of MPs and Peers, informed by the best scientific assessments, to agree areas of consensus and seek input from a wide range of stakeholders. The Prime Minister should also join with the leaders of the other parties in identifying a senior MP (preferably with both ministerial and consensus experience) to take responsibility for following through on the necessary negotiations.
11. The current EE (formerly ENV) Committee is solely a government committee, and there has been no suggestion that the proposed Office for Climate Change would call on other parties, but we suggest that its existence might provide scope for involving other parties in policymaking: perhaps even for exploring a coalition-like approach on climate change. Its likely high profile should, at a minimum, be accompanied by openness in its proceedings and a readiness to listen to ideas from outside government and outside the governing party. In setting it up, ministers could perhaps consider options for formally involving opposition parties, at least in the event of emergencies related to climate change.
12. We recommend that the Government establish an authoritative independent body, similar to the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee, to agree UK climate change targets and measures to meet these, and to report at least annually on progress towards meeting them, in a fully transparent manner and in the light of the best available scientific assessments.
13. We recommend that the proposed climate policy group try to obtain cross-party agreement on the powers that the independent body should have to hold the government of the day to account.
14. We recommend that the proposed climate policy group (Recommendation 10) and the independent body (Recommendation 12) consider whether cross-party support should be given (a) to C&C as an approach to setting international emissions targets, and/or (b) to some form of national carbon-rationing system, such as DTQs, alongside other means, as an instrument for achieving the targets that a C&C cap would impose on the UK. Consideration of these issues may require further detailed research.

Annex 1: Joint Statement on a Cross-Party Approach to Climate Change

26 January 2006

In the light of the exceptional threat posed by climate change, and the need for robust, stable, and long term strategies to bring about a significant reduction in UK CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions, we have reached agreement as follows:

- ❖ We accept the scientific consensus that human activities are causing climate change to occur, and that the rate of change constitutes the most serious threat we face.
- ❖ We believe that normal politics is simply not delivering the actions necessary to tackle this threat.
- ❖ We therefore support the establishment of a Cross-Party approach towards finding ways to limit the emission of greenhouse gases and developing solutions to the challenge of climate change.
- ❖ We accept that a cut in both global and UK emissions of at least 60% by 2050 is necessary.
- ❖ We propose the establishment of a new, independent, authoritative body with a specific remit to:
 - Set binding annual targets, to secure reductions in UK greenhouse gas emissions and monitor progress towards them;
 - Advance measures to achieve year on year reductions in climate change gas emissions;
 - Publish a report annually on its findings which will trigger an annual debate on the floor of both Houses of Parliament on the report; and
 - Develop policy measures in the light of changes in scientific evidence.
- ❖ We will work together to develop specific joint policy proposals, seeking agreement wherever possible, bearing in mind the right of the devolved administrations to make their own provisions.
- ❖ We will establish a Climate Change Forum, comprising members of each Party, which will meet regularly to take this initiative forward.

Peter Ainsworth MP, Norman Baker MP, Elfynd Llwyd MP, Rev Dr William McCrea MP, Mike Weir MP

Annex 2: Inquiry announcement and terms of reference, 28th March 2006.

First Inquiry – call for evidence

“Is a cross-party consensus on climate change possible – or desirable?”

Introduction

Climate change has been described as the greatest threat to humanity – ‘greater even than terrorism’ (Sir David King). Yet the issue was barely addressed in the 2005 general election, a uniform absence of debate which belied the party political differences in approach that exist, though most political parties accept that climate change is a reality brought about by anthropogenic causes.

Calls for a party political consensus on climate change reflect the view that this subject is ‘too big’ for partisan dispute, and that whilst party differences continue the public will be sent mixed or conflicting signals about how they should react. But another view is that unless there is a dynamic political debate, ineffective policies may be allowed to go unchallenged, and that complacency may replace a sense of urgency.

In other countries there are examples of cross-party working. In Denmark, both government and opposition parties signed a formal agreement on energy conservation. In Finland, normal party divisions were overridden by a free vote in parliament on whether or not to build a fifth nuclear power station.

This inquiry, the first to be undertaken by the APPCCG asks whether political parties could and should work more closely together on their approach to climate change, and seeks to identify the possible scope and limitations of a consensus approach.

Call for evidence

Evidence is sought from any one who wishes to submit it. The closing date is 9th May 2006. Evidence may be sent to colinchallenmp@parliament.uk or posted to Colin Challen MP, APPCCG Chair, House of Commons, LONDON SW1A 0AA – please mark your envelope “APPCCG Inquiry”.

The evidence will be assessed by three independent assessors. The results of the Inquiry will be discussed at a future APPCCG meeting and published by July, 2006. To assist publication, evidence should preferably be sent in electronic form, but hard copy alone is acceptable.

Questions

Contributors of evidence may wish to consider any or all of the following questions to assist the framing of their submission:

1 Areas of agreement/disagreement

What are the current points of consensus on climate change? In which areas of policy would a consensus require further convergence by the parties? Is a consensus inevitable in view of European and international agreements?

2 Mechanisms

What would be the best forum or mechanism for arriving at a consensus? How should parties retain the involvement of their members and the public in policy development? Should there be an electoral pact, or a joint manifesto statement? Should party leaders appear on the same platform? How might disputes be resolved without political recrimination or ‘point scoring’? Could convergence be aided by the parties

drawing upon the existing, and any new, scientific research on climate change? Are there areas of disagreement which cannot be easily resolved through such research?

3 Outcomes

Would a consensus approach result in policies with really significant (or maximum) impact, or would it lead to the adoption of the lowest common denominator and/or constrain vibrant political debate? Should the electorate be left with or without a choice of approaches? Should consensus cover policy on adapting to climate change as well as mitigating it? If there were a cross-party consensus, would it imply collective responsibility for parties within and outside government?

Examples of successful and failed cross party consensus making would be welcome.

Inquiry evidence assessor CVs

Dr Helen Clayton

Helen Clayton has been working since January 2004 as Parliamentary Liaison Team Leader in the Natural Environment Research Council, Swindon, a role which includes a focus on translating science into policy. She came to NERC from ADAS Consulting Limited, Wolverhampton, where she worked for nearly three years as a Research Scientist in the Soils Group, managing research projects on minimising gaseous nitrogen losses from agricultural systems. Before that she had completed six years as a Postdoctoral Research Associate working on similar issues: greenhouse-gas emissions from agricultural soils, at the University of Edinburgh, and the effects of air pollutants on plants, at Lancaster University, where she was also an Assistant Lecturer in crop physiology. She gained an Honours degree in Natural Sciences and a PhD in Plant Biochemistry from the University of Cambridge in 1986 and 1990, respectively. For three years from 1997 she combined her scientific and foreign-language skills as an examiner of agricultural technology patent applications at the European Patent Office, Munich. She represents NERC on the Swindon Strategic Partnership Climate Change Action Plan Steering Group.

Professor Nick Pidgeon

Nick Pidgeon is Professor of Applied Psychology at Cardiff University. Prior to that he held a Chair in Environmental Risk at the School of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia. His research falls broadly into the area of public attitudes to risk and risk communication, with particular applications to science policy decision-making, environmental issues (such as biotechnology, nuclear power and climate change) and industrial safety. He has worked extensively within inter-disciplinary teams, most recently as Director of a major programme on *Understanding Risk* funded by the Leverhulme Trust (2001-6). That work included a major evaluation of the GM Nation? UK-wide public debate that occurred in 2003, and major survey work on public acceptance of energy futures. Professor Pidgeon was also a member of the Royal Society / Royal Academy of Engineering nanotechnology study group which reported in July 2004. He was first author of the chapter on risk perception and communication in the influential 1992 *Royal Society Report on Risk*. Co-author (with B. Turner) of the book *Man-Made Disasters*, 2nd Edn 1997, and (with R. Kasperson and P. Slovic) of *The Social Amplification of Risk*, Cambridge, 2003.

Professor Mark Whitby

Mark Whitby is founder and a director of the engineering firm Whitbybird - one of this year's Sunday Times Top 100 Companies, and Queen's Innovation Award winners – and Professor of Sustainable Construction at Nottingham University. He was formerly President of the Institution of Civil Engineers and a member of the Energy Foresight Panel, and is currently a member of the pan construction ginger group 'The Edge' which he helped found in 1997. He is the author of numerous construction articles and has contributed to a number of major television programmes on engineering most notably the BBC's secrets of lost empires series on Stonehenge. Notable engineering designs include Millennium Bridges in York, Lancaster and Peterborough, together with over 20 major office buildings in the City of London. He was elected to the Royal Academy of Engineering in 1996 of which he remains (regretfully) one of the younger members.

Annex 3: Oral Evidence

Taken on 11th May 2006, Committee Room 13, House of Commons

Witnesses:

Professor Mike Hulme, University of East Anglia and Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research

Dr Douglas Parr, Chief Scientist, Greenpeace UK

Dr Chris West University of Oxford and the UK Climate Impacts Programme

Peter Ainsworth MP, Conservative, Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Joan Walley MP, Labour, Member of House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee

Chris Huhne MP, Liberal Democrat, Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

2.05 p.m.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: I would like to thank you all for coming here today. We have got about an hour, until just before 3 o'clock, so I hope we can have a good discussion before then. Just to clarify. This is slightly unusual in that this is a session of the cross-party group on climate change. We are not members of the group⁴⁰, but we have been asked to be assessors of both the written evidence that has been sent in with the oral evidence today. So we will take an independent view and help with the writing of the report. As you can see, it is being recorded. The transcript of today will be part of the published record in the report. Our first question, which I think perhaps will be for each of you, is to just open up and say who you represent and the relevance of your organisation's work, just very briefly, to the climate change policy debate in the UK and internationally.

PROFESSOR HULME: I am Mike Hulme. My affiliation is with the University of East Anglia. I am a Professor of Environmental Sciences. I am also a director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, which is a publicly-funded research organisation addressing sustainable responses to climate change. I am here in my own capacity. I am not representing any official Tyndall corporate view. I am also here as a citizen of the City of Norwich.

DR PARR: I am Doug Parr. I am the chief scientific adviser for Greenpeace in the UK; Greenpeace being an environmental pressure group. We are entirely funded by individual donations; about 220,000 in the UK, and something approaching 3 million globally. We have a longstanding interest in climate change. We feel that it is the major environmental threat. It is certainly at the top of our international priorities.

DR WEST: I am Chris West. I am a director of the UK Climate Impacts Programme, hosted by the University of Oxford. Again, I am here in a personal capacity. I am not representing either the University or the Programme. The UK CIP was funded by Defra to help them achieve one of their objectives in the UK and well-adapted to climate change. So we work with decision-makers across British society to help them identify what the impacts of climate change are going to be and help them start to adapt to those impacts.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Thank you very much. We had an open question for you to start off with which was: was there any brief opening statement you wanted to make just about the inquiry and its purpose from your perspective?

DR PARR: We do think there will be value in a cross-party consensus and appreciate the all-party group opening up

some of the detailed questions. I also think the coverage of the *Independent* is very helpful in terms of trying to access a wider constituency.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Thank you. We have some questions on science. The first issue we were interested in, really, is: what can we agree on the climate change science and its impacts? If we were to put a statement on this in the report on our first page, what should we be telling people about the scientific consensus about climate change?

PROFESSOR HULME: I would try and summarise it like this. I would make a distinction in the question here between what we understand about the science of the climate system changing and humans' role in that, and distinguish that from what we might understand about the consequences of those changes for society. I think it is helpful to distinguish those two general domains of knowledge because I think the role of science and the extent of consensus differs between those two domains. If we just focus on the domain of what we understand about the climate system changing because of humans, I think here there is an all-important distinction to make between recognising science as a process of discovery which is never complete, and yet we are able, as a community of scientists, at any one particular time to make an assessment of what we know at that particular point of time. I think that whilst in the process of science the journey of discovery is ongoing, is never-ending, it is always open-ended and will always have lots of loose ends, allowing people to question and challenge and dispute what is known. The assessment at a particular point of time is something that we can actually reach some closure on. My recommendation would be that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, that has reported three times now and is currently finalising its fourth report to be published next year, is the best snapshot at this particular point in time of what we know about how the climate system is changing, and that should be the prime source of authority.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Do we know what is going to be in the next one?

PROFESSOR HULME: We do, in broad brush terms. It is a semi-public document, even at the moment. You can go on to the US Government website and read it today, if you want. I think the core messages that come from the primary science of what is happening to the climate system are reconfirmations of what was published five years ago, with additional further evidence that the changes that are happening to the world's climate caused by human interference are visible, increasingly visible. I think on the impact, the consequences of climate change, I think it is harder here to argue that there is a very strong consensus about what those impacts are, certainly what the consequences of them might be for society and how they might respond, because as soon as you start talking about the

⁴⁰ The Natural Environment Research Council recently joined the APPCCG.

consequences of climate change over the next twenty, forty, a hundred, thousands of years, what the significance of those are for different groups of societies, different individuals in society, are actually much more contested. So I think it is much harder to converge on a single consensus and accept what the consequences are for society, although again the IPCC does make some effort to move in that direction.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Chris, I think you had some comments in your written evidence on climate sensitivity. I thought it was interesting that, regarding the climate system, you made a statement that the 2 to 3 degrees may be higher or there was a chance that it may be higher? Can that be related to the forthcoming IPCC report?

DR WEST: Yes. I think the IPCC report will give a figure -- it will be hidden away in tables -- for the sensitivity; a theoretical number that says what the global temperature does with doubling of carbon dioxide. A hundred years ago it was said to be between four and six. I think now people are coming to a figure somewhere between two and three, somewhere near there, but interesting results at the Exeter conference a year ago suggested it was possible that the sensitivity is much higher. I think that is a risk that is not zero. There is a significant risk that it is higher. I would put this in the category of uncertainties as opposed to facts which cover, if you like, the causes and the causal relationship between greenhouse gases, temperature rise, sea level rise, changed climate systems, that is a quantification of all of that of which the sensitivity of the climate system is one that, if you like, we are approaching better and better knowledge, but clearly we will not know what it is until it happens, if then. I think, more importantly, there are the other uncertainties in that sort of sensitivity of the human system to climate change, which we do not have either any experimental evidence for or any modelling evidence for. As Mike says, that is very much harder to project forward. Then I think there are uncertainties of yet another sort where we know -- this is a Donald Rumsfeld known/unknown. There are bits in the climate system that can switch from one state to another. What we do not know is when or how likely it is. Of course there are the same sorts of state functional changes possible in human systems, and I do not think we have begun to think what those changes might mean.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Can you just give us a couple of examples of both types; the climate ones?

DR WEST: A known/unknown, if you like, the North Atlantic circulation partly driven by salinity drawdown off Greenland. We know that in the past that circulation has collapsed. We anticipate it is possible it collapses again. We do not know how it might collapse -- it has been very hard to recreate it in models -- but it is a possibility. Most models show the flow diminishing but not stopping. If it stopped that would be a very serious consequence. So we know something about what it would be like if it happened, but we cannot say anything about when or how likely it is to happen. On the unknown unknowns on the human side; if we look at a country like Bangladesh, which clearly is vulnerable to sea level rise, at some point it is possible that the population no longer put up with increased frequency of flooding and they want to move somewhere else. May be that number of people moving to higher ground has global geopolitical consequences. It is a very difficult thing to investigate.

DR PARR: Could I just add a couple of comments about the role of uncertainty in policy? My observation on the way that the climate debate is often carried out is that the level of certainty that seems to be sought is of a completely different

order of magnitude -- well, no, that is wrong -- but it is very different from the sort of certainty that is expected for other policy interventions. For example, what is the evidence base for assuming that all class sizes in a school should be below thirty? That is an established policy or has been an established policy for the Labour Party. What, one might mischievously ask, is the evidence for weapons of mass destruction being in particular countries? What is the evidence that certain forms of taxation stimulates certain forms of behaviour? On many of these issues there are actually uncertainties that seem to me to be way beyond the uncertainties in terms of climate science. I talk here about policies demanding mitigation rather than adaptation policies because I think that my two colleagues have suggested they are a different order of magnitude there. My point is that somehow there seems to be a search for complete certainty where it feels to me to be an inappropriate search for certainty given that, broadly, we know that there are some unpleasant things going to happen as a result of climate change, and certainly our belief is that it is one of the greatest threats to human society that there is.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: That led on to the next question we were interested in, which is do we need more science? Well, we do need more science; that is a rhetorical question. But, on the climate side, do we need more science or do we actually need to act now? Has the balance shifted radically in the last five years or so?

DR PARR: My view would clearly be that we need to act now. I am certainly not saying we do not need more research, in some cases, of a very different kind. We need more research, but we clearly need action. Action is far more important this point. We have the evidence base that we need to say we need to do something.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Do the others have a view on that?

DR WEST: I would support that: we have enough evidence to act. Whether we have enough evidence to say how much we should act, that is harder to say, but at this point in time the action we have does not look like enough. It would be hard to go much further than that.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Thank you. In a sense that leads on to the next question that we were interested in. Given that --

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Mike, you did not comment on that. Do you agree?

PROFESSOR HULME: Just on the uncertainty? On research versus action?

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Yes.

PROFESSOR HULME: I think there is scientific evidence that humans are often confused in ways that are potentially damaging, or even, if they are not potentially damaging, at least in ways that potentially society needs to respond to in order to continue to sustain the sort of economic and social functions that we currently have. That evidence is clear that in some way, shape or form is necessary. I think that the problems come -- and this is obviously what we lead on to later on -- in actually deciding what are the appropriate types of responses. Are they ones that can only be addressed globally? Are they ones that actually can be implemented on much more local scales? I think, in reality, the climate is changing, humans are implicated, and that challenges a huge

array of human activities around the world. That is absolutely clear in my mind.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Moving on. If you are saying there is a need for action, I guess you have been thinking about some of the policy prescriptions. I think Dr Clayton is going to address this aspect of the inquiry shortly in a little more detail, but have you any first thoughts on where that takes us, in terms of what the policy makers should be doing?

PROFESSOR HULME: I think all I want to say at this point is, in a way, I am more interested in the process of policy development. You may want to question this later on, but I do not want to come up with policy suggestions. I think what is important is the process whereby policy interventions are developed. The reason that process is important is that climate change, is the global environmental issue of our age. Ozone depletion, to some extent, might take that characteristic, but climate change clearly is the ultimate global environmental challenge. It affects everybody. As we understand the climate system, it also affects future generations. So it is not just an issue for this generation or even the next generation. So, because of these comprehensive spatial and temporal scales, the actual process of having to build a policy, it is very important, certainly from my society where we have an open democracy, and we expect the process of policy development to be open and participatory. We obviously cannot dictate that in other societies. But I think our intention to progress, then, is one point I would want to make about how we develop a policy on climate change.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: That gets us on to the inquiry remit, does it not?

PROFESSOR HULME: I think it raises various lines of reasoning by focusing on how the process is developed. I think it raises issues about information; whether actually our public are adequately informed about what the issues, the risks, the challenges, what the opportunities are. I think it raises questions about what international forum processes we are supporting, because it is not just the case for the 60 million people in this country; it is an issue for the 6.5 billion people worldwide. I think it does raise this issue of how -- and this is what the inquiry seems to me is fundamentally tackling -- what is the role of different political visions, future society, when it comes to the question of climate change? Does climate change transcend differences in political vision? So I think it opens up different issues, but that is the point I would like to make; that, beyond any other issue, climate change challenges the process by which we develop the policies.

DR PARR: Going to your question. Of course Greenpeace has a huge list of policies and possible prescriptions. I am not sure how helpful it would be to run through them all. I could spend the rest of the hour doing that, if you would like. Needless to say, if I can just outline. We were thinking about and campaigning for large scale solutions, such as offshore wind, and onshore wind indeed, which we still support. We do recognise that there is currently a need to decentralise the energy system; not simply because it takes up new technologies, but I think the most important aspect of this is the way that it would make energy part of a social system in the way that the debate over climate change can seem distant, in that people completely lack any sense of urgency in relationship to it. Climate change becomes a thing that is dealt with by international agreements and distant remote politicians who make great speeches from whether it is in Morocco or wherever it happens to be. Actually there is a

limitation to how far such a top-down process can go, in terms of process, which attacks some of the root causes of the problem.

DR WEST: Could I ask a rhetorical question? What is the purpose of this all-party consensus? I think the answer is that it is a step towards achieving nationwide consensus about what we need to do. Given that the UK is only a small fraction of emissions on the global scale, the purpose of that is as much to influence other countries -- the EU, China, India, the United States -- because eventually climate change will require a global consensus. You look at the framework convention consensus process. I can stand about fifteen minutes of it and then I need to scream because it is so slow and so cautious, and somehow we have actually got to change that into 6-and-a-half billion people being signed up to a consensus to do something about it.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Doug, you mentioned the need for a more social aspect of the ownership of the problem. Do you feel there are any governments that we could learn from who have achieved this?

DR PARR: I do not think they have necessarily achieved it explicitly on a climate change agenda. At least I am not aware of that. I know that there is a much more localised element to the heat supply and energy supply systems in Denmark and the Netherlands, in particular. I think the sign up, for example, to renewable energy by the population of Denmark is one particular example. There are different expectations of the role of government in different countries -- in, say, Germany -- which, although I am certainly not pretending to be an expert -- it feels as though, looking from afar, it is different to how the population of the UK relates to the topic.

DR CLAYTON: We were thinking that it would be useful to get discussion going along the question of how far a consensus can go, whether it can go beyond targets and how far beyond targets? A lot of the evidence that we have received would go as far as to say that it is reasonable to have a consensus on reaching the 60 per cent reduction by 2050, for example, although some have said it should go beyond that. I think even Greenpeace, or at least your evidence, Doug, has taken us to 80 per cent or something by then. On that question, in fact, do you think it is possible to reach agreement on stricter targets, on stronger targets?

DR PARR: I would say an important part of targets is actually something that involves annualised checks on how far things are going, because it is far too easy to say, "Let us have a target of 60 per cent or 80 per cent in 2050", which does not have any traction in the immediate politics of it, or determines where we are going. So, whilst I would not say it is irrelevant whether we choose 60 or 80 per cent, I think at this stage what I would hope from a consensus, a party-political consensus, is that there is an established framework that says "This is the way in which we should go." At this point I would be less concerned about whether it was 70 per cent, 75 per cent, or 80 per cent, so much as whether you were saying, "Right, this is the framework within which we work, and the direction in which we have got to go", which means the following things. My organisation might come up with different things that need to be done in order to get us there -- and they will, because this is a legitimate debate about political values and visions for society, etcetera -- but that long-term reduction of emissions, plus the annual reduction, is, if you like, what I see as the consensus, then that the actual final figure at this point in time is rather less important, so long as it is fairly large.

DR CLAYTON: Have you any comment on that?

DR WEST: In my written evidence, I suggested that there is actually a role for some independent body to set these targets. The analogue, imperfect though it is, is the interest rate committee at the Bank of England. Something like that could undertake the role of setting the targets and actually ensuring that they were met year-on-year.

DR CLAYTON: Have you any idea what sort of mechanism there could be for holding a Government to account on reaching those targets?

DR WEST: No.

DR CLAYTON: Anyone else?

PROFESSOR HULME: Not on specifically that question. I have a degree of sympathy with the position that Doug outlined, although I think one of the difficulties about moving towards a cross-party consensus, even on a headline target --well, actually, there are two issues; there are two difficulties. First of all, just for mitigation, reducing emissions, that actually the climate policy or the policy that is engineered to deliver a 60 per cent energy carbon emission reduction is not set in a policy vacuum. There are many other dimensions -- for example, energy -- which are related to climate change. So classically issues around energy security are now geopolitical in nature. So, whilst the ambition of reaching a cross-party consensus on an emissions reduction target, driven by the evidence base of concern about climate change might seem high -- and we all might agree that this is a serious enough issue to reach that consensus and there might be convergence--that does not necessarily apply to the other dimensions of those energy policies, so there might be a quite legitimate cause for quite different approaches to issues of energy security across different parties. I think that the problem area is you cannot compartmentalise a climate change policy and extract it from much of the embeddedness of all the policy issues. That is even more of an issue, more pertinent, in the other type of response that we think about as a society to climate change and adaptation, and how we actually minimise the risks to society from climate change that is unavoidable. Again, you just cannot take out "Here are the climate causes on adaptation that are independent of all other policy initiatives". So the real problem, I think, of moving towards a cross-party consensus is that actually, as you start reaching out from climate change, you almost end up acquiring almost a complete political convergence on most of the important matters that concern British society, and that is unrealistic.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Doug, in his evidence, has said you can have overall agreement and then let everybody disagree about some of the finer detail, and that that may be helpful for political debate. So could you not have a situation where that pertained? Would that not resolve Mike's problem?

DR PARR: I am just thinking about that. I understand what Mike is saying. I think that this will always be down to politics. It will always be down to the extent of political conviction about the need to tackle climate change in parallel with all the other considerations that apply. What I mean by that is that, if there is a sudden shortage of oil for whatever reason, would there be a political consensus in the face of that not to go down, say, the liquefaction-of-coal route, which would be environmentally very damaging, although technologically it might be an option. If there was a cross-

party consensus, that would help. It would not stop such options being possibilities and, indeed, potentially happening, whatever Greenpeace thinks or says or does about it. So, in the end, it will always come down to the level of political conviction in taking forward those targets when the other challenges, in the same policy, arise.

DR WEST: Just to add on a bit to what Mike has said about adaptation. I fully agree that we do not want adaptation in a little box on its own to spread like lightning throughout all the rest of the policies. Whereas now we have an almost pan-national consensus that health and safety at work is something that is everybody's responsibility. It is never something you do not do as a choice. You know you do not have a choice about it; it has to be addressed. Everyone does it. I think climate change adaptation needs to get to that stage where nobody thinks about spending public money without making sure that the system to check that it is adapted to climate change has taken place. You do not put up a school without making sure that it is going to be fit for purpose through its lifetime, and to do so is as unacceptable as building an unsafe school.

DR CLAYTON: That ties in quite well with this point about whether, if parties were presented with different ways of achieving the same target, that choice would, in itself, be enough, because some of the evidence has indicated that, particularly for certain businesses, there is a real need for a long-term view to give any stability for investment. Two areas in particular have to do with electricity distribution and transport systems. One problem, of course, if the parties take a different view on those needs, is that you cannot necessarily have that long-term guarantee. Would you like to comment on that as to whether that means that we should be trying to include means within a consensus for setting emissions?

DR PARR: For precisely those reasons, I think it would be desirable. Whether it is feasible, or as feasible as establishing a consensus around targets, I am less sure, because this long-term certainty is a challenging thing to develop. I would hope so and, as I said earlier, I would have some fairly firm views about what form that long-term certainty should take, which would include a high price in the emissions trading systems and so on. What I am not in a position to say is whether the values and views of the parties, of all the parties, can be accommodated around particular mechanisms. I would hope that the recognition of long-term targets and progressive reductions would provide some level of certainty. Measures would not be necessarily specific to the energy sector, the transport sector, but, say, a high price of carbon, signal that carbon reduction technology or low carbon technology is going to be required, and would give an indication of the way things were going.

DR CLAYTON: Has anyone else got any other comments on that?

PROFESSOR HULME: Yes. It might be desirable, and I think that we have got to face the reality; a very simple example of where, I suspect already, all the three parties basically agree, is that we know that aviation is the sector that is contributing the most growth to UK emissions, and I think probably all three main parties would recognise that that has got to be one of the priorities that is tackled, and that actually, having tackled that, the fundamental approaches of different political parties, different political visions, as to how you tackle that can be very, very different. It came out in the European debate between Britain and Germany as to whether, for example, you put aviation into an emissions trading scheme -- which is what the British Government have

argued. The German Government actually argued that the most effective way to do it was to tax aviation fuel properly. So there is a fundamental difference, I would suggest, in political vision, two different solutions, but agreement on the problem, and I think you are going to find many of those types of conflicts emerging within British politics when you really get down to the nitty gritty of policy interventions.

DR CLAYTON: Do you think that the only way of really hold governments to account is to have an internationally agreed consensus so that there is scope for such measures as sanctions, for example? I cannot think of anything else at the moment. Is there any way that we could otherwise make sure that governments were doing what they have agreed to or what is necessary?

DR PARR: I think if the solutions were cheaper than the problem causing technologies, then yes. It is not immediately on the horizon but it is not impossible to imagine that that would happen. However, I would say that, to bring those technologies to market and to make them happen, requires at the very least national and regional legislative approaches and international agreements, and, of course, ideally we want a fully global agreement.

PROFESSOR HULME: Many, many nations are not going to meet going to meet their Kyoto protocol obligations, and it is difficult to know what sanctions the international community is going to invoke against those countries who fail to reach their targets by 2012.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Chris had some strong words on Kyoto, I seem to recall, in your evidence as well, did you not?

DR WEST: Did I? I said it was limited in scope. But, to quote Lord May: When you see a train move out of the station, you do not say it is not going very fast; you say it has actually transformed itself from the state of immobility to movement. I think that is what Kyoto has achieved, and that is amazing that clearly Kyoto, as we have it now, is only the first step, and it must go on to something more useful even if it is in a different form.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Do you think that would be a useful function of any potential parliamentary consensus, in allowing the UK to have some leadership in that next step?

DR WEST: I think it has the potential to do that, and I think it is an important thing to aim at, just because if we are going, as we are trying to, to lead on climate change, then we have to be able to show that domestically we are doing what we said we would and showing that it is actually a good thing to do, so leading by example. Also it gives us a voice of authority.

DR CLAYTON: I wanted to come back to what sort of body we could have in this country. Chris, you have had a good way of approaching that as a list of things that we could agree on in a consensus, possibly. I wondered who should be involved in deciding what areas there is a consensus on? Is it just the parties or is it people from outside? Also, how much public involvement should there be in that?

DR WEST: I think there is an issue that, even with a cross-party consensus, there is a disconnect between that and the country at large. In some areas, I think the public may well be in advance of politicians. It is my personal view, based on non-quantifiable evidence, that we could go further in constraining people, if you like, in moving people towards

more climate appropriate behaviour, and the public would actually go for it. I think that there is an important lesson in introduction of rationing during the Second World War when it was actually privation for people. It was a monstrous fiddle, it was open to abuse, but people saw it as essentially a fair process and they were prepared to sign up to it. I think the same thing is probably true today; that people can see the injustice in destroying the world for future generations, and I think they are actually willing to say, "Yes, this is a fair and reasonable thing to do. I do not like giving up flying to southern Europe three times a year", but I think people would actually consider it.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Do you all share that view?

PROFESSOR HULME: No. I do not see any evidence that human behaviour would respond in a passive and egalitarian way to such an implementation of rationing.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Again, a fair bit of the evidence that we have received has argued for education, let us say, and has also argued for Government, or whatever consensus might emerge, taking some leadership, and then that being the basis to take people forward with the policy process. You would still be pessimistic under those circumstances?

PROFESSOR HULME: If there was a cross-party consensus, for example, on capping individual emissions.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: And perhaps all the party leaders stood together on a platform and said this is what must be done, let us say, which has been suggested in the written evidence.

PROFESSOR HULME: I would still be sceptical.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: Chris is nodding.

DR WEST: The other thing that may make it work, if you like, is if there was a very clear and obvious danger, the threat of global war, that actually meant people said, "Right, we have actually got to pull together. Here is a device which we are being asked to do, and that is fair and I can see how it contributes." What we have at the moment; I think people are very good at saying, "Yes, this is fair." But, if you like, the public has not yet grasped the size of the problem and made the connection between the size of that problem and it actually meaning something uncomfortable to every individual. That connection needs to be stronger. It depends. If you are a rose-tinted optimist, I think people might make that change. I think Mike is quite correct; there is very little evidence for it at the moment.

DR PARR: Can I just elaborate a bit on Mike, because I am sort of agreeing with both Mike and Chris? As Mike described, I think he got the three party leaders on a platform and spoke to the the British people and we have got to do this. I do not think that would have the effect of inspiring to accept privation for the greater good. What I will say is that there is a level of concern out there. I think your research shows that, Nick. There is a level of desire for something to be done and for someone to do something, but I do not think we can just approach this as a business-as-usual political issue. That is why, as I mentioned earlier, I think making climate change operational on a different level from simple national politics and international statements is the way to go. Climate change becomes an issue that is about local sustainability -- it is a horrible term because it has no inspirational value but the idea of making one's community, making one's home, making one's living room something that

is somehow addressing climate change, and people are retaking control of the issue rather than leaving it in the hands of George Bush is a very important part of it. Response to climate change has to be a social process and not just a technological one, and I think the involvement of people in that way, as well as at the political level in the sense of being engaged in political discussion about it, is terribly important. So I think there is a tremendous mandate and expectation that someone will do something to try and do something about it; not leave it until it has turned the lights out. But I think the response to that is to operationalise change in a different way than is currently being done; which is not to say a conventional political cross-party consensus would not be a valuable instrument in part of the process of getting there.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: We need to move on as we are getting close to three.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: I was interested in the comment made about taxation versus government trading, particularly, really, from the point of view of whether or not taxation and carbon trading could be reconciled; whether they are actually just different sides of the same coin? Whether there is a view there, to begin with?

DR PARR: There is no technical reason why you cannot do both at the same time, I do not think. I think the obstacle is industry sectors which desire all "consistency" and level playing fields and such like.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: I was also thinking of nation-to-nation, where differences of points of view were expressed with Germany, whether they could be reconciled across the nations.

PROFESSOR HULME: Again, there is a fairly important difference in that an emissions trading scheme, however extensive it is or whatever it contains, is harder to manipulate, essentially it is harder to fix the price of carbon, than if you impose some sort of centrally determined tax rate. So the price of carbon would go up and down, it will vary if it is a truly open trading system, whereas actually sufficiently elected governments can impose their own view of what a particular carbon tax should be. That seems to me quite often the fundamental difference; the role of the State, if you like, in intervening in public affairs, and right and left, traditionally, you have seen those things are different; market-based mechanisms as opposed to State intervention.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: But in which sense do you see that domestic tradable quotas and/or carbon trading at an industrial level, is a successful means of reducing the amount of carbon we have in circulation?

PROFESSOR HULME: I think so. I think it is a sensible measure for sure. I would not want to do anything to undermine the development of emissions trading, both geographically and if we move to new sectors. Personally, it seems to me it is a suitable intervention.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: You both agree on that?

DR PARR: Yes, we support the emissions trading scheme as a way of delivering emissions reductions. The Euro emissions trading scheme needs a good deal of tidying up but, in principle, we support it. It is, of course, like all trading schemes, only as good as the cap you set in terms of delivering reductions.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Do you believe that the emissions trading scheme can be extended down to the domestic level?

DR WEST: I think it would probably have to be a separate scheme, at least initially, just to make it manageable. I am still waiting for the grand product, the Isle of Wight scale carbon trading scheme, which will require an injection of cash to set it up. We would learn so much from running that, and I think that has the potential to tell the rest of the country that this is actually something people want to do. It is a big research project.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Taking it as a research project, Mike, do you have a view of how long it would take to establish and make a project like that reach a conclusion?

PROFESSOR HULME: I think I would defer to my colleagues in Manchester who have done a lot more work in domestic trading than I have. The reports that we have produced have actually looked at some of the technical and legal dimensions of domestic trading.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: In terms of contraction and convergence, what are your views as to how we could all reach a logical conclusion and be relatively fair between various nations?

PROFESSOR HULME: I think it is wonderfully inspirational but totally impractical, for legal reasons.

DR PARR: While having a great deal of sympathy with the aims of that, trying to get that into an international agreement, including the US and so on, just does not seem at all remotely feasible. In that sense, it could be that the perfect is the enemy of the good.

PROFESSOR HULME: The enemy of the good?

DR PARR: The perfect is the enemy of the good. Equitable allocation of property rights and emissions rights would be perfect, but the good will be some political agreement that would actually deliver some emissions reductions.

DR WEST: Yes. The principle is clearly right; everyone should have an equal right to pollute the planet. But the way it is framed in terms of countries holding back so that others can achieve their share, I think, as Mike says, it is impractical. It is an expression of a deeper problem: Is global inequality a handicap to addressing climate change? Is it something that needs to be addressed before we can address climate change or is it one of the nice by-products of addressing climate change that we would end up with a world that was more equitable? I do not have an answer but, clearly, one can see a future where we have a sustainable energy economy, and, instead of the energy that the planet uses being concentrated in a few Saudi places in the Middle East, everyone in the tropical belt actually has an enormous resource, a renewable resource, to sell to the rest of the world. Now, if we can use that, if you like, as the highlight to which we are aiming, then that has those two benefits.

PROFESSOR HULME: It is interesting to note that, as I understand it, of the three main political parties in Britain, only the Liberal Democrats have formally endorsed contraction and convergence as an appropriate policy framework. You can ask the question: Why is it that the Lib Dems have adopted that, and not Labour or the Conservatives? It seems to me to reflect something about the fundamental nature of those three parties.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Just returning to the domestic tradable quotas. Is it your view that, if we could achieve a consensus, that a considerable effort should be made to promote these and further investigate these as a useful mechanism, even at a national level, of creating a climate which could deliver an equitable share of carbon?

DR PARR: Are you asking all of us?

PROFESSOR HULME: I would certainly like to see further progress done in understanding -- did you refer to the Isle of Wight flippantly or seriously?

DR WEST: Flippantly.

PROFESSOR HULME: We can model how it would work. Television companies have toyed with the idea of doing individual households. But, until a community with some sort of boundaries actually does the experiment, we are not going to know how to do it. Now, the big experiment is to say: If we are going to have identity cards, let us have them as carbon allowance cards. You have done all the experimentation; let us do it. When people buy fuel, it is in fairly constrained places; petrol stations, through their utility bills, and that is about it. It is a very constrained market. So you could actually give everybody a carbon allowance and it would set it up. It is an enormous thing to try and do, but it would have two values. With a cap, it would certainly drive down use of fossil fuels. With the right back-up, it would be hugely educational. The big problem we have with people and carbon emissions is they are invisible; nobody can see their carbon emissions. If you actually had a car that showed your allowance going down and your behaviour changing your allowance, people might actually start to visualise what they are doing to the planet.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: I am aware we have just over-run and our next witness is actually here. Unless there is any burning statement you want to pass on to the committee at this point, I would like to say a big thank you for giving up very valuable time to come here today. You are free to stay and listen to the rest of the sessions if you so wish. Thank you very much.

(Witnesses withdrew)

PETER AINSWORTH, MP (Called)

DR CLAYTON: Thank you very much for coming to give evidence today. I believe that you are familiar with why we have been chosen; because we are independent of the actual [party] political process. We will try to cover areas partly related to what we have covered in the previous session but some which affect you as an MP. We wondered, first of all, whether you could give an idea of which areas you think there is greatest agreement and disagreement on between the parties concerning climate policy.

MR AINSWORTH: I think there is general agreement that there is a problem. That is, in a sense, the good news. The bad news is why there is agreement. It is the continually growing scientific evidence that is, at its worst, alarming. So the most important piece of the jigsaw, if you like, is there the acceptance that climate change is for real, that we are already living with the consequences of it, that those consequences are going to continue whatever we do today, and that we therefore need a step change in the activity that we are all involved in to try and tackle that problem. I think that is actually a big, big change. That was not true five years' ago. Five years' ago it was still respectable to have a

polite discussion about whether or not the science was real. We have moved on from that. I think that is the first big thing. I think the second is that we all accept that we need to engage the public in being part of the solution. We all, I think, accept that we need to engage business in being part of the solution; that we all accept that we need regulation, we need fiscal measures, we need incentives, we need to use market mechanisms as part of the armoury to deal with climate change, that we need international agreements to do it, that we need national agreements to do it, that we need local engagement to do it, and we need individuals, which is where I started, to be part of the issue. So I think actually there is a very considerable degree of consensus already.

DR CLAYTON: What we have discovered through reading the written evidence is that there is, from the witnesses who have provided evidence, a lot of agreement that we can agree on targets to a large extent, although, even there, there has been some disagreement. We asked the previous panel how far could you imagine the parties agreeing on a target of 80 per cent instead of 60 per cent. Do you think that would be possible?

MR AINSWORTH: I do not know. We have not explored that. At this stage we have coalesced around the 'at least 60 per cent' phrase, which is not a bad place to be, although I accept that the changing scientific evidence and the failure globally to deal with the problem may necessitate us shifting from that position at some point in the future. In the end, we have to be guided by the consensus of scientific opinion. I know there are still scientists -- or actually, largely, economists -- who say that there is not a problem; we can solve it in some sort of strange way. The consensus of accredited scientific opinion is what we are listening to and what we continue to listen to, and the policy for any party, and for any cross-party consensus, will need to evolve in the light of the changes there.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Peter, do you believe that consensus is expressed without Parliament? Do you think that it is known that there is consensus on the targets that we all agree to?

MR AINSWORTH: If I went down to the Fox and Hounds in Clapham and asked whether they knew that there was cross-party consensus on a 60 per cent reduction target, I think the answer would be definitely not. That is an issue to do with communication, which is, of course, one of the biggest issues that all of us, as politicians and policy makers and people engaged in this debate, need to think about much more carefully than we have in the past.

DR CLAYTON: How far do you think parties can go in reaching consensus on means to achieve the targets?

MR AINSWORTH: That is a very interesting question. I hope you have seen -- First of all, let me apologise for not having given you written evidence in advance of this session. I can assure you that it is not because there has been a breakdown in the cross-party consensus; there just has been a serious difficulty over timings and so on. Basically, I did not do it in time. There will continue to be disagreements between the parties over policy. That is only right. If anyone has got the idea that a cross-party consensus on climate change will amount to some sort of climate change fascism, something beyond dispute or political debate, I think that would be incorrect. There will continue to be differences about the mode of travel. What I think is important is for us to keep hold of the idea that the direction of travel is very

much the same. I am not sure whether that answers your question actually.

DR CLAYTON: It begins to answer the question. What we are concerned about to some extent is that, if there are differences in means proposed by the parties, and obviously that leaves the electorate with a choice, one possibility is that there is not a sense of stability which, for some businesses, is a big concern because they feel they cannot rely on a particular area being favoured, such as a type of electricity generation mechanism or the way of planning for transport needs. How would you deal with that issue?

MR AINSWORTH: It is absolutely clear that industry is crying out for long-term frameworks and stability and a clear direction of policy in this area. You will have seen the letter from thirteen business leaders sent about a year ago to Tony Blair saying they accepted the need to engage in tackling climate change but that their investors would not hack it if there was not a sufficiently clear trajectory in terms of government policy. Now, one of the purposes of the cross-party agreement which we have signed up to is to try and eliminate those uncertainties so that you do not have a set of policies which industry are asked to engage in, and then you have a general election and it all changes. We regard it as really important to give the greatest long-term stability possible to all those who are going to be part of the solution, so that the investments can be made, the changes can be adopted, and behaviour patterns can gradually change in the certainty that we are not going to be in for very sudden shocks or changes in direction. It would be helpful, I agree, to have a proximity, at least a proximity, of opinion about the specific measures. We are edging towards it. You have, you may have seen it, the Conservatives announced a proposal for a carbon levy quite recently, which is not that different from the climate change levy but actually it deals with carbon rather than industrial use of energy. So we believe it actually rather fine tunes what is an existing instrument not quite doing its job, and really addresses the question of carbon. The point is that all these things -- and there are many ways of achieving the same end -- must be linked by a constant trajectory, which is the reduction of carbon that we all produce in whatever ways we produce it. If that message is firm at cross-parties, I think that is a very good start.

DR CLAYTON: How do you think that the individual parties, if they were in Government, could be held to account on their promises to reach certain targets?

MR AINSWORTH: This goes to the heart of the idea that we have come up with as an independent body to take forward this agenda. Perhaps it would be helpful if I explained a little about how we see that working. It is for politicians to set the targets. At the moment, as we have discussed, we have brought in to the 60 per cent, at least, targets. It is for politicians to do that. It is also, I think, for politicians to devise means of reaching those targets. The point of the independent body is rather like the monetary policy committee at the Bank of England, which takes a view on interest rates on a distribution of probabilities; looking forward into the future bearing in mind that the further from now you get, the more uncertain life becomes, in an attempt to establish what the effect of an interest rate today will be in two, three, four, five years' time. The independent body would analyse the science and the policies that a Government had put in place, and would tell us whether or not we are doing enough to meet the targets that we have all agreed to. The interesting and, potentially, very exciting thing about that is that it actually changes the way that Whitehall thinks about everything, because you then get a Government that is not

only constrained by fiscal issues and monetary issues; you get a Government that is constrained by carbon issues as well. Now, any Government could choose to say, "Well, to hell with the independent body. We are going to make those targets and we do not need to bother." They will then be held to account at a General Election as to whether or not that was a sensible decision. That is a matter for their political judgment at any time. They would also be said to be breaking the spirit of the consensus that we are trying to reach. So it is a constraint on Government. It would be hugely embarrassing, I think, for a Government to say, "Well, yes, we have noticed your independent scientific report about the fact that we are failing to meet our trajectory on climate change. We are not doing anything about it."

DR CLAYTON: But if, at the next election, another party is elected and still fails to achieve a target, is that --

MR AINSWORTH: If collectively as politicians we fail, then the world will be a very bleak place in thirty to fifty years' time. It is our duty not to fail. You will not have heard me say it before, but I have said many, many times before over many years that marrying the competing interest of industry and economic growth, with the constraints imposed by nature, is the biggest challenge for this generation of politicians. I believe that. We must not fail. We need to work together. The scale of the challenge is so great, the time frame that we are talking about is so unusually long, that this is a different order of issue for politicians. Of course it is going to be awkward and difficult, and there will be rows between the parties over specifics. There is bound to be all of that. But we will be failing in our duty as a generation of politicians if we do not do everything we can to make sure that Britain at least -- and that begs all sorts of questions about other countries, but that Britain at least -- does its bit to solve this problem.

DR CLAYTON: At an international level, do you see scope for some sort of way of enforcing countries' agreements?

MR AINSWORTH: Well, I do not see any immediate and obvious way of doing that. I think the most exciting thing about the Kyoto treaty is that it exists at all. I think it is a remarkable achievement that so many countries -- and we know the ones that need to become players -- have signed up to something on a global scale to address a global problem. The fact that that was done at all, I think is extraordinary. And, clearly, another thing that I hope and I believe we are all signed up to, in the cross-party agreement at any rate, is an effective and more effective post 2012 arrangement for dealing with these international problems. It is a prerequisite. We must have international agreement.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: In the evidence we have had a lot of commentary about the potential for a consensus saying that it is a very good thing from across the board. But, playing devil's advocate, one of the things that has been said in a number of the submissions is, to paraphrase: "What happens if the politicians have to revisit some very deeply-held assumptions about the way society operates?" If we think about economic growth? So some of the choices that we might have to present people with, like reduced airline travel, less transportation, potentially will impact upon economic growth. Do you think consensus can deal with those issues which might be very fundamental indeed?

MR AINSWORTH: I do not assume that all, or even necessarily the majority, of measures that need to be taken, changes that need to be made in dealing with climate change, will necessarily be painful, will necessarily involve wearing a

hair shirt. But I certainly accept that there may be measures which are difficult and that we do need to change. The process of change is always awkward, always throws up tensions, and in this context we need to change a lot so the tensions are likely to be that much greater. It is one of the purposes of trying to build a cross-party consensus that, as politicians, we are robust in the face of difficulty. There will be people who do not want to change. There will be people who decide that they want to go on being part of the problem. I hope they are not the majority, but there will certainly be people in that situation. And what is important when that happens and the lobbying starts, or whatever it is, is that, as politicians, we can adhere to the basic principles that we have signed up to, and not break apart and use differences on climate change for electoral gain or cheap popularity. It is a different order of policies this. It really is.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Peter, do you believe we can establish a framework for your independent body that would be setting levels of emissions on an annual basis against which a Government could be held to account?

MR AINSWORTH: The way we have structured this is that the Government will be held to account on an annual basis because the independent body will report every year on the progress against targets and will say, as I said earlier, "This is the science. You are not going to hit the target in two years' time if you go on like this." So it is suggested we do this, that or the other. So the Government will be held to account every year through a debate in both Houses of Parliament where adjustments can be made on a rolling basis.

Of course, we recognise that there needs to be flexibility built into the system because the economy may be going up one year and going down one year, so there will be distortions within it. The important thing is that there is a rolling basis towards the targets that have been set, and ultimately towards the at least 60 per cent, or whatever it is, in the light of evolving science.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: We are seeing businesses adopting thoughts of trading emissions, but what about from a domestic level? Do you have any views as to whether or not ...

MR AINSWORTH: I am very interested, as Colin Challen knows well -- and I actually pay tribute to Colin for the work that he has done, not only to raise the whole issue of climate change but also his dogged pursuit of domestic tradable quotas. I am very interested in that. I think one of your previous witnesses pointed to the very substantial logistical and practical difficulties associated with putting something like that in place, and those are for real. I see John Gummer has arrived. John Gummer is charged with looking at these issues in an holistic and open-minded and very fresh way. I have no doubt that looking at the question of whether or not domestic tradable quotas are practical, politically acceptable, will be part of what he wants to do. I have no answer on that at the moment, but it is a potential solution and needs to be examined carefully.

DR CLAYTON: Could I come back to the question of how parties can present their different policies? Do you think that there is a way in which the environmental policies that are related to climate change could become the central part of the platforms that the parties actually stand on at an election, because they cover, as we have discussed in previous sessions, so many areas of policy, effectively?

MR AINSWORTH: It is pervasive, it is diffuse, it is difficult to grab hold of. It is everything from the litter outside your

street to the Amazonian rain forest and the melting Arctic ice. So it very hard for people to get hold of. The other thing is that I have this theory -- which may be true actually, it would be nice if it was -- that when you go round as a polling person asking questions about politics to people, they think, politics, that is health, education, crime, tax. Those are the priorities which regularly pollsters get. If you do not ask them a question about what are the most important political issues but, "What are the most important issues affecting your quality of life?", then you get a very different set of answers indeed, and it is about the quality of their local environment. There is growing evidence of an uneasiness that people feel about the issue of climate change and their seeming inability to do anything about it, their helplessness, and a hunger, I think, for political leadership there as well. I have never regarded the environment as a minor political issue, even at elections. Go into individual constituencies and see what candidates are campaigning on. A lot of it is to do with the quality of the local environment, whether it is house-building, over-development, whether it is litter, graffiti, environmental crime, whether it is an incinerator at the edge of the village, whether it is a landfill site. Huge areas that engage people politically but are not thought of as political. So, actually, the environment forms a more central part, I think, of any general and local election than people give it credit for. But, given the growing public concern, given the way that climate change in particular is elbowing its way up the political agenda, I feel pretty confident that, even looked at in a conventional way, the environment will form a bigger part of future General Elections, and, frankly, if we do not begin to solve the problem it will, indeed, become the dominant issue in some years to come.

DR CLAYTON: Given that so many other areas of policy are involved, do you see a case for a sort of climate change Cabinet within the Cabinet that involves the relevant Ministers, and possibly even of Opposition politicians who might --

MR AINSWORTH: It is supposed to exist at the moment. It used to be called ENV. This is a cross-departmental ministerial group led by Defra that is supposed to ensure that these issues are -- in Tony Blair's words -- at the heart of policy making. The trouble is it does not work. We could have a very lengthy conversation about the merits or otherwise of Defra and its ability to influence the behaviour of Government, but I think the difficulties that Defra have had and the trouble that it has encountered in really having clout across Government is part of the problem. The Environmental Audit Committee, which I chaired in the previous Parliament, certainly recommended that there should be a central Government office dealing with this, possibly located in the Cabinet office. I think that is a very interesting idea. Certainly we need a step change in the way that these things are dealt with across Government. But, as I said earlier, if we get the independent body that we have been talking about, that will change the mindset within Whitehall and across Government because, as I say, Government will be working within carbon limits as well as fiscal and monetary limits for the first time. That will be a major change.

DR CLAYTON: On the question of a consensus. I think it was Oliver Letwin that was working on it before with Norman Baker, and they seem to have managed to get some support from Margaret Beckett. Do you have much hope of obtaining support from --

MR AINSWORTH: I take this opportunity to reiterate the offer to the Government to engage with us on this. I know that there is a tendency for governments to feel that they do not need the benefit of the advice of the Opposition. Very frequently, with a disputation in a Parliamentary environment, advice is not well met. On this occasion, it is. I would also like to say that it is not a question of take it or leave it to the Government in terms of what we have proposed. We are perfectly happy to discuss it with them. We have a new Secretary of State and I invite him to consider whether or not it is in the national interest for Labour to remain outside this consensus.

DR CLAYTON: Thank you.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Thank you very much.

DR CLAYTON: We have run over slightly but we started a bit late, but thank you very much.

MR AINSWORTH: Thank you.

(Witness withdrew)

JOAN WALLEY (Called)

DR CLAYTON: We will move straight on to our next session. We welcome Joan Walley, MP. We gather that you are not going to speak to us as a Parliamentary Labour Party spokes person, because that is not your role, but more as an individual. Is that right?

MS WALLEY: It is very kind of Mr Challen to elaborate that. I think perhaps I should say -- and I am very sorry that I missed the previous contributions, due really to a couple of lobbies on Parliament today -- but I was asked by Colin Challen if I would come along, and I was not quite sure on what basis he was asking me. I suspected it was probably because I have been the Vice Chairman of the Environmental Audit Select Committee since its inception after the 1997 General Election, so I have worked with the preceding Chairmen, including Peter Ainsworth, previous and subsequent. I have got no basis on which I am speaking on behalf of the Parliamentary Labour Party. I have got no remit there. I also have no remit in terms of Government Ministers either. What I have got is a perspective which really comes from having looked in depth at all the different inquiries that our Select Committee has done. That really gives a unique perspective on this whole question as to whether or not there should be a political consensus. If so, how it should go about being arrived at. I have just really got two things that I want to say by way of introduction. A couple of years' or so ago I met with Lester Brown when he was over from the Washington Institute promoting his book Plan B. I think that the urgency with which he made his points really came across, in the sense that we really need to get on to some kind of footing which acknowledges the reality of the threat that there is to the climate. I think that all of us, as we get older, realise just how much time there is left in which to do anything and that threat of climate change is there. I think that politicians of all parties either have to grasp that reality and adapt their behaviour to it; their behaviour, political behaviour, in terms of their own constituencies and the way that they interact with the electorate, and their behaviour in terms of the Government that they may form or the Opposition parties which they then may have in Government. I think that the reality of climate change means that that has to be changed as well. I think it is also about those of us who are not Government Ministers but who are Parliamentarians, about the way our centre and heart of

democracy here works and how it is, if you like, fit for purpose with the reality of the climate change and the whole pressure on the limited environmental resources that there are. So it is really how each of us in each of those different roles can be equipped to be able to avert climate change. That means being able to take people with us. That means being able, as well, to have policies that are not going to make matters worse. That is not a question of having an environmental policy; it is actually about having an embedded policy which is cross-cutting across all Government departments. So then it is about how that feeds into our legislation -- whether it is in the Department of Trade and Industry, whether it is international development or at the heart of the Treasury -- and what the evidence is. The experience of the Environmental Audit Select Committee has found, which is quite an innovative committee along the lines of the Public Accounts Committee, is that whatever thing you might sign up to, it is always the devil in the detail and what gets done, and how that then cuts across all different policy areas. So I think that those issues really need to be at the heart of how we consider this issue. Just to refine things by way of introduction. I think that it is a debate that needs to be had as a starting point as a first step, and that that debate is not in the national psyche, and it is not in the international psyche either, other than often for the very few committed usual suspects, and we need to broaden this whole debate so that it is something which is understood. Finally, something which came over to me during the recent elections that some of us have just been involved in. I noticed, for example, that in the London elections, as I understand it, leaders of the three main political parties went out to certain constituencies and were united in what they saw as a threat from the BNP. I think that if ever there was a threat from anywhere, it is about the state of the planet and climate change, and we need to be united and work through how we can make a reality of action that is going to give us a vision and an action that backs it up.

DR CLAYTON: The question about a vision and an action brings us to the written evidence that we have received, which generally reveals a consensus about the idea of targets but it differs over the issue of whether we should have a consensus on means to reach those targets. We discussed in the previous session how far parties can propose policies that might differ and still achieve a sense of long-termism and stability for the importance of business and so on. Have you any comment on that? How far you think policies could be agreed and how necessary it is or not to have the means agreed as well?

MS WALLEY: Sometimes you deal with a situation and you think "Can we do this? How can we do this?" Then all of a sudden, it is no longer a question of whether or not we can do it; it is where and how. That, again, I think determines whether or not we can do things in the long-term or the short-term. There are always different time frames in which things that seemed impossible last year, suddenly, because of a different set of changed circumstances or understanding of those changed circumstances, becomes something which is much more acceptable to people, and therefore targets that people will be prepared to go along with. So I think that one of the issues is how you can always get that understanding because, once people can sign up to what the vision is, then somehow or other the individual steps, one step at a time, you can take quicker and longer steps to get to where you need to be. It is about having that understanding of where it is that you are actually going to, if that makes sense. I think the real issue here is that what we are talking about here are long-term problems; we are all the time thinking about the most immediate pressing issues and the events that come up. I

think the difficulty that we have on this agenda is that, unless we are dealing with, for example, flash floods somewhere, we do not often have the actual evidence of the problems of the reality, of the pressure on the environment. Then, when it is a crisis, then people are prepared to rally round as if you are on a war time footing, or perhaps have a cease fire if you previously had political differences, but I think with this we need to have the understanding in order that people can see that we cannot wait for the crisis. Well, some people have said that the crisis is already here. But it has got to be something that is relevant to people's lives and their understanding of it, that is not there in a lot of cases at the moment.

DR CLAYTON: Do you see a role for an independent monitoring body to hold a government to account over reaching targets?

MS WALLEY: Yes, that would be something which is really important. I think that in many ways the Environmental Audit Select Committee, given the work that it has done so far in terms of looking at different Government departments, could well be the kind of devil in the detail mechanism that could either be used as a model, or its expertise could perhaps be built upon in a changed setting, because you have got to have some means of what it is that everybody has signed up to, and then what is realistically feasible in different time frames and how you measure that and how you monitor that. I think only now, after something like nine years, is the Environmental Audit Select Committee really getting to be understood, but nowhere near half enough. I personally feel that, for example, policies in this House, there should be the opportunity for things like pre-legislative scrutiny, like, "How does this fit in with environmental objectives?", so that every single piece of legislation gained from here could somehow or another be measured for environmental impact and progress, and how much in line it is with the goals that are being set. So it would actually alter, really, the way that Parliament actually functions away from the kind of adversarial, maybe, but how good legislation was at meeting the objectives and targets that were set.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Joan, do you really believe that it is possible for an independent body to influence some group, like the Treasury, in setting budgets which would be environmentally courageous in delivering the sort of reductions that we might be looking for?

MS WALLEY: I do not think that any one thing -- institution, committee, body -- on its own can bring about any influence of any kind. I think the issue is how that could be part of a wider momentum or engagement, really. I think that if it was in a framework whereby there was political buying into it, where it had some kind of credibility and was accepted by the political parties or by the Government of the day, if it had that credibility, if it had that legitimacy, but it would have to have that legitimacy, backed up by public legitimacy as well. I think on its own, no, but if it was part of a different approach and understanding actions towards the environmental issues, yes, provided all these other things were in place well.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: We have discussed various ideas for domestic tradable quotas as a means of incentivising people or otherwise to use less fuel. What is your view of that practicality?

MS WALLEY: I think that we need to be looking at all incentivisations of that kind. That would just be one example of one instrument that could be used towards achieving the

greater goal. I certainly think that that is one good way of actually going forward. The debate that we have at the moment-- this is perhaps bringing some controversy into it -- is about emissions trading. It is one thing may be for one Party to say, "Yes, we should have this cross-party political consensus", but then, if you spend all your time arguing about what the means of getting there should be and perhaps not agreeing with emissions trading, then you are disagreeing about the means. That is just as combative as anything else might be really. So I think it is about having fail-proof mechanisms that can actually deliver the objectives that we are actually setting ourselves and following those. For example, one of the issues at the moment, on a completely different tangent, for example is with palm oil. There is a lot of discussion at the moment about how bio-diesel and the incentivisations that there are in transport could perhaps lead to a greater use of palm oil, but then, if that is not being followed through in terms of the disbenefits that that has in terms of deforestation and all those other issues, then you are not taking the full environmental impact into account. So I think it is incredibly important that whatever mechanisms we have are properly evaluated and properly audited as well.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: On a slightly different tack. Some of the evidence that we have been presented with would argue for taking some choice away from people, because the problem is so serious, as in war time and perhaps thinking of rationing, which is slightly different from a market-based model. That raises some serious dilemmas, does it not, both politically and in terms of how a consensus might be taken forward? So I just wondered about this question of choice and how the public could be taken along with a consensus process and whether there should be a choice or not? The evidence is very mixed that we have seen so far on what people think should occur here.

MS WALLEY: I think that is a huge issue. It is linked up, is it not, with the whole marketisation agenda, the whole of the WTO agenda, with the things that perhaps you might like to do if you were being totally environmentally correct, which you are not allowed to do under the World Trade Organisation Rules and the negotiations that there are at the moment, and the failure to actually get all of the multi-lateral agreements, having proper regard to the environment, which is part of that bigger picture of the question that you asked. I think that there is also an issue about whether we are a market-based economy. I have just come from a function at number 11 about timber and about the FSC. That was a very good example of where maybe people who were involved in the timber trade have, perhaps, moved their thinking on to actually set up a charitable trust that is able to help with the accreditation of sustainable produced timber. What I am coming on to say in reply to the question that you asked is that I think that, when you start out on something, this issue about choice, you might think that someone is just living in cloud cuckoo land if you think that could be achievable now. But as you go further along and you understand more, and perceptions change, then I think that you can do more quicker. We are on a journey and it is about what is right at different stages of the journey and, as you proceed along that route, things which were perhaps impossible or unfeasible become much more achievable and realistic because people's perceptions of the threats have actually changed, and so choice is not as important perhaps as it once was. Choice then becomes something that is in a different context, and that has to be something that is understood by the consumer who is using their purchasing power on that by her or him as by international negotiators who are actually at the other end, perhaps with the World Bank or on the world stage, making international agreements and perhaps understanding that we

cannot carry on not putting environmental issues at the heart of that.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: That is interesting because we have heard in the evidence and here today the word "process" suggested on a number of occasions. I think part of the suggestion is that there is no simple solution that you can state now. This has to be a process and it has to be continually reflected upon both by Government and all the parties involved, which I guess is congruent with that.

DR CLAYTON: One of the pieces of written evidence that we have received proposes a number of statements on which a consensus could be built. In other words, a succession of statements and one could decide to agree or not as the case may be. If that list of statements ran from targets through to means, would there be a case for a referendum on that sort of issue, do you think, to involve the public more in what could be agreed widely?

MS WALLEY: I do not know. I think sometimes referendums can be very divisive because referendums are always incredibly likely to end up either being for or against something. I think, in a way, if you look at how you start to build a consensus -- I mean, I have not thought this through so I am just really speaking off the top of my hat -- but I think that, for something of this magnitude, we have to start by identifying what we can do together and what everybody around the table, whoever those people are around the table, can sign up to, and then concentrating on what it is possible to do, and then use that as a kind of foundation stone for what the next thing is that might be more likely to be feasible.

DR CLAYTON: I was thinking of the statements being separately judgeable, so to speak, so you could get an idea of how far people were prepared to go.

MS WALLEY: I do not know. I am not a great believer of referendums, in one sense. We have had very divisive referendums on whether or not there should be, for an example, an elected Mayor or not. In a way the public debate that then took place very quickly got either for or against. I think that what we are dealing with is something which is just so multifarious, there are so many different aspects to it, that it is not quite as black and white as that. For example, one of the things that I would perhaps want to see more of is that I have been very familiar with the work of citizens juries with Doctor Wakeford, who has actually developed those, and those seem to be a much more inclusive way of, through information and through informed opinion, assisting people to reach conclusions relating to particular problems or challenges that present themselves. I do not think referendums have the same opportunity for sharing of information. So, therefore, I would just put a question mark against referendums at this stage.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: A number of people have submitted evidence and suggested that we could have a body equivalent to the Bank of England, an independent body, appointed by the Government who might actually manage the rationing or otherwise of carbon across the community. Do you have a view whether that is a practical idea or whether this is something that should remain within Government?

MS WALLEY: I think, drawing on the evidence that Peter gave just now in terms of some of our Environmental Audit Select Committee inquiries, I think we have definitely identified the need for some kind of institution that could be the depository, if you like, of expertise in terms of nature, in terms of assessment, so it may well be an organisation of that

kind, if it was subscribed to. We would have to have a legitimacy, a political legitimacy about it.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: I think it has a political legitimacy, albeit that it is this Government that has given it its independence, but the reality is could this be something that could be, to some extent, removed from Government with a mandate to deliver the reduction?

MS WALLEY: I certainly think it would be well worth exploring, yes.

DR CLAYTON: How far do you think we can go purely with technological fixes and how far with behavioural changes?

MS WALLEY: Personally, I would like to think that we would go a really long way with technological fixes. I have had close links with the new environmental technologies industries for many years, in the sense that I have kept abreast of work that has been done there. It just makes sense that, when it comes to fuel or when it comes to energy and other issues, that that could take a huge part of the change behaviour that we all want to see. When I spoke to my son last night about this inquiry today -- and he is actually doing a human ecology course at Strathclyde -- his perspective was slightly different. He perhaps would say, if he was sitting here, that we should be much more looking to have perhaps less technology and perhaps adapt to what nature and the world and the planet is telling us. But I certainly think that we have to pursue the technological solution, provided that that is not a flawed technological solution.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: In the sense of the question, it was a little bit about proportions. I share with you a great belief in technology, but, relatively speaking, it is a question about new technologies and how much it might be due to human behaviour.

MS WALLEY: It has to be about human behaviour, and I think that was the thing came across talking to Lester Brown. If and when climate change catches up with us, in the sense that we are at the eye of the storm of it, as it were, it will not be a question of technological; it is about how we then react to the resources of the planet. In a way, I suppose I still have my ideas after nineteen years here, there has to be some way in which we can change our behaviour as a result of understanding the risks and the threats that we face, and change our behaviour in order that we are much more working with the planet, really. That is about human behaviour and about human changes. But, given that we are all brought up in a totally consumer materialistic world, the challenge of that, given that we are not facing in this country at least that kind of pressing problem, it is an absolutely monumental Herculean task for us to confront, I think. I am pessimistic about this.

DR CLAYTON: I would like to ask you about the ENV group that Mr Ainsworth told us about which tries to link departmental responsibility in climate change. I wonder whether you can tell us a bit more about your views on this?

MS WALLEY: I have to say that I do not know very much about how it operates, despite having interviews in the course of different committee inquiries with various green Ministers. I think that one of the things that I find is that Ministers come and Ministers go and Ministers get reshuffled. It is almost as though the one that gets the short straw is the one that becomes the green Minister. Somehow or another, without having that leadership from within the very heart of

Government and within the Treasury, that for each Department of State the green Minister --Sorry, perhaps I am confusing ENV with the green Ministers, because there seem to be two different committees. There is the ENV committee, which is set up and brought through to the cabinet. But I think what I would say is that it is not very self-evident what the work is. It does not have a profile about it. And because it does not have a profile, we do not really understand exactly what issues it is resolving. I think its role is very much to perhaps thrash things out, if there is perhaps a DTI policy that could lead the government down one direction and that might be at variance from an environmental over something else. Maybe that might be one of the new roles of the Deputy Prime Minister; I do not know. Basically, it is absolutely critical that it is possible to put the environment interest first. I do not know how much that ENV committee from Cabinet does that. As well as that, we have a system of green Ministers where people have bilaterals or whatever to resolve issues between different ministers of different departments. There again, my own sense is that it is not the main priority for the green Ministers. I want this issue to be the main priority and for each different Government department, so then policies get shaped around the environmental imperative and not other imperatives.

DR CLAYTON: So is there a case for elevating the status of this ENV group?

MS WALLEY: Yes, definitely, from number 10 and number 11 as well.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: I have a burning desire to ask a question, which I appreciate you may not be willing or feel that it is appropriate to answer. But on the basis that we could reach a consensus on climate change and that this group could be set up, do you believe that a decision on further nuclear power should be postponed until that time?

MS WALLEY: I would say, yes, absolutely.

DR CLAYTON: Would you see it as being a possibility that this cabinet within a cabinet could actually involve a proportion of opposition politicians as well that I presume at the moment it does not? Is there a way that you could bring in expertise and then use that as part of the consensus?

MS WALLEY: I think in the present circumstances, no, but I think that you need different governance arrangements at different times to meet different realities. If perceptions of the current reality that we face change, then maybe that might be a possibility. If we were in a war time situation, then perhaps no-one would think twice about that, but obviously that is not the situation that we are in.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: In the evidence, again lots of people are writing to the all-party group suggesting it is a war time situation, and that is the analogy that constantly crops up.

MS WALLEY: Those are the perceptions that come about in the Lester Brown analyses. Some people would, perhaps, subscribe to that. But what I am talking about is within the general perception, and you have got to have that political engagement. If I went back to my constituency or any other MP went back to their constituency, we would say that that would be shared. So you can only be where people are at, really.

DR CLAYTON: Thank you.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: You cannot speak for the Parliamentary Labour Party?

MS WALLEY: I do not have any position with the Parliamentary Labour Party.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: The attempt to build the consensus in Norman Baker's original initiative, a number of the Opposition parties have signed up to that. Do you think that there is any hope for getting a complete consensus in the near future on this?

MS WALLEY: I do not think it is something that is really on people's agenda at the moment. That is why I think the hearing that has been organised today, and the work that Colin Challen's all-party group is doing, is an important contributor to that debate, I think. That's how I look at it.

DR CLAYTON: Thank you very much.

MS WALLEY: Thank you very much.

(Witness withdrew)

CHRISTOPHER HUHNE, MP (Called)

DR CLAYTON: The first thing I would like to say is that you are, presumably, also familiar with why we are doing this interviewing, as people outside the [party] political process. You obviously came in earlier and heard quite a lot of what was said. The first question that we would like to ask is what you see as the main areas of agreement and disagreement between the parties?

MR HUHNE: Perhaps it might help to say broadly where we are coming from and where we are trying to go to on this because, as a Party, we are very much in favour of the cross-party agreement on climate change. I think it responds to something that most people want. They want parties to work together on solutions to what I think all of the mainstream Party leaders have now described as the pre-eminent challenge of our time. We believe that the cross-party agreement can, in principle, make it easier for parties to propose difficult measures that could otherwise fall apart in the face of vocal but minority opposition. An example here, which perhaps was a part of the learning curve that set many of us off on this road, was what happened during the fuel duty protests in 2000. I think it is, though, important -- and you mentioned earlier in asking about goals and means -- I think it is important that the parties who have signed up have faith in each others' fundamental commitment to the long-term goals. To some extent, that does mean that, if we are going to be effective at setting an environment for business and effecting long-term investment decisions, then we do need to have more than just a consensus about the 60 per cent reduction in emissions, or whatever. We need to have consensus about the broad framework within which private sector decision-takers are going to be operating. They need to know that they are going to be able to face a consistent environment in policy terms. It is obviously important that the cross-party consensus should not be used as a for not taking tough decisions as opposed to a way of actually taking tough decisions. For that reason, we have pressed, as you may have seen with press releases and so forth, we have pressed David Cameron on inconsistencies in the Conservative Party's attitude over the environment. Sir Menzies Campbell challenged him, in fact, and the Labour Party to agree with us on a certain series of effectively means for reaching long-term goals in a speech at the Tyndall Centre in Norwich a couple of weeks' ago. Ming took the

initiative by writing to David Cameron spelling out areas where we could, and in our view should, reach short-term agreement, and hoping that he would be able to resolve some of the inconsistencies which clearly exist within the Conservative Party between what David Cameron and Peter Ainsworth and other members of the Front Bench have been saying, and then some disconnect which has existed, for example, in the behaviour of, say, Eric Forth and Christopher Chope towards the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Bill. We will not intrude on private grief. But, in response, I should just say to Ming's initiative, David Cameron has written to me asking for a meeting. I am delighted to say that we have certainly agreed that. We are very much up for the process of the cross-party agreement. I think a date for that is being arranged. We are sceptical about the argument from David Cameron, which he again put in his letter to me, that he cannot pre-judge the deliberations of the Quality of Life Policy Group chaired by John Gummer as he floated in and out, precisely because it seems to us that all the parties are going to have to come to some pretty clear decisions before the time scale of eighteen months which is when the Quality of Life policy group report. For example, we are dealing with the Finance Bill at the moment in which the Chancellor is announcing and trying to get through, first of all, a restructuring of vehicle excise duty, which clearly has climate change implications.

Secondly, very firmly, he is proposing a revalorisation of fuel duty, and that has climate implications. Thirdly, he is proposing a revalorisation in line with inflation of the climate change levy. That has climate change implications. We would, indeed, go beyond the restructuring of air passenger duty and a broader commitment to reversing the trend decline in green tax. But all of these things require, it seems to me, a responsible Party to take a view ahead of that. And, of course, we are going to have the Government's energy review in this time scale as well. We certainly intend to take a very clear line which, perhaps it will not surprise you to hear, is going to be anti-nuclear on the energy review. Ming will also raise at this meeting the procedural issue concerning the cross-party agreement which calls for a climate forum to discuss common ways forward. Clearly, there is a difficulty here because we would like to discuss specific measures, precisely because it is important to give those signals to business in particular, but, if nothing can be forthcoming from a key player in the political environment for eighteen months, it is not obvious how we can make progress in the climate forum until that point. Therefore, this is clearly something which we need to sort out. So our view of the cross-party agreement is that it should be designed, rather like the cross-party views on Northern Ireland historically, it should be designed to enable the political system to deal, first of all, with the long-term issues, secondly with tough issues where there is a potential for one party undermining another in terms of their views if we get into a collective race towards the soft option, and it is thereby to ensure that parties don't attack each other for putting forward responsible and sensible proposals which are designed to deliver behavioural change and technological change, or the mixture of the two that comes about to deal with climate change. That is why we set out the five principles on green taxation in the Queen's speech. Perhaps I should leave it at that to kick over to you in terms of questions. But we feel very strongly. We want to back this process. It is a useful process. I think what we signed up to is very sensible in terms of the expert group to advise on targets. I know that has been a subject of what you were talking about earlier. Coming into this area as an economist rather than an environmental ayatollah, I have to say that there is clear precedent for this in the economic area in other

G8 countries. If we look at, for example, Germany where there is a counsel of wise people that advises the Federal Government on economic matters, not just the independent Central Bank, and that provides a framework of expertise from which it becomes more difficult for the Finance Minister to depart without incurring a good deal of criticism that he has ignored the expertise which is available and, effectively, is involving himself in a race towards soft options.

DR CLAYTON: So that would be a way of holding the Government to account?

MR HUHNE: It is an important way, I think, of anchoring the political process in what is the consensus or mainstream technical advice. What you see again and again and again in the economic field is when Finance Ministers get into tough times, for whatever reason, unexpected downturns or whatever, their natural optimism comes fully to the fore and they start making ridiculous forecasts, assuming that they are going to be able to resolve their problems by growing their way out of them, getting high revenue growth, unexpected cuts in public spending or whatever, and what that German system does is to anchor the process in sensible assessments from people who do not have any axes to grind. That seems to me to be a very sensible read-across into the environmental area. We need to do exactly the same thing.

Obviously we can have a debate, we will have a debate, about means. I very much hope we can reach a substantial consensus about means as well because I do not think it is terribly useful to other players in the economy if we merely have a consensus about targets and nothing else. We do need to have a consensus on taxes, for example, and on incentives.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Chris, you mentioned taxes and incentives. I am minded to think that one could argue that the vehicle exercise duty on vehicles with higher emissions could be substantially greater than it is, and it might be a policy that you or this group would recommend, but, at the same time, I could equally see that our fragile industry might be given a blow which might kill it. I am minded all the time of how one can balance these requirements. I would like to know your views about how that might be done?

MR HUHNE: Clearly, it is appropriate for any policy maker to take on board all interests that are likely to be affected by policy change. The particular example that you give, the vehicle excise duty, we did as a Party, in fact, put on the audit paper a proposal that the top rate of vehicle excise duty for band G, that is for cars, vehicles emitting more than 225 grammes per kilometre of carbon emissions, should go up to £2000 a year, which is actually the figure which comes broadly out of the research which was done for the Department for Transport and for the Energy Saving Trust. What we were very disappointed by in the Chancellor's proposals for the restructuring of VED was simply that he had taken on board the Energy Savings Trust proposal to have a new higher band, but he then proposed that it should only go up by 45 pounds a year for these gas guzzling vehicles, which, frankly, is about the cost of half a tank of petrol; A Jeep Cherokee or a Porsche Kiam or whatever it happens to be. Given that many of them are £40,000 or £50,000 new, frankly it is going to have a completely negligible effect. So we put down an amendment which actually was the other part of the Energy Saving Trust and Department of Transport advice with the figure of £2000, and it is precisely that sort of measure, which is not necessarily going to be universally popular amongst the Jeremy Clarksons and following voters in some of the Home

Counties, about which Peter and myself would no doubt be fighting, but it is precisely that sort of measure which I think that the cross-party agreement ought to be able to facilitate and make easier; if we can reach agreement, that we need to change the stock of the car pool. I do not think it is going to, in that case, particularly lead to difficulties for British industry since, in fact, I think the vast majority of the 180,000 or so cars on sale every year in that category are made elsewhere.

DR CLAYTON: Could I ask, from your European experience, whether you have seen examples of consensus building in other countries that would be worth following, and whether parties in other European countries are closer?

MR HUHNE: I spent six years as a Member of the European Parliament and the absolute Warp and Weft of operating in a system on the continent, any system where you do not have a natural one-party majority, is that you have to work with other parties. In the European Parliament, if you want to change Commission proposals, you have to assemble a coalition, which will inevitably go across parties. If you cannot work with other parties, you cannot deliver. So it is an absolutely essential part of my experience to do that. I find it quite natural. I have to say, the unnatural type of political system, in the European context anyway, is our own, which is very much more adversarial, where your first reaction in arriving in the House of Commons is you see the sort of rutting stag testosterone-fuelled conflict going on, and wonder. It certainly generates a lot of heat. Whether it generates light to our policies is another matter. So I personally think that you can see, in Scandinavia in particular in the environmental area, there has been a lot of progress made through this sort of consensus building. It is not always right the way across the political spectrum, but certainly enough to build important majorities and important majorities amongst opinion formers across society as a whole. I think that is a very sensible way of proceeding. Whether we can get it through the extraordinarily adversarial political culture of the UK is another matter, but I have no doubt that, on an issue which is as important as climate change, as long-term as climate change, and where the measures need to be pretty controversial and pretty radical, then I think it makes a lot of sense to try.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: I think you mentioned Northern Ireland. What triggers an issue to that level rather than day-to-day?

MR HUHNE: What really triggers an issue to that normally is a feeling amongst the political class that this has got too serious to allow us to indulge in our usual yahoo politics. There obviously is a time of great national crisis and peril when we have tended to go into coalition governments right the way across, in both the First World War and the Second World War, for example, and even to the extent of having cross-party agreements on not fighting by-elections and so in Northern Ireland -- I am no expert in this area -- but it is my understanding that there was a feeling across the House that, if we did not have a fairly strong cross-party view on Northern Ireland, then the people who would end up benefitting would be the extremists and the terrorists, and there would be a slide far more upon this management of security situation. So, again, it was the prospect of serious crisis. Now, I hope very much that the climate change prospect is enough to scare the political system into dealing with it in this way because I do think it is very important that it should be dealt with in terms of a cross-party agreement.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: You are not there yet. That is the thing.

MR HUHNE: I do not think we are there yet, and I do think that is why it is important that the means are there. We do want to make it work and we will try and get there, but I do think it is crucial that the parties that are participating feel -- well, it is rather like a disarmament process, is it not, when people get involved in trust building between groups that have traditionally been adversaries; you have to feel that there is enough confidence that you are moving forward together and that you are not going to take an undue and unfair advantage of each other. We are perhaps in a rather more luxurious position than Labour and the Conservatives because in this area we have traditionally been seen as the most green, the most environmental of the mainstream parties. We are perhaps in a more luxurious position of being able to put forward measures which the other parties might draw breath about before committing themselves to, but I do think that is the whole point of this cross-party agreement.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: My view of the cross-party agreement was that it was very much led from the top, in other words the Prime Minister at the time, who really did believe that that was the only solution, but that is a very naive point of view. How much do you feel this cross-party consensus on climate change would need to be led by the Prime Minister in order to make it bind? Or, alternatively, how much could it be driven by the rank of Parliament MPs?

MR HUHNE: I think the rank of Parliament MPs obviously have an important role in building up pressure. There is no doubt about that. But I think that it is almost inconceivable that a cross-party agreement could work in this area without the active support of the Party Leader, and, in the case of the Government in power, obviously that means the Prime Minister. That is, in part, flowing from the nature of this area. It is very clear to me, I think Peter, in his evidence to you, mentioned the same point that we are, to some extent, as the Shadow Environment Food and Rural Affairs Secretary, we are guardians of a particular set of objectives, but many of the levers for ensuring that those objectives are met actually are in other departments' responsibilities; taxation, the treasury. Obviously the Department for Transport is absolutely crucial for road transport and aviation. Department of Trade and Industry on all of the industrial use of energy. ODPM on things like building regulations. So you need to have a very clear commitment right the way across Government, and indeed a party. One of the things which I have tried to do since taking on this role from Norman Baker is to make sure our other spokes people dealing with these issues are taking on board climate change as an absolutely key objective. That is one of the reasons why we were putting forward these amendments for the Finance Bill, which is obviously the Treasury team's principal responsibility. So, yes, you need to have, I think, the Party Leader and the Prime Minister signed up to it, and you need to have proper coordination mechanisms to ensure that it hangs together and you have joined up Government or, indeed, joined up Opposition.

DR CLAYTON: So would you see a case for a cabinet within a cabinet --

MR HUHNE: I would not get too excited about that idea. I know that you were asking Peter, and Joan before, about this. There is already a cabinet within a cabinet in effect, because there is a cabinet committee dealing with this. That is the normal way that Government functions in pulling together ministers with different interests. One of the reasons, I think, why there was such a long delay in the climate change review which we recently had -- you can see clearly in the small print that there was a massive row going on between Defra and the DTI. That was unresolved, and from the rather large

range left in some of the numbers it was very clear that that was not resolved. So this is an inevitable part of Government and of Opposition. It is crucial to get the mechanisms right to resolve differences and to ensure overall that the Prime Minister or the Party Leader is committed to making it happen because, ultimately, when there is a difference between different parties, an Opposition party of the party Government, somebody has to say "Where are we going to put the priority?" This happens in spending. It happens on climate change versus industry, etcetera.

DR CLAYTON: Could I ask you about the issue of a referendum? Whether, in the absence of more proportional representation in the electoral system, there would be a case for a multi-question referendum on issues about which there could be a consensus that would involve the public?

MR HUHNE: I am quite keen on referenda. The issue of referenda is a slightly fraught one for anybody on the progressive side of politics because referenda began to be used in a big way as a political tool by the somewhat disreputable Louis Napoleon when he became President of France. He used a referendum, first of all, to extend his term and allowing himself to continue in office. And, secondly, to declare himself as Emperor and then, whenever he came across a difficult decision, he had another referendum. There was some doubt as to whether they were counted, I have to say. But Bonaparte traditionally found the use of referendums a rather easy way of acquiring dubious legitimacy. I, on the other hand, see the way referendums are used in Switzerland as being a rather good check, in the liberal sense, on an over-powerful executive. If a large number of people go around, collect signatures and decide they want to have a referendum on a particular issue, then that is a way of doing it. The proposal to use referenda to come along and sanctify what the Government has done, sounds a bit more on the Bonaparte side than the liberal side. I am slightly dubious about it as a mechanism, to be honest, but I would not want you to put me in a box saying that my mind was fully made up on it, but I could certainly ruminate it.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Joan talked of her enthusiasm for technological fixes. We have had quite a lot of evidence today from a number of scientists. Do you believe that, within Government, there is a sufficient appreciation of science for difficult decisions to be properly made?

MR HUHNE: No. I think that most people in the political process, and most senior civil servants, are non-scientists, and there has been a probably growing gulf between people who actually understand and are conversant with what is often the private language of scientific specialists and the political process. That is difficult. I think it is something that we have to address. That is one of the reasons why (a) I think that it was very sensible for the UN to set up a panel on climate change as a way of synthesising where the bulk of mainstream science had got to.

Secondly, it is one reason why I very much support the idea of an independent monitoring body which would, as I say, anchor the political debate in a realistic assessment of what the technical options are, and stop politicians getting involved in the tendency which we know very well the economic area they have done over time, which is to believe in the soft option and to avoid, as I say, that race to the soft option. So I do think of it as an important role.

DR CLAYTON: Who would you involve in this independent body?

MR HUHNE: The legitimacy of an independent body is not something which has to come from the political process because the process sets it up. But the whole point of it is that it should be people who are seen to be above and beyond the political process and the common thrust of the political debate, and who have undoubted technical expertise and standing in the scientific community. That is the model which we have seen historically in the economic area, both in terms of the independent monetary policy committee at the Bank of England, and indeed at every other G8 Central Bank, which is already independent. We were the last country to adopt this model. It is the model which the Germans supply in the context of grounding the debate about fiscal policy with the wise people and a council of economic advisers. There is, indeed, a council of economic advisers in the US, although not as successful and rather more politicised than the German one.

DR CLAYTON: Could I ask one more question? Going back to the international level and your European experience, clearly the European Union has a mechanism for taking countries to account when they fail to act on directives. Do you think that is a successful way? Do you think that there is scope for using that at an international level?

MR HUHNE: It is ultimately successful. Anything to do with any legal process inevitably is exceptionally slow and frustrating, but it is the case still that no Member State in the history of the European Union has ever defied a final judgement of the European Court. Therefore, it is a way of ensuring that everybody respects the obligations to which they have signed up. You already have wider examples of that sort of process at an international level beyond Europe. The WTO disputes procedure would be an example. You could certainly foresee something of a similar kind in the environmental area, and I think that might be very sensible.

DR CLAYTON: Thank you very much.

PROFESSOR PIDGEON: We have asked this of everybody. It is not really a criticism of any party here. But we are interested in the view that the Liberal Democratic Party will be taking forward the consensus approach that was started and how they are going to attempt potentially to widen it?

MR HUHNE: We have signed up to the process, we have signed up to the independent body, we have signed up to try to make a go of the climate forum, and indeed of the specific measures. I hope I have made that very clear. We think this is a useful initiative. It is very much part of the style. Quite apart from this particular issue, it is very much a part of the style of politics to which my Party is anyway historically committed. So it fits very much with the grain of the sort of change which we want to see going on in the British political process. So for all of those reasons we would like to make a success of it. The next step practically for us is that we will have a meeting between the two big players and the five parties that have signed up for this, Ming and David Cameron, and I very much hope that they will agree that there are a whole range of things which we can then go ahead and come up with in terms of proposals which we are prepared to put on the table. I also very much hope -- and I reiterate what Peter said earlier -- that the arrival of David Miliband at the Department of Environment, Food and Rural affairs, may also be another opportunity for the Government to reassess; whether it wants to be involved in this process. I think there are undoubted and real advantages for the Government in doing so, most important of which is that it could start, if there were genuine agreement on, as I say, often quite tough decisions which would have to be taken, it

could start moving on those tough decisions in Government in the knowledge that they would not be criticised, either by us or the Conservative Party or the other parties, and that should give them, frankly, wiggle room, in policy terms, which they would not have otherwise. I would merely repeat that one of the most crucial policy instruments in this area in terms of changing behaviour, is the price mechanism. The most classic and easy way that the Government has of changing prices is the change in taxes, and green taxes as defined by the Office of National Statistics published in the environmental accounts, peaked at 3.6 per cent GDP in 2000, and it has been declining ever since. They are now down to 3 per cent of GDP, which is actually less as a percentage of GDP than was being raised in green taxes in 1997 when the Conservatives left office. So the Government's record on this is a record of the race to the soft option. It is being completely panicked by the fuel duty protestors and, as a result, we have seen a steady retreat in what is a known policy instrument for dealing with this particular issue.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Does that mean that you could see a consensus being formed amongst the Opposition parties which might cut the Labour Party out of the picture, but that you would share a common manifesto on some green issues?

MR HUHNE: We have already signed up five parties, all of them Opposition parties. We have signed up to common agreements on climate change and attempted to make a go of it. Obviously, from what I have said, the biggest potential gainer from a cross-party agreement on climate change is actually the Government, because they are the people who are, in theory, taking the tough decisions. We have, nevertheless, decided, the five Opposition parties, to go ahead and try and make this work with very much an open

door – Peter said it earlier today; I will say it again – very much an open door for the Government to get involved and see whether we can establish a framework which genuinely deals with these issues in the long-term way which is absolutely essential, and sets a framework for business, for private sectors. I say again, I do not come into this area as an environmentalist. I come into this area as an economist. Therefore, getting the incentives right for those whose behaviour needs to change, whether it is in business or individual, is absolutely crucial, and those incentives have to be long-term, they have to be effective, and they have to be stable. The only way of ensuring that is if there is a very broad measure of cross-party support that sets that framework.

PROFESSOR WHITBY: Thank you.

DR CLAYTON: Thank you very much indeed for your time. And those witnesses remaining, thank you again.

(Adjourned at 4.30 p.m.)

Annex 4: List of Written Submissions

Jo Abbess
 Association of Electricity Producers
 BAA Plc
 Norman Baker MP
 Endymion Beer, Naturama
 Doug Begbie
 Bond Engineering (Turned Parts) Ltd
 Moira Brown
 James Bruges
 BSKyB Plc
 John Byers
 Campaign to Protect Rural England (East of England)
 Carbon Disclosure Project
 The Carbon Neutral Company
 Colin Challen MP
 Tim Chapman
 Brian Chatterton
 Tony Cooper, Green Party
 Professor Andrew Dobson, Keele University
 Richard Douthwaite
 Andrew Eagles, The Housing Corporation
 EDF Energy Plc
 Hank Eynatten
 Anne Fitchett
 Dr David Fleming, The Lean Economy Connection
 The Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability (Feasta)
 Maurice Frank
 Global Commons Institute
 Cathy Green
 Greenpeace
 Mark Gregory
 Heather Grinter, Bradford World Development Group
 Rosemary Hall
 Dave Hampton, The Carbon Coach
 Michael Hendford
 Jarvis Group
 Robin King
 Ian Lander
 James Levy
 The Life Style Movement
 Richard Lofthouse
 Peter Luff, Action for a Global Climate Community
 Christopher Lysaght
 Tony Maskell
 Robert McKechnie
 National Grid Plc
 National Transport Round-table including Transport 2000
 Pat Newsome
 Ray Newton
 Reggie Norton
 Simon Norton
 Norwich Union General Insurance
 Nuclear Industry Association
 Clive Parsons
 Narcyz Piotrowski
 Rt. Revd Stephen Platten, The Bishop of Wakefield
 Adam Poole, The Edge
 Practical Action

Bruno Prior
 The Railway Development Society
 Peter Rainford
 John Riley
 Barry Robinson
 R.J. Roscoe
 The Scarman Trust
 Alister Scott, Jim Watson and Raphael Sauter, University of Sussex
 Shrinking Economies in the Developed World
 Kitty Smith
 David Smith
 Richard Snell
 Elizabeth Stamp
 Richard Starkey, Dr Kevin Anderson, Dr Alice Bows and Dr Sarah Mander, Tyndall Centre University of Manchester
 Heon Stevenson
 Robin Stott
 Jane and David Straker
 Summerleaze RE-Generation Ltd
 Gordon Taylor
 Michael Thomas, Future in Our Hands Network
 Conrad Thwaites
 Mrs D.H. Train
 Professor David Vaughan
 John Vincent
 Jonathan Ward
 John Watkins
 Chris West, University of Oxford
 Rt. Revd Martin Wharton, The Bishop of Newcastle
 Professor Bob Williams, University of Oxford
 Ian Williams, Plan B
 Mark Williams
 Dr Gerry Wolff, From Greenhouse to Green House
 WWF-UK

We have been unable to list here the very many individual letters and e-mails forwarded to the inquiry by *The Independent* newspaper. Where appropriate we have cited such submissions by author's name in the main body of the report.

Parliamentary Members of the APPCCG

Peter	Ainsworth	MP	Charles	Kennedy	MP
Dave	Anderson	MP	Robert	Key	MP
Norman	Baker	MP	Susan	Kramer	MP
Tony	Baldry	MP	Ashok	Kumar	MP
Gordon	Banks	MP	Mark	Lazarowicz	MP
Celia	Barlow	MP	John	Leech	MP
Hugh	Bayley	MP	Lord	Lewis	
Lord	Beaumont		Lord	Livsey	
Roberta	Blackman-Woods	MP	Baroness	Maddock	
Peter	Bottomley	MP	John	McFall	MP
Julian	Brazier	MP	Anne	McKechin	MP
Colin	Breed	MP	Alan	Meale	MP
Annette	Brooke	MP	Anne	Milton	MP
Lyn	Brown	MP	Anne	Moffett	MP
Colin	Burgon	MP	Madeline	Moon	MP
Stephen	Byers	MP	Bishop of	Newcastle	
Lord	Campbell		Lord	Oxburgh	
Colin	Challen	MP	Andrew	Pelling	MP
David	Chaytor	MP	Gordon	Prentice	MP
Katy	Clarke	MP	Gwyn	Prosser	MP
Jeremy	Corbyn	MP	John	Pugh	MP
Lord	Crickhowell		Lord	Redesdale	
Ann	Cryer	MP	Andy	Reed	MP
Jim	Cunningham	MP	Lord	Renton	
David	Curry	MP	Linda	Riordan	MP
David	Davies	MP	Chris	Ruane	MP
Janet	Dean	MP	Joan	Ruddock	MP
Jim	Dobbin	MP	David	Ruffley	MP
Stephen	Dorrell	MP	Claire	Short	MP
David	Drew	MP	John	Smith	MP
Philip	Dunne	MP	Peter	Soulsby	MP
Tobias	Ellwood	MP	Bob	Spink	MP
Paul	Flynn	MP	Howard	Stoate	MP
Roger	Gale	MP	Andrew	Stunnell	MP
Baroness	Gale		Emily	Thornberry	MP
Mike	Gapes	MP	John	Thurso	MP
Ian	Gibson	MP	Des	Turner	MP
Julia	Goldsworthy	MP	Andrew	Tyrie	MP
Nia	Griffith	MP	Rudi	Vis	MP
John	Grogan	MP	Mike	Weir	MP
John	Gummer	MP	Alan	Whitehead	MP
Fabian	Hamilton	MP	Lord	Whitty	
Mike	Hancock	MP	Anne	Widdecombe	MP
Stephen	Hesford	MP	Bill	Wiggin	MP
Baroness	Hilton		Betty	Williams	MP
Kelvin	Hopkins	MP	Stephen	Williams	MP
John	Horam	MP	Mark	Williams	MP
Nick	Hurd	MP	Tim	Yeo	MP
Michael	Jack	MP	Baroness	Young	
Eric	Joyce	MP			