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# Hansard

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## Transport Decarbonisation Plan

### Volume 697: debated on Wednesday 16 June 2021

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*Virtual participation in proceedings commenced (Order, 25 February).*

*[NB: [V] denotes a Member participating virtually.]*

🕒 9.27am

**Mr Laurence Robertson** >  
(in the Chair)

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I apologise for the late start. I am just filling in for a few minutes—I deny all responsibility for the delay. I need to remind hon. Members that there have been some changes to normal practice in order to support the new hybrid arrangements. Timings of debates have been amended to allow technical arrangements to be made for the next debate. There will be suspensions between debates. I remind Members participating, physically and virtually, that they must arrive for the start of a debate in Westminster Hall and are expected to remain for the entire debate. Members attending physically should clean their spaces before using them and before leaving the room. I remind Members that Mr Speaker has stated that masks should be worn in Westminster Hall other than when you are speaking.

🕒 9.28am

**Felicity Buchan** >  
(Kensington) (Con)

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I beg to move,

That this House has considered the transport decarbonisation plan.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Robertson, even if only for a few minutes. There is no question but that the UK has been an international leader in combating climate change, and I am proud of that record. Since 1990, we have decarbonised at the fastest rate of any G20 country, and of course we were the first of the major countries to legislate for net zero by 2050. In December 2020, we went even further and said that we would get to a 68% reduction by 2030. That is an ambitious target.

To get to that target, there is no question that we need a radical and comprehensive transport decarbonisation plan, because transport is the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases in the UK and currently accounts for approximately 30% of total emissions. As a percentage of emissions, if we leave out the fluctuations because of coronavirus, it is going up, and is scheduled to go up further by 2035. Transport is therefore key to meeting our objectives to be net zero by 2050 and to achieve our intermediate objective by 2030.

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Some 55% of transport emissions come from cars, and almost two thirds of total emissions come from cars and light vans, so I will focus my remarks on electric vehicles, but there is no question but that we need a comprehensive strategy across buses, rail, freight and aviation, and we need clear targets. It is easy to say, “Net zero by 2050, and down 68% by 2030”, but we need a clear and firm plan as to how we will get there, and we need to constantly measure our progress against that plan.

Apart from the sectors that I have mentioned, we also need a modal shift towards more walking and cycling, which will be important for the health of the nation and to meet our transport decarbonisation goals.

**Alan Brown** >

(Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)

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As the hon. Lady rightly says, targets in themselves are no use; we need plans. I assume she agrees that any plans need to be backed by policies and proper funding to show us a pathway to net zero.

**Felicity Buchan** >[Share](#)

Yes, we need policies, and, when money needs to be made available, it should be. I personally think that there are private sector solutions, but I am glad to see that with electric vehicles, which I will go on to talk about, the Government are making available £2.8 billion.

Electric vehicles will be critical because, as I said, cars account for 55% of emissions. I am glad that the Government have brought forward the date to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles to 2030. That is a huge achievement. The investment of £2.8 billion in electric vehicle technology, infrastructure and plug-in grants is hugely important. I am lucky to represent a borough, Kensington and Chelsea, that is very focused on electric vehicles. We have the highest number of electric vehicles per capita of any London borough, and probably the highest number nationally.

London is very good in not having much car usage. Only 27% of journeys are by car. Nationally, it is 68%. Clearly, rural areas will be more dependent on cars than cities such as London, but electric vehicles are important to my constituency. I hosted a seminar a few weeks ago in my constituency on the roll-out of electric vehicles. It was great to see so many of the major south Kensington institutions participating. I had Professor Richard Herrington, the Natural History Museum’s head of earth sciences, which is very important in electric vehicle batteries. I had Dr Billy Wu from Imperial College, who is one of the leaders in battery research, and Dr Rachel Boon from the Science Museum. We had a tremendous attendance from Kensington residents, and it is great to see that they are so focused on electric vehicles.

However, it was striking that the residents’ questions were repeatedly about having confidence that the electric charging infrastructure would work. There was a lot of concern about range anxiety. In my constituency, there is not much off-street parking; it is all on-street parking by the pavement. That clearly leads to challenges for electric vehicle charging. Of course, this is anecdotal, but I took away a huge willingness to embrace electric vehicle technology, but real concerns about the practicalities. If we are going to get there by 2030, we need to resolve these practicalities as quickly as possible.

I essentially have five key asks on electric vehicles. First, we need a comprehensive strategic network of electric vehicle charging points. I see this almost like the electricity national grid. I am a great free market capitalist, but I do not think in this instance that we can just leave it to the free market. We are not in the mid-19th century building railway lines randomly all over the place. We need a comprehensive network that gives people confidence, because they will not want to give up their cars that they have confidence in if they do not have confidence in the electric vehicle charging network. It needs to be Government led and top-down, as opposed to bottom-up.

Leading on from that, it is important that we focus on the customer experience of electric vehicle charging. I too often hear stories about the unreliability of chargers and the lack of interoperability between different charging points. We and the Government need to work on these issues, because confidence is critical.

I would also like the Government to mandate that all new houses, buildings and office blocks have electric vehicle charging points. I know the Government have consulted on this, but it should be standard. In the same way as, when you build a house you put in

electric sockets, you should put in an electric charging point.

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Moving on from the consumer element, it will be important to have more battery capacity in the UK. I feel strongly that we need more recycling of battery capacity and capability in the UK. In my discussions with Professor Herrington, there is no question that we need to extract very precious and rare metals to make electric batteries and these have to be recycled. We cannot just use up our stock of lithium and cobalt.

Finally, I would ask the Government to consider a zero emission mandate. This has worked very well in California. For those who do not know how that works, it requires manufacturers of cars to produce an increasing percentage of electric cars as part of their output. If they do not meet those percentage sales targets, they need to buy carbon offsets. I would like the Government to consider that. It has worked well in California and the increased supply of electric vehicles could achieve a number of ends.

First, while the price of electric vehicles over their lifetime is now equal to petrol and diesel cars, because the operating costs are lower, the up-front cost is still high. We are expecting price parity in 2023, but a zero emission mandate is a way to increase supply and accelerate price parity.

The second reason it could help is that I understand from leasing experts that it continues to be more expensive to lease an electric car, because leasing models look at the future value of the car in two years' or five years' time. As there is no developed second-hand market for electric vehicles, they put a discount on to that value. The more supply we can get, the better the secondary market for electric vehicles.

I thank all Members for participating in the debate. I am looking forward to hearing the Minister's reply. There is no question but that the transport sector is a big challenge when it comes to emissions, as the biggest emitter in the UK at the moment, but that means that it also offers the biggest opportunity.

#### **Caroline Nokes >**

(in the Chair)

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Before I call the next speaker, I aim to call the Front-Bench spokespeople at 10.25 am, which leaves plenty of time. I have no plans to put you on a time limit, but please can Back Benchers recognise that four of you wish to speak.

 9.42am

#### **Alan Brown >**

(Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)

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It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. I congratulate the hon. Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) on bringing forward the debate. She is maybe a bit hasty in thanking Members for their contributions before she has heard me speak—she should wait with bated breath.

I was talking about the debate with my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands) last night. When we saw the debate title, we were hoping that the hon. Member for Kensington had an inside track and that the transport decarbonisation plan was going to be launched just in time for the debate. Alas, that was not to be. In many ways, the debate could be called “the lack of a transport decarbonisation plan”.

As the hon. Member for Kensington said, the UK Government are hosting COP26 and claim to be leading the way and talk of a green recovery. The reality is there are still no coherent interlinked strategies and policies to achieve net zero. Given that the transport sector is the biggest contributor of greenhouse gas, the lack of a transport decarbonisation plan is basically a dereliction of duty. Why are the UK Government so behind in the publication of the plan, which was initially promised last year? Given that transport decarbonisation is so interlinked with energy policy, which is itself interlinked with the decarbonisation of our fossil fuel heating systems, it is imperative that these policies are complementary to each other and are interlinked. They all go hand in hand.

When we focus on transport, it should of course come as no surprise that the Scottish Government lead the way, being the first to include international shipping and aviation emissions within their overall net zero target, The Scottish Government have published

their rail decarbonisation strategy with an end date of 2035. Meanwhile, Network Rail has a business case for a 2050 date. Will the Minister confirm that they will get a grip of the final programme, with the suitable ambition that is needed to achieve net zero?

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The Scottish Government's rail decarbonisation plan means increased electrification and the introduction of battery or hydrogen-powered trains. Hydrogen is clearly a plan for the UK Government, and I welcome the ongoing trials of hydrogen-powered trains. However, we are still awaiting a hydrogen strategy, which will be critical if we are going to rely on hydrogen-powered trains. The Government's 5 GW hydrogen target is, frankly, too weak. The Scottish Government have already got their own 5 GW target and hydrogen strategy in place, so will the UK Government's eventual strategy be more ambitious? Will they set a target for green hydrogen production? Will the Minister explain how extensive a role hydrogen will play for trains in the decarbonisation process? Will the UK Government address the lack of electrification of railways, which is partly due to the previous Transport Secretary's obsession with hybrid diesel trains?

Hydrogen is an obvious solution for heavy goods vehicles, but it is part of the mix for buses too. Again, that underlines the need for a hydrogen production strategy. Blue hydrogen with carbon capture and storage is an interim step on the way to net zero, so when will the Acorn project at Peterhead be given the go-ahead?

Aberdeen has led the way on hydrogen-powered buses, with the introduction of 15 of the world's first hydrogen double-decker buses. The Scottish Government have invested more than £3 million in that project, but £8.3 million also came from the EU, so what will the replacement funding be for those types of schemes? The Scottish Government will have phased out the majority of fossil fuel buses by 2023, thanks to investment of £120 million in zero emission buses. More importantly, those buses are being manufactured by Alexander Dennis Ltd, making the investment circular for the economy. That is what the green recovery is all about: combining manufacturing with the net zero transition. What are the updates on the manufacturing strategy from the UK Government's perspective in that regard?

On flying, decarbonising the aviation sector means that some radical thoughts are required. That will be sensitive, given the fragility of aviation post covid, but a proper green recovery also means supporting the aviation sector. Although talk of air passenger duty might be welcomed in some quarters, that is too blunt an instrument. What discussions has the Minister had with the Treasury on that? What does she think of the call from the citizen's assembly to have a frequent-flyer surcharge—a policy that would affect only those who can afford to pay for frequent flying, while allowing others still to fly? Any moneys raised from such a policy could be reinvested into the decarbonisation of the aviation sector.

There are also opportunities for the production of sustainable aviation fuels, so when will the UK Government finally provide the support needed to pump-prime the private investment required to create a number of sustainable aviation fuel production plants? It makes no sense that aviation gasoline is duty-free, when domestic petrol for drivers is taxed to the hilt. That disparity should have been resolved years ago, but it will need to be addressed to incentivise decarbonisation and the switch to other aviation fuels.

On domestic electric vehicles, we heard a lot from the hon. Member for Kensington. I agree with the five goals that she set out at the end of her speech. We have heard a lot of talk about being world leading, without that being delivered. I welcome the fact that the Government are bringing forward the phase-out date for new diesel and petrol cars to 2030, but there need to be joined-up policies, properly funded, to match that ambition.

According to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, the UK will need to spend at least £16.7 billion to get its public charging network ready for the mass EV market. In March, it estimated that 700 new electric charging points need to be installed every single day until 2030 to give the right market coverage for the 2030 implementation date. At the moment, installations average 42 per day, so what will the Minister do to resolve that? Will the decarbonisation plan tackle that disparity?

It will be no surprise that Scotland leads the way on the roll-out of charge points in the UK. It has 40 public charge points per 100,000 people, compared with fewer than 30 in England and fewer than 20 in Wales and Northern Ireland. That is, of course, because the Scottish Government invested directly in that. Scotland also has the shortest average distance to travel to reach a public charge point. Will the UK Government up their game and tackle that in the decarbonisation plan, which will hopefully mean more Barnett consequential for Scotland?

Many motor manufacturers are already starting to phase out fossil fuel cars. However, the transport decarbonisation plan will need to allow for extra interventions. What assessment has the Minister made of Climate Assembly UK's recommendations, such as a car scrappage scheme, which I have long called for, and larger grants to assist businesses and people in purchasing electric vehicles? Will the UK Government copy the Scottish Government by providing interest-free loans for individuals and businesses to purchase electric vehicles? The Scottish Government have now extended that to the second-hand market to stimulate it as well.

Another key point regarding energy as we move towards the electrification of domestic highest grid charges in the whole of Europe, so if we are to have joined-up thinking for electrification of the domestic vehicle market, that means overhauling the grid charging system to allow renewables to be developed at the best locations, incorporating investment in storage such as pumped hydro storage and moving away from the nuclear obsession.

The future can be bright and green and include a revitalised manufacturing sector, but we need to see actions, not words, and clearly we need much more than a transport decarbonisation plan. We need cross-Government departmental co-ordination and leadership from the very top. Those are matters that, frankly, at the moment, are sadly lacking, but the transport decarbonisation plan would be a first step.

🕒 9.50am

**Nick Fletcher** >

(Don Valley) (Con)

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It is a pleasure to serve under you, Ms Nokes. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) for bringing the debate forward at this moment. I am pleased that over the years most of us have come to accept that humans are having an impact on our environment. That said, I can understand why some people may be sceptical about the extent to which the UK can lead the global fight against climate change. After all, we contribute a mere 1% of the greenhouse gases produced globally, and naturally some may ask, “Why should we take such a lead?” That is a question that I have asked myself, but I believe that, with our standing in the world being as great as it is, we must lead rather than follow. We can set an example to our international partners on the merits and necessity of reducing emissions. However, it is local pollution—the pollution on our streets—that I want to speak about today.

The fumes that we breathe as we walk down the street are mainly from cars, yet in Doncaster, where the bus fleet is old, vast clouds of black smoke from the buses also fill the air. In recent months, I have said much about electric cars with regard to the need to introduce a zero emission vehicle mandate and increase the number of charging points. Such moves would help the speed at which we make the transition to electric vehicles and reduce emissions. However, many more individuals in urban centres mainly use buses rather than cars to get about.

As part of the Sheffield city region—now the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority—Doncaster has had to cope with second-hand buses for many years. Meanwhile, the newer buses are predominantly located in Sheffield. Apparently that is due to the topography of South Yorkshire. In speaking to stakeholders, I have been informed that it is better to give the new buses to Sheffield, where it is very hilly, and use the older buses in relatively flat Doncaster. My constituents rightly believe that this state of affairs is unfair, and I long for the day when Doncaster residents can also benefit from the clean air that results from having electric buses on the roads. For too long, Doncaster’s children, on their way to school, have had to breathe in particulates, which can cause lifelong illnesses. If we are to embark on a green industrial revolution, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to work with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, Doncaster Council and private enterprise to get polluting buses off my constituency’s roads.

We often hear how China is the main contributor to global carbon emissions. That is true and something that I am sure is raised by our representatives abroad with its Government. However, China is also a leader in electric transportation and buses as a whole. It is also one of the largest investors in grid renewables. Shenzhen, a city of more than 12.5 million people, has electrified its entire bus system.

I see no reason why that could not be replicated right here in the UK. After all, the UK is one of the greatest innovators in and utilisers of grid renewables. I therefore hope that, with the Government’s plan to build back better, we can move quickly to complete electrification of our public transport. Electric buses reap the same benefits as electric cars: reduced servicing, increased ease of driving, reduced noise pollution and smoother journeys.

However, if we are to roll out more electric buses, infrastructure is needed. I am talking about huge charging depots, which will inevitably require a lot of power. However, if we are truly going through with building back better, the Department for Transport must prepare for that. Furthermore, we must press forward quickly in rolling out electric buses in places such as Doncaster, as that would work well and be a great example of levelling up.

To conclude, if we are ever to end the love affair we have with our cars, we must create frequent, reliable, safe, clean and easily accessible electric buses.



🕒 9.55am

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(Rother Valley) (Con)

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It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) for raising this important issue. I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I rise today to speak on an issue on which I feel strongly. My hon. Friends will know that much of my work in the House has focused on bringing the green revolution to left-behind areas across the United Kingdom, including Rother Valley, and that green transport has been a focus for me. In fact, I sponsored the first two debates on hydrogen and the first debate on critical minerals in the UK

Parliament, and I shall speak about those topics today, as I firmly believe that they are vital in the context of our transport decarbonisation plan.

Critical minerals are incredibly important to our green energy and low-carbon transport needs. On average, each electric car uses 100 kg of copper, rare earth for the magnets, and lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese and graphite for the batteries. To meet the Prime Minister's vision for wind power, we also need more than 26,000 tonnes of rare earths and more than 4 tonnes of copper. Importantly, seven points in the Government's 10-point plan for the green recovery are dependent on a secure green supply of critical minerals. The UK Government must acknowledge that the construction of renewable energy technology and low-carbon electric vehicles is inextricably linked to the supply of our critical minerals. We must take action accordingly to protect our energy sector, the generation of clean power and the future transport technology for low-carbon vehicles.

The challenge to the UK is not just that rocketing demand will leave shortages, but that our suppliers of critical minerals—namely the People's Republic of China—are unsustainable and unreliable. More than 75% of the world's lithium-ion component manufacturers are located in China, resulting in more than 72% of lithium-ion batteries and 45% of all global electric vehicles already being produced there. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Nick Fletcher) mentioned Shenzhen and other areas in China with huge electric vehicle networks. That is a positive in some ways, but also a concern, as they are almost hoovering up the critical minerals that we need to decarbonise here in the UK and across the globe. In December 2020—only a few months ago—the Chinese legislature passed a law on export control allowing the Chinese Government to ban exports of strategic minerals and advanced technology whenever they wished, so they have a stranglehold on the supply of essential minerals.

I have been active in persistently calling on the Government to adopt a comprehensive critical minerals strategy and to collaborate with the Five Eyes and Commonwealth partners on a unified supply network. I am pleased to hear that my call has been heeded and that Ministers and Whitehall are waking up to the urgency of this policy sector. Time is of the essence, and we must move now.

Furthermore, I submitted questions to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the role of assured data in mineral supply chains and the role of the Government in the stimulus and advancement of deployment of technology, including distributed ledger technology, used in the distribution system for critical minerals. I was a bit disappointed that the Department chose to group its responses together and provide, frankly, a very short and unresponsive answer. I hope the Minister can speak to her colleagues in BEIS and get them to commit to look at the questions again, because they are essential to our future critical mineral needs.

I wish to devote the rest of my speech to hydrogen. Some great work has already been undertaken by the Government on this issue, and I have spoken a lot about it in the House. However, with COP26 coming up in the UK, we must seize the opportunity to steal a march on the competition and become a pre-eminent world leader in hydrogen technology. I would like us to go further by introducing a vehicle capital financial support mechanism that applies to vehicle types where hydrogen has the potential to significantly reduce emissions. We should also introduce a financial support mechanism per kilo of hydrogen sold. That can be achieved quickly through the liberalisation of the renewable transport fuel obligation, which has recently gone out for public consultation. Further, we hope the hydrogen strategy will enable the development of a more refined scheme, such as, potentially, contracts for difference.

In addition, we should urgently develop hydrogen train schemes and use the 4,000-strong zero emission bus scheme to buy a large number of hydrogen buses to help kickstart investment in UK-made buses, as well as hydrogen production. We must modernise the bus service operators' grant to align with the UK's net zero ambitions and favour zero emission fuels over and above fossil fuels. We must commit to an explicit medium-term, zero emission freight deployment programme with vehicle deployment targets, and relax and clarify the conditions for hydrogen projects to qualify for the renewable transport fuels obligation, which will support the entire

production and supply chain infrastructure needed for full hydrogen mobility. Combined progress to net zero, stimulate private investment and create jobs across the Union, all with minimal taxpayer spend.

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One other small point I want to touch on in relation to the low-carbon transport strategy is the nature of our technology and the batteries. Let me talk briefly about oil, as someone who used to work for Shell in the oil industry. Many people do not know the amount of oil that goes into an electric car. It is a huge amount, mainly for cooling the batteries, because at the moment that is the best way to cool them down. As battery range increases, batteries will get hotter and will need more cooling, therefore needing more oil. We cannot get away from the fact that, even in a low-carbon future, we will still need oil in the engine. It is not burned; it is first fill, so it is sealed in the engine, but when the engine battery is recycled or destroyed, that carbon will be released.

In future strategies, the Government need to acknowledge that there is carbon that we will have to get rid of at some point, and there needs to be a true way of recycling it. They also need to realise that some of that oil will get lost and carbon will be released, so we need to invest in offsetting that carbon usage. We will never get to zero carbon—net zero, but not zero carbon. In the strategy that is hopefully coming up, we need nature-based solutions and, potentially, carbon capture and storage. That needs to be at the heart of the strategy. We cannot ignore the elephant in the room: there is oil still in electric vehicles.

I commend the Minister for the work the Government have already done on critical minerals and hydrogen. However, without further decisive steps in both sectors, we risk losing out to the rest of the world, putting our net zero, energy security and economic growth at risk. We must see the rapid publication of the transport decarbonisation plan and the hydrogen strategy, which I think we are still waiting on. Every time I raise that with the Government, they say it will come soon. I hope it is sooner rather than later. We also need the critical mineral strategy. Industry, politicians and international partners are waiting. Now is the time to rise to the challenge and set the gold standard for transport decarbonisation.

🕒 10.02am

**Jim Shannon** >

(Strangford) (DUP)

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I did not expect to be called quite so early, but it is a pleasure to speak, Ms Nokes. I thank the hon. Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) for setting the scene so well. Where we can, we must make changes. Many people want to change their carbon footprint, because it is the right thing to do. I do not think I have met anyone who thinks it is not the right thing to do, but we have to all agree whether we are prepared to pay the price to move from where we are to where we should be. I am not convinced that everyone is in a position where they want to or are able to pay that price. Others will make the change because their Government instruct them to do so. The legislation on the sale of petrol and diesel cars will be a case where we are following instructions.

I am excited by the opportunities for the electric vehicle market. But those who wish to jump on the train, to use a pun, and buy in early to start the change now are undoubtedly hampered by the lack of infrastructure to support it. In Northern Ireland, electric charging points are few and far between. I have had some correspondence with the Infrastructure Minister in Northern Ireland about that. I get contacted every week by constituents who want to buy or have bought diesel cars and vans, because they do not know how long they will last. Constituents also tell me that they buy an electric vehicle and set off to their destination, having checked the route to make sure there is an electric charging point. They see that there is one, but when they get there, 10 people are waiting in the queue. That is a real problem.

We need a good frequency of extra charging points. For someone who wants to buy an electric car, there is a very limited number of charging points in Northern Ireland. I wrote to the Minister, Nichola Mallon, about my constituency, and she gave me a clear response. She said that, in Northern Ireland, the

“electric vehicle public charge point network is owned, operated and maintained by the Electricity Supply Board...It is responsible for the operation, maintenance and development of its network. There are currently 320 22kWh (Fast) charge points at 160 locations and a further 17 50kWh DC (Rapid) public charge points in the North.”

I say facetiously that I think she refers to Northern Ireland, as opposed to the north part of Northern Ireland, but that is by the way. She goes on to say that the Government have

“made £20 million in grant funding available to local authorities/councils in GB-NI for 20/22”.

I know from my discussions with the Minister in this place and others who have been involved that that will provide some charge

points for residents without off-street parking.

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To quote the Northern Ireland Minister again:

“My Department has engaged with local councils in relation to the need for more electric vehicle charge points, including more recently with regard to the On-street residential charge Point scheme”.

Many of those who want to buy electric vehicles and electric vans need to make sure there is a charge point in their street. They need to make sure their vehicle can go the distance that they want it to go. She goes on:

“Therefore, the installation of on-street residential charge points, in urban residential areas, is essential going forward. My officials will continue to make themselves available to local councils to provide assistance, advice and guidance... ESB have advised that they plan to replace approx. 60 charge points i.e. 30 charge posts and a further 5 Rapid charge points to upgrade and improve the reliability of the existing public network.”

Nothing is as frustrating as going to the charging point and finding that it cannot be accessed or does not work for whatever reason. I declare an interest in that my son bought a hybrid car a short time ago, ultimately, probably because he thinks it is cheaper, but also because it helps him and shows his commitment to moving forward to what we all want to do.

Many of us are not yet convinced that it is possible to take that step if we do not have the charging points in place. A lot of work needs to be done and it appears that the driver of the work must be the Government from this place, going out to the regions, Northern Ireland and elsewhere. Perhaps the Minister in her summing up will give some indication or advance notice of what contacts, relationships and discussions she has had with the Northern Ireland Assembly, and in particular with the Minister responsible, Nichola Mallon—a good Minister, by the way, who works very hard.

The allocation of funding for councils should provide charging points that meet the need and allow those who want to buy a new car now to be sure that if they need to make a long journey, they can do so confidently throughout Northern Ireland without worrying that there will be a queue of 10 cars waiting to get home at the one charging point—that has happened—or whether their car charge will not get them to where they want to be and ultimately get them home as well.

I support these targets, but it is up to the Government to put the infrastructure in place quickly to enable change to take place. I look for more information about funding streams, incentives and encouragements being made available to private bodies, such as major supermarkets. I think that is one of the things that people wish to see. I am conscious that some of my constituents say to me, “It’s okay to have them at supermarkets, but we’d like to see them in the centre of town as well”. I am not saying this is wrong, but we need an equal playing pitch. They need to be in the main streets as well to attract people there, and not just at the supermarkets.

I want to make a wee plug for Green biofuels. Coincidentally, I had a meeting yesterday with some representatives and friends who took the opportunity to make me aware of some of the points. These refer mostly to London, and I know the hon. Member for Kensington will be very aware of them. They informed me that out of a bus fleet of some 9,112 vehicles, only 318 are electric or fuel cell. There are 3,773 diesel hybrids, but the principal fuel source is still diesel. There are 5,011 diesel vehicles. They also informed me that the company Green Biofuels has recently entered into partnership with Thames tugs and barges and that some of them are now running on green biofuels. The point I am making is that there are other methods of decarbonisation, and we need to be considering green biofuels as one of those. I understand that green diesel and biofuels are used in generators at Glastonbury and the Hyde Park Winter Wonderland event.

There are many things that can be done to reduce carbon and have a positive impact. I think there needs to be a commitment by train companies as well, such as on some of the freight and diesel locomotives that go from King’s Cross to the north of England. At present, trains are a major source of pollution. As chair of the all-party parliamentary group for respiratory health, I am aware that this issue has been brought to our attention. It is clear that we need to improve air quality and respiratory health across the whole of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Trains that sit under a main station canopy run their engines for about 30 minutes, and the amount of pollution they generate in that time, before they even pull out of the station, is very large.

I know that this is a bit last minute, so the Minister might not be able to respond today, but I am quite happy to get a response further down the line. It would be very helpful for me to go back to the people I have spoken to and tell them that. There are many people out there who have good ideas, who are very committed to reducing carbon, and all of us want that to happen.

We can make a huge difference, but until the infrastructure is in place for us to do so, there will be substantially fewer people who be confident in taking that eco step now. We want to encourage them. I believe that the Government want to do that; I believe we should work together in partnership, positively and constructively. If we do, then we will achieve the goals we need for our children and our grandchildren.



🕒 10.12am

**Gavin Newlands** >

(Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP)

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It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. I thank the hon. Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) for bringing such an important debate to the Chamber this morning.

The Government's rhetoric on this is fantastic, with their 10-point plan and 4,000 electric buses. The UK was the first G7 country to legislate for net zero, although of course that was after Scotland had already done so. However, the Government's actions simply do not follow the rhetoric, from the much-delayed investment in those electric buses, which I have spoken about many times in this place, through onshore wind, carbon capture and storage, rail electrification, and reductions in electric vehicle grants—without notice, I have to say—to the obscene grid charges levied on Scottish renewable projects mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown).

The Government's track record is poor. In the last debate in this Chamber, I asked the Minister when they would publish the long-awaited transport decarbonisation plan and I was told “shortly”. However, I think “shortly” has been the answer for quite a long time now, so I hope that when the Minister sums up she can give us an actual date for the publication of that plan, because it is needed as soon as possible.

By 2023, Scotland will see the majority of fossil fuel buses removed from our roads. That is in sharp contrast to the UK's ambition—if we can even use that word in this context—of just one tenth of fossil fuel buses. We are getting on with that now. While the UK Government have prevaricated, the equivalent of 2,720 buses are already on order in Scotland. Scotland's plans mean not just green buses but renewed fleets around the country at a time when, post-covid, the offer to potential passengers has to step up a gear.

Buses are the unsung heroes of the public transport network. Over twice as many commuter journeys use bus versus rail, but there is no doubt—as the hon. Members hear from their own local bus companies and I hear from mine—that bus patronage is dropping and putting the future of routes at risk. Many have already gone in areas outside London, I would imagine.

Clean buses are one way to bring patronage back and show off what technology can do on our roads. We have also committed to decarbonise our rail network by 2035. As I speak, that work is ongoing with the East Kilbride to Glasgow railway line which is set to be electrified, with a subsequent boost in services to meet the growth in passenger demand. That is just the latest in the roll-out of electrification across Scotland's railways, which has been in place for two decades. Airdrie to Bathgate, Stirling to Alloa, Larkhall and the Borders Railway have all been reopened since the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament. Just yesterday, my colleague Graeme Dey MSP, Minister for Transport, confirmed the Levenmouth line reopening in Fife will be double-tracked and electrified from day one. Communities cut off from the mainline railway network for more than five decades will now have speedy, zero emission rail travel, linking with jobs and opportunities across Fife, the Lothians and the rest of Scotland.

Over the last couple of decades, nearly all main routes in the central belt have been electrified, with plans to fill the gaps over coming years and with work to continue heading north to Perth and Dundee. Those years have seen a near continuous process of upgrading, electrification and future-proofing, at the same time as investing in rolling stock and making journeys more attractive to get people out of their cars.

This has not been a party political process. Progress has been supported across the parties at Holyrood, which is a recognition that for too long rail investment lagged behind when the sole responsibility was Westminster's. Those roles have now been reversed, with Westminster lagging far behind Scotland when it comes to equipping our rail infrastructure for the 21st century and the challenge of decarbonisation. Over the last 20 years, Scotland's rail network has been electrified at twice the pace of England's rail network.

I was proud that the SNP's manifesto at last month's election included pledges on extending free bus travel, support for zero carbon bike travel and reducing car kilometres by 20% by the end of the decade. Of the cars remaining, we want as many as possible to be zero emission cars. That is why we have enhanced funding in Scotland for drivers switching to electric vehicles. We have enhanced home charge point funding of up to £350 over and above the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles funding. We also have interest-free car loans of up to £28,000 for new zero emission cars and up to £20,000 for used models.

There is still a significant gap between the price of regular combustion engine cars and electric cars, so as well as the various sticks that people talk of, we still need a significant carrot when we talk about electric and zero emission cars to make it easier for people to switch. It cannot just be the preserve of the well-off to switch to electric cars. I should declare at this point that I have made use of

the schemes just mentioned of late. We have bought our first electric car and ditched tv [Back to top](#) [Previous debate](#) [Next debate](#)

The investment follows years and years of sustained investment in charging points and the infrastructure we need to drive demand for electric vehicles, to ensure that early adopters are not discouraged by a lack of support and, more importantly, electricity. We all know—not least, in part, because my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun has told us all—that the UK charging network, outside London at least, is lagging well behind Scotland. Further to the stats that my hon. Friend outlined, here is another: there are currently double the number of rapid charging points per head of population in Scotland compared with England. Even London’s rapid charging network is almost half of Scotland’s.

According to the excellent report, “Pain points” by DevicePilot, the plans for 2021 are not particularly encouraging and are not going to change things too much, with a new charging point planned for every 2,741 people in London. The figure for the rest of England is one for every 19,159. In the east of England, the figure goes up to 38,000 people. Where is the levelling up or the building back

greener for the rest of England? It simply does not exist. I hope the decarbonisation plan, when it is eventually published, will address that.

There is huge innovation in public charging in Scotland, because there can often be difficulties in identifying sites and installing the infrastructure because of the various parties involved. Project PACE, a collaboration of both Lanarkshire local authorities, the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and Scottish Power Energy Networks, explored the benefits of having the distribution network operator involved at all stages of the planning and delivery of charging infrastructure. It increased capacity in Lanarkshire by 360% and achieved savings of up to £60,000 per site, which aggregated over the project across Lanarkshire amounted to £3.5 million of savings. I would like to see a lot more of that, not just across Scotland but across the rest of the country, and I hope the Minister can look at that project for down here.

On e-bikes, the Scottish Government are taking up the slack with yet more interest-free loans for electric bikes, while Cycle to Work, overall a very worthy scheme, is unfortunately letting some fall through the cracks. Again, Scotland is taking the lead while the rest of the UK outside of London is stuck in the slow lane, and that should not be the case. The UK authorities and the Department for Transport should speak to their counterparts in the Scottish Government to learn from the experience and ambition there and use those lessons to up their game across the board.

The Scottish Government have also pledged to increase active travel spending up to 10% of the transport capital budget over the lifetime of this Parliament. That should be transformational spending that could revolutionise how our towns and cities function and how people can connect. We have heard much more over recent months about 20-minute communities, where Governments and communities ensure that for most people services and shopping are within 10 minutes of homes without using a car. My colleague, Tom Arthur MSP, with whom I share some of my constituency, has been appointed Minister with responsibility for that in the Scottish Government. Tom will make sure that the drive towards 20-minute communities will have decarbonisation and a net zero future at the heart of each development across the country, working with communities to make sure that our high streets and centres are places with people rather than vehicles at their heart.

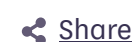
Combining those measures has the potential to revitalise town centres that have been hit hard in recent years by regional shopping centres, the growth in car ownership, and most recently covid. By increasing the active travel budget, as the Scottish Government are doing, we can not only reboot our towns and neighbourhoods, but ensure a more sustainable economy on the ground. We are also boosting zero carbon travel and keeping more of our money in the local economy.

Decarbonisation is not and should not be just about tackling emissions and climate change. It should also be about making changes to our transport networks that rebalance our economy and naturally regenerate communities that for too long have suffered as carbon-based transport has dominated. Moving to net zero is also a move to greater fairness. It is the poor who are disproportionately affected by air pollution and climate change, the poor who are excluded from accessing services for want of private transport, and the poor who are disproportionately hit by poor quality or highly priced public transport.

Investing in decarbonised and sustainable transport is not just the right thing to do environmentally. It is fundamentally the right thing to do economically and socially if we are serious about social justice and building a fairer society and—dare I say it?—levelling up. Change will not come tomorrow and we will no doubt have many bumps along the way, but if we are to meet the challenges of a net zero country by the target of 2045, Scotland has to make that commitment and take those risks. I urge the Minister and the rest of the UK Government to learn from that and show the ambition that has the potential to transform the lives of people here in England for the better, too.

**Kerry McCarthy** >

(Bristol East) (Lab)



It is a pleasure to see you in your place, Ms Nokes. I congratulate the hon. Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) on securing this important debate. She made an excellent speech and I agreed with almost everything that she said. I say “almost everything” in case there was something in it that I did not spot and will come to regret. Certainly on the key points, she was very much on the same page as the Labour Front Bench. One of the most important things that she said was that too often there are very ambitious end goals, but they are far into the future, and unless we have clear interim targets and ways of monitoring and scrutinising progress

towards those targets, and a plan as to how we will get there, there is a danger that everything will get pushed into the long grass, as we have seen with the 25-year environment plan. As the Environment Bill goes through Parliament, there is a real concern that with a 25-year plan, how do we make sure that we do ambitious things in the next five years and not just put things off?

It was really interesting to hear the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), and also the SNP spokesperson, the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands), talk about the progress that Scotland is making. There is a lot we can learn from that. The point was made about how many more EV charging points we need to get to where we need to be. I speak as an EV driver, and what the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said resonated with me. I have learnt not to travel on a bank holiday because of queues at the service station. I cannot charge at home, so I rely on public charging points and have learnt to make trips in the wee small hours because I know I can get to the charging point then.

Also interesting was what the SNP spokesperson said about how this needs to be part of the planning system. Another speaker talked about new housing developments and how important it was to have charging points built in. This cannot be left to the market; it cannot be left to chance. It is something that we have to plan for.

I agree with what the hon. Members for Don Valley (Nick Fletcher) and for Rother Valley (Alexander Stafford) said about the importance of electric buses, hydrogen, and the sourcing and manufacturing of batteries. These are real issues that we have to grapple with now. As has been said, decarbonising our transport sector is one of the most pressing challenges that we face as a nation, and we need more ambition and more action from this Government if we are to meet net zero. At the moment, whether it is the lack of a green recovery plan for our post-pandemic recovery or carbon budgets that will not be met through current policies, we are not seeing enough ambition or action from this Government. As the Scottish National party spokesperson, the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North, said, the rhetoric is great—we cannot disagree with that—but where is the road map? Instead, we have a Prime Minister who talks green but then flies to the G7 in Cornwall, where climate change is high on the agenda, in a private jet rather than taking the train. What kind of signal does that send to world leaders ahead of COP26?

As has been said, transport is now the largest contributor to UK emissions. There has been real progress in areas such as energy, but we have not seen similar progress on transport. There has been a decade of inaction by this Government. According to the Climate Change Committee, surface transport contributed 24% of UK emissions in 2019, with aviation accounting for 8% and shipping 3%. I am glad that the Government have now said that they will look at including international aviation and shipping emissions when measuring our carbon footprint and on the agenda for COP.

I am also glad that one speaker in this debate has withdrawn and the other speakers, if anything, came in under time, because there will be lots of time for the Minister to answer questions, and I have quite a lot of questions for her. Obviously, the first one is, “Where is the transport decarbonisation plan?” We expected it to be published last year, and then we were told throughout this year that it would be published in spring. This Sunday marks the start of the summer solstice, so unless the Minister has a very big surprise up her sleeve for us in a few minutes’ time, it looks like that is another missed deadline. The hon. Member for Rother Valley talked about his frustration at constantly being told, “Soon, soon, soon.” That is something that we have come to expect from this Government: “Soon, shortly, spring.” When are we going to see the plan? I hope that it is very soon. Could the Minister also say whether, when the plan is published, there will be an oral statement in the House to accompany it? I certainly hope that there will be, so that MPs have a chance to ask questions.

We know that we urgently need to get polluting vehicles off our roads, get more people into zero emission vehicles, and get people back on public transport once it is safe to do so. Importantly—we have not heard very much about this so far this morning—we need to get people to engage more in active travel, whether that is cycling on conventional bicycles, e-bikes or e-cargo bikes, or walking. All of that will improve air quality, help lower emissions, reduce congestion, and improve physical health. With all the focus on

technological developments, sustainable fuels and so on, I hope that people-powered t

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Unfortunately, what we have seen from the Government recently does not inspire confidence. Subsidies for EV plug-in grants have been slashed yet again, and although the Government have tried to say that that is because they want more people to benefit—that was the answer I got when I challenged the most recent cut—based on the figures we have seen from the Government, the overall pot for plug-in grants has reduced too. Leaving it to the market, as has been said by the hon. Member for Kensington and others, will not get us to where we need to be by 2030. Funding for public charging infrastructure has so far been piecemeal, to put it mildly. There are at least four different pots that councils can apply for, but lots of local councils have not had anything from the Government.

When I have asked the Government which local authorities have not had any public funding at all, I have not had an answer; what I have had is a list of councils that have had money, and I have tried to extrapolate from that how many have not. It is a very significant number. That might be because of a lack of political will on councils' part: maybe they do not feel the need for public

charging infrastructure, and assume that people can charge at home, or that it can be left to the market. It might be because they have not been successful in putting together bids, but there are really significant gaps, and that needs to be addressed. We need a strategy to ensure consistent coverage throughout the country.

We also need to deal with grid connection costs, because the private sector has told me that there is an expense to putting in public charging points, and it could take quite a long while to recoup the costs before ownership reaches critical mass. In rural areas or tourist destinations in particular, it would take a while to recoup those costs. The actual cost of connecting to the grid is the thing that really deters companies from doing so.

On funding for local councils, the £2 billion for active travel that was announced last year—in fact, it was announced several times last year—is being released far too slowly. We have had a couple of tranches but I understand that there will be no more money until the next spending review, so we have missed the crucial window to embed the positive behavioural change that we saw during the lockdowns, when people were wary of using public transport but were quite keen to take advantage of the reduced traffic on our roads to take up cycling.

I also challenge the Minister on the £27 billion that has been pledged to road building by this Government, and on the fact that the Transport Secretary overruled the advice of his own civil servants to conduct an environmental review of the policy. I hope that the transport decarbonisation plan sheds some light on how and if such carbon-intensive construction projects can be made compatible with our net zero emissions target.

**Alexander Stafford** >

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Tarmac is made of oil, so when making roads, we need to go back to offsetting some of our emissions because we will always need that oil. Does the hon. Lady think that should be part of the plan as well?

**Kerry McCarthy** >

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We need the environmental impact assessment from the Department so that we can assess the carbon footprint of road building, and look at whether more sustainable materials can be used and whether the extent of the road building programme proposed by the Government is compatible with reaching net zero, or whether other decisions need to be made.

We desperately need a comprehensive strategy to guide the Government's approach. We do not want to see in this plan only platitudes and declarations of intent; we need clarity about how the Government intend to boost zero emission vehicle sales, speed up the transition to sustainable fuels, including for aviation and maritime, and encourage more people to use public transport, which we must ensure involves clean, greener vehicles.

We need a bold vision, linked to planning, housing and economic policy, on what role transport will play in the future, with post-pandemic adjustments to the way we live, move around, buy goods and access services—for example, the idea of the 15-minute city, which has been championed in Paris, and the role of the logistics sector. Many more people have resorted to online deliveries during the pandemic. I believe that pattern of behaviour will continue, so what is the strategy to keep heavy polluting vehicles out of urban centres wherever possible and rely on more sustainable forms of transport, whether electric vans, e-cargo bikes or other alternatives? The other day I visited Magway, a company that is looking at an underground delivery system, which it will be trialling



in west London soon; that is really quite exciting stuff. Will we see ambition on that sort

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I would welcome any insight from the Minister as to what concrete measures we can expect to see. Are the Government considering a zero emission vehicle mandate, as recommended by the Green Alliance and Policy Exchange, to ease the transition to 100% new zero emission vehicle sales by 2030? Are they considering a sustainable aviation fuel blending mandate to incentivise production and the adoption of stable fuels derived from waste? Will we finally see the timeframe for the production and roll-out of the 4,000 zero emission buses promised by the Government? How does the Government’s consultation on cutting air passenger duty for domestic flights square with all of this?

There is huge potential for jobs, and for the UK to lead the way in technological development. What we really want to hear from the Minister is a real strategy to get us there.

 10.34am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport** >  
(Rachel Maclean)

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It is a huge pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Nokes. I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) on securing this landmark debate on the forthcoming transport decarbonisation plan. I welcome the opportunity to provide an update and set out the Government’s position on all matters raised.

I warmly thank all Members who have taken part for their contributions, which displayed their extensive knowledge of this vital topic, including my hon. Friends the Members for Don Valley (Nick Fletcher) and for Rother Valley (Alexander Stafford) and the hon. Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), for Strangford (Jim Shannon) and for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands).

Before I move on to the main body of my remarks, I want to reassure the hon. Member for Strangford that I am shortly to meet Minister Nicola Mallon to discuss many of the matters that he raised. Northern Ireland is always close to our thoughts and we want to ensure that our transition is taking place at speed.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington started by saying, in 2019 we became the first major global economy to set a 2050 target to end our contribution to climate change and to achieve that net zero of carbon emissions. Our ambitious target to reduce our emissions by at least 68% by 2030, our nationally determined contribution under the Paris climate agreement, is among the highest in the world. It commits the UK to cutting emissions at the fastest rate of any major economy so far.

I will answer head on the question put to me by Opposition and Government Members—when are we going to publish the transport decarbonisation plan? We have done a huge amount of work on the plan, as I have said in this House many times, and we have a final draft. I am not satisfied with the draft because it does not meet the ambition we need in order to reach those incredibly challenging targets. It is my desire that, when we publish the plan, hon. Members will not be disappointed, and we will be able to ensure that we have taken into account the Climate Change Committee’s sixth carbon budget advice. I cannot give a date, I am afraid, so I cannot meet hon. Members’ challenges head on, but we are working through that at pace and intend to publish soon.


It is right at this point to counter some, though not all, of the narrative that we are not doing enough and it is all rhetoric. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Let me focus on a few highlights. We already have half a million ultra low emission vehicles registered on UK roads. That is backed by £1.3 billion of Government grants, also available in Scotland, as the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North updated us.

Nearly one in seven cars sold so far in 2021 has a plug. A driver is never more than 25 miles away from a rapid charge point anywhere along England’s motorways and A roads. We have 4,450 rapid charge points and 24,000 public charge points. We are providing up to £120 million for zero emission buses, adding to the £50 million already awarded to Coventry under all the all-electric bus city scheme. We will commit to spend £3 billion rolling out 4,000 zero emission buses during this Parliament. On active travel, we have committed—

**Gavin Newlands** >

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Will the Minister give way?

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Forgive me; will the hon. Gentleman allow me to complete my speech, because I am sure I am going to answer his questions in it? I have a lot of points to cover, but I will take interventions later if he is still not satisfied.

We have committed £2 billion to active travel over five years. That is the largest amount of funding ever committed to cycling and walking by any Government.


Let me turn to electric vehicles, which were the focus of the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington. The key to decarbonising transport will be to roll out cleaner modes of travel that are affordable and accessible to all. I am delighted to see all the hard work she is doing in her constituency. It is by local engagement that Members of Parliament can play a vital role in ensuring that their local authorities are engaged in this. Many of these initiatives are delivered through local government funding.

I note that some local authority areas are not taking advantage of our on-street residential charge point scheme. I encourage any Member of Parliament to come to me, so I can provide them with an update about if their local authority is engaging in this, because that is how we are going to get charging points rolled out to people who do not have off-street parking. We need to move further and faster, and I fully agree with everybody who has posed that challenge to the Government.

We have an ambitious phase-out date to end the sale of all petrol and diesel cars by 2030. That is the most ambitious date of any country in the world. All new cars and vans must be zero emission at the tailpipe by 2030. We will be the fastest country to decarbonise cars and vans. There is no sign of buyer's remorse.

**Alan Brown** > [Share](#)

On that ambition of before 2030, does the Minister accept that that means that energy policy has to align with that to get the electrification? That means that Ofgem must be mandated to deliver net zero and it means an overhaul of how energy is delivered. Is she discussing that with other Ministers? Does the transport decarbonisation plan interlink on that basis?

**Rachel Maclean** > [Share](#)

I am absolutely discussing that with fellow Ministers. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will be coming forward shortly with its net zero strategy, which will answer many of those issues about the electricity network.

Over 90% of EV drivers say they will not go back to petrol or diesel. I am one of them because I drive an electric car, including on bank holidays, so I experience these issues first hand. We are determined to make it as easy to charge up an electric vehicle as it currently is to fill a tank with petrol or diesel. The private sector has already installed 24,000 public charging devices, but the process is changing and accelerating all the time. In two years' time every motorway service station will have at least six high-powered chargers, so that people can charge up in the time it takes to have a coffee.

To underpin our ambitious phase-out dates and to help achieve them, in November we committed to developing three key policy documents over the course of 2021. Those policy documents will specifically answer many of the questions that hon. Members have rightly posed to me. The first is a delivery plan that will set out key Government commitments, funding and milestones. That is for the 2030 and 2035 phase-out dates. It will deal with the question whether we will have a zero emission vehicle mandate. We are having that discussion inside Government at the moment.

We will set out an infrastructure strategy. That will set out the vision and action plan for the charging infrastructure roll-out that is needed to achieve our ambitious phase-out date successfully, and to accelerate the transition to a zero emission fleet. As part of this strategy we are working with local authorities, charge point operators and other stakeholders to ensure that our future charging infrastructure is practical, accessible, reliable and achievable, alongside outlining all the key roles and responsibilities for all actors in the EV charging sectors. It is clear that we need more charge points everywhere and this Government will set out how that will take place.

The Green Paper on our UK future CO<sub>2</sub> emissions regulatory framework, now we are no longer a member of the European Union, will

Let me go through the key points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington. On her first priority, the need to combat range anxiety, she is absolutely right and every Member has mentioned that. We need to increase not only the reality but the perception of the adequacy of the infrastructure for electric vehicles. I keep reminding people that in England they are never more than 25 miles away from the nearest charge point and we have committed, and are already investing, £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll-out of charging infrastructure in rural and urban areas across the UK.

The charge point market has evolved over the past decade. Like my hon. Friend, I am a free-market capitalist, but of course Government has a role to play, hand in hand with the private sector, which is stepping up in an incredibly impressive way. They have a growing role in charge point funding, with areas such as home charging showing signs of maturity. We need to keep working hand in

hand with the private sector, so we have committed to invest £950 million in future-proofing grid capacity along the strategic road network, to prepare for 100% uptake of zero emission cars and vans. We expect to increase the number of high-powered chargers across the network by 2035 to 6,000.

We also have a £90 million local EV infrastructure fund that will support large on-street charging schemes and potentially local rapid charging hub schemes in England, as well as the £20 million already referred to, which is the on-street residential charging scheme. We are working closely with stakeholders to inform the design and delivery of the fund. We aim to launch it in spring next year. We must continue, however, as a Government—that is our responsibility—to monitor the market.

**Gavin Newlands** >

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On charge points, those plans sound fantastic and what have you, but will the Minister comment on the massive discrepancy in the numbers of planned charge points in England? In London, which already has an extensive network compared with the rest of England, this year there is one charge point for every 2,700 people, whereas in the east of England there is one for every 38,500 people. Why is there such huge discrepancy across England?

**Rachel Maclean** >

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I thank the hon. Member for his comments, but I have addressed them already with the roles that local authorities, the private sector and Government have to play. I also point him back to what I said about our delivery plan, which will, absolutely, set out how we intend to ensure that every resident of the United Kingdom, no matter where they live, has equal access to this electric and low emission revolution. We will continue to monitor the market, and where it is not delivering, it is right for central Government to step into those areas of market failure.

Members mentioned the experience of public charging. We have consulted recently on measures to improve that experience, including opening up public charge point data, improving reliability and streamlining the payment methods for drivers—they should not have to have multiple active apps and accounts on their phone. We want to increase pricing transparency. I have done a huge amount of work with charge point operators as part of that vital work. We also plan to lay legislation later this year.

We want people across the country to have the opportunity to move to being electric vehicle drivers.

**Kerry McCarthy** >

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Am I right in thinking that that would be legislation requiring charge point operators to meet certain reliability standards? Is that what the Minister is suggesting?

**Rachel Maclean** >

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Absolutely right, it is that. We already have those powers in legislation, and we intend to use them.

The vast majority of electric vehicle drivers choose to charge their cars at home overnight or, increasingly, at the workplace. We plan to support people to charge their cars at home, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington said. We are working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government at the moment and we have consulted on plans to introduce a requirement for every new home to have a charge point, where there is an associated parking space. We will publish our response soon. We aim to lay regulations in Parliament in 2021—this year. That will make England the first country in the world to introduce mandatory charge points in new homes, again cementing our position as the global leader in the race to net zero.

My hon. Friend spoke about R&D, and we are world-leading in the automotive manufacturing sector. We have prioritised securing investment in battery cell gigafactories. That is key to anchoring the mass manufacture of electric vehicles in the UK, safeguarding green jobs and driving emissions to net zero by 2050. We must also create a circular economy for electric vehicle batteries to maximise the economic and environmental opportunities of the transition to zero emission vehicles. That is why we support

innovation, infrastructure and a regulatory environment for the UK battery recycling industry. The £318 million Faraday battery challenge is about tackling those technical challenges of reusing and recycling battery components with the aim of making them 95% recyclable by 2035—up from 10% to 50% today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley mentioned many of the critical minerals. He will have to forgive me, that topic is not my direct brief, but I assure him that a lot of the work on the Faraday battery challenge is to address such critical challenges, of which Ministers are well aware.

We must also continue to support public transport as one of the most sustainable ways around. On rail, we are building on our Williams-Shapps plan for rail to decarbonise the rail network. We have already completed 700 miles of rail electrification in England and Wales, and we will continue to electrify more of the network in the years ahead. In the past year, there has been a meteoric rise in cycling and walking, and all of our policy development is aimed at embedding that shift. As I said, we are investing £2 billion to enable half of all travel in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030.

**Jim Shannon** >

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I asked the Minister earlier—if she is coming to it, that is dead on, but if she is not, perhaps she will reply to me—about how green biofuels can improve rail and public transport in the UK. Does she have a response to that? If she does not, I am happy for her to get back to me.

**Rachel Maclean** >

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We refer to that in the transport decarbonisation plan, but I am happy to write to the hon. Gentleman with a lot more detail. Synthetic fuels are an important part of our thinking on decarbonising the entire transport network.

In the Prime Minister’s 10-point plan, he announced £20 million of funding for pioneering UK freight trials. The hon. Member for Bristol East rightly mentioned freight. We want to test and develop primary candidate technologies for zero emission long-haul HGVs this year, and the role of hydrogen will be crucial as we aim to decarbonise the transport sector and put UK industry and technology at its forefront. Although it is in its infancy, in the UK we have one of the largest publicly accessible hydrogen refuelling station networks in Europe.

I seek your guidance, Ms Nokes. What time does the debate end?

**Caroline Nokes** >

(in the Chair)

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It ends at 10.55 am. It would be a courtesy to allow the Member in charge time to wind up.

**Rachel Maclean** >

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I will certainly do that. Thank you very much, Ms Nokes. I will bring my remarks to a close and thank everybody who has contributed.

Our transport decarbonisation plan must not just change transport to be greener; it must make transport better for everyone, because transport is what connects people to opportunity, prosperity and each other. Our resolve in tackling climate change and ending the UK’s contribution to it could not be stronger.

 10.51am

**Felicity Buchan** >

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I thank the Minister for that informative and ambitious update. I thank all Members, including the Opposition Front-Bench spokespeople, for their contributions. I am glad to hear that the transport decarbonisation plan is in its final phase and that the Minister wants to make it more ambitious. I am looking forward to that.

I was also glad to hear that we will be introducing legislation on the reliability of chargers, because that is something that I hear a lot about anecdotally. I am glad we are making progress on mandating chargers in new homes. There is clearly a lot of legislation to come. The Minister also mentioned the consultation on vehicle sales between 2030 and 2035. I am looking forward to seeing and scrutinising all that because, as I said, this is a huge challenge but also a huge opportunity. We collectively need to get this absolutely spot on.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the transport decarbonisation plan.

 10.53am

*Sitting suspended.*