

Speech: Committee on Climate Change 'Net Zero' report

Everyone knows that when you appoint John Gummer to chair this important committee you are going to get rigour, you are going to get passion, and you are going to be challenged.

But you are also going to get the sense that we can drive ourselves to achieve what you set out. And we are absolutely determined to do it.

I just want to say a few things to set the scene for Chris' introduction of his report.

The first is to thank you for the huge work that's gone into this request that we made in the full knowledge that we would have rigour, we would have science, we would have the authority that the Committee draws on and always expresses.

We will study the recommendations very carefully. But it's evident already that this is going to be one of the most important publications not just that we've had on climate in this country but around the world.

It is a seminal work and draws on the very latest climate science and its impact will be felt for decades to come.

In recent weeks people from all walks of life and all sections of society have set out the stark and uncompromising case for further action to protect our planet. I applaud them.

I think this report is being launched at a time of great national and international commitment and determination to see greater action.

One of our proudest achievements as a country is that – with all political parties uniting, and civil society coming together – we have led the world in tackling climate change.

Since the year 2000 no country in the G20 has gone further than Britain in decarbonising their economy.

Six years ago, 40% of our electricity generated came from coal.

When I checked my Gridwatch app this morning there wasn't a single contribution from coal being generated. Across the year it's typically now less than 5%, while the world's biggest offshore windfarms can be found off our coasts.

We are still building many of the key pillars of a net-zero economy mentioned in today's report.

From making plans to have the first Carbon Capture and Storage operational

from the mid-2020s.

To our mission to halve the energy use of new buildings by 2030 and establishing the first zero-carbon Industrial Cluster by 2040.

But while all this is necessary, it is not sufficient.

We know we must do more – and we will do more.

In 2008 I was the opposition spokesman during the passage of the Climate Change Act. Through the passage of the bill the 60% reduction target to 80%.

And that was the first law in the world to set a legally binding carbon reduction targets.

More than a decade later our ambition – far from having diminished – is strengthened.

We want to be the first major economy to legislate for a net zero emissions target.

It is the start of a new phase to eradicate our contribution to global warming once and for all.

As we consider how we reach net zero we must listen to – and be guided by – the science.

That's why we commissioned the report in October. That the substance of this report has been put together since then is a tribute to the professionalism and dedication of John and Chris, and their team.

It is a comprehensive and ground-breaking report and we will commit to responding in a timeframe which reflects the urgency of the issue.

In the years ahead the battle to halt catastrophic climate change will be won or will be lost.

We intend to win.

Here in the UK, we want to do more than just 'play our part'.

We want to lead from the front.

Today's report is part of that.

So in this crucial moment for our planet we should be united in our determination to tackle the climate emergency vigorously at home and show that leadership abroad.

It is a great honour and fills me with great pride to be here.

Thank for you very much.