

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM GHNÍOMHÚ AR SON NA HAERÁIDE

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE ACTION

Dé Céadaoin, 27 Márta 2019

Wednesday, 27 March 2019

The Joint Committee met at 2 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Colm Brophy,+	Senator Paul Daly,
Deputy Pat Buckley,+	Senator Máire Devine,
Deputy Mary Butler,	Senator Alice-Mary Higgins,*
Deputy Jack Chambers,	Senator Billy Lawless,+
Deputy Lisa Chambers,+	Senator Tim Lombard,
Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy,	Senator Ian Marshall,
Deputy Pat Deering,	Senator Michelle Mulherin.
Deputy Timmy Dooley,	
Deputy Danny Healy-Rae,*	
Deputy Martin Heydon,	
Deputy Billy Kelleher,+	
Deputy Tony McLoughlin,+	
Deputy Imelda Munster,	
Deputy Eugene Murphy,*	
Deputy Tom Neville,	
Deputy Kate O'Connell,+	
Deputy Thomas Pringle,	
Deputy Eamon Ryan,	
Deputy Sean Sherlock,	
Deputy Bríd Smith,	
Deputy Brian Stanley.	

* In the absence of Deputy Carol Nolan, Deputy John Lahart and Senator Grace O’Sullivan.

+ In the absence of Deputy Martin Heydon, Deputy Imelda Munster, Deputy Mary Butler, Deputy Pat Deering, Deputy Tom Neville and Senator Ian Marshall for part of the meeting.

DEPUTY HILDEGARDE NAUGHTON IN THE CHAIR.

The joint committee met in private session until 3.56 p.m.

Third Report of Citizens’ Assembly: Discussion (Resumed)

Chairman: I welcome our viewers. We will start with recommendation 16 in respect of chapter 6. There is an amendment put forward by Deputy Dooley. There is an amendment to the amendment, on which we propose to vote. Does Deputy Corcoran Kennedy want to read out the amendment to the amendment?

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: There are a number of excellent recommendations in the amendment proposed by Deputy Dooley. I propose one amendment to it, which I hope will be acceptable. This is in relation to the response to the Citizens’ Assembly recommendation that the level of carbon taxation should be increased. My proposed amendment is that we accept the expert advice in favour of this measure from the Climate Change Advisory Council for a carbon price trajectory that rises to €80 per tonne by 2030, and that this should be supported by legislation in 2019.

Chairman: Are there any other contributors on this? I will bring in Deputy Dooley.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I am not accepting the amendment as proposed. I set out a very clear amendment aimed very specifically at assuring the public about how the Government might respond to the collection of a carbon tax. From my point of view, I have supported a carbon tax and I acknowledge, accept and appreciate the advice that was given at the Citizens’ Assembly and, indeed, that of the Climate Change Advisory Council. In conjunction with setting out the trajectory and the numerics, it is important to set out information for the people who will be most affected by the increases in carbon tax, which I and my party accept fully are a necessary component to assist in the behavioural change to wean this society off fossil fuels. What we do not accept is for the committee to decide on this now without assisting the information deficit among the public and of people who will recognise the impact of an increase on them, particularly on those in the category of fuel poverty who will not be in a position to do a deep retrofit or insulate their home. All this amendment presents them with is a tax and a charge but they are not being given any significant outline of what it is that the Government intends to do, or what we are suggesting from a committee perspective, to assist them in meeting those increased charges. It is important that we do this in step and in parallel and I am not prepared to accept the amendment until such time as the work is done in setting out in a very clear and concise way how we are going to assist people in making that transition away from fossil fuels. I accept that it is happening and I support the principles but it is not good enough to just talk

about a tax on the one hand while on the other hand not to talk in any meaningful way about the capacity to assist people, particularly those experiencing fuel poverty, to whom I referred, and those who are struggling to pay their mortgages and their rent. We must set out in a very clear way how we will assist them in the transition away from fossil fuels.

Deputy Brian Stanley: We need to be careful about what this amendment is about. It is about multiplying by four the carbon tax that we have at the moment, from €20 per tonne, which brought in about €450 million in the past year, to €80 per tonne. This is happening without any consideration for the impact it will have on low and middle income households or, indeed, on businesses and on rural dwellers, in particular. What we are doing here if we go ahead with this amendment is that we are simply loading on another layer of tax on top of citizens who are already under serious pressure with mortgages and all the other increases in charges that they have as well. We are doing it without any firm international evidence that can show that this has worked. We are also doing it without having the alternatives available for citizens to make the transition. We want citizens to make the transition to more eco-friendly living in using public transport and electric vehicles. We do not even have the network for charging electric vehicles and there is an affordability issue with them. There is the issue of public transport, which, outside the M50, does not exist in most of the country. The poorest and the lowest income households in this State are those that most need retrofitting. On microgeneration, I have a Bill sitting on Committee Stage that needs to be progressed to allow citizens, small businesses and householders to generate electricity. We are doing it at a time when we have not made a switch in how we generate our power. If we are going to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, we are talking about the electrification of our heating systems and of large parts of our transport systems and we have not made any changes in how we generate that power, except to continue to do so mainly from fossil fuels. Our party has put forward proposals on that to move to 80% renewables by 2030. For those reasons, we will be opposing this amendment.

Chairman: I will try to keep members' contributions to two minutes each if possible. I know this is an important issue but we must do that to try to be fair to members. I will let them know when their two minutes are up.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: All committee members are very conscious of the need to ensure that there are mechanisms put in place which reflect the views of the Citizens' Assembly in respect of fuel poverty. While, by and large, there is a recognition of the €80 per tonne by 2030, which was set out by Professor FitzGerald and others, there is also a need for actions built into the recommendations of this committee to ensure there are plans to ensure that funding is put in place to protect those people who are in fuel impoverished households and, in particular, those who are on low incomes. We are all very mindful of that.

I seek clarification from the Chairman on what is actually before us as an amendment. As I understand it, we are to divide on one element of the recommendation, namely, the word "accepts" versus "agrees." In other words, we either accept the expert advice in favour of this measure from the CCAC for a carbon price trajectory that rises to €80 per tonne by 2030 and that this should be supported in legislation by 2019. The rest of the wording of that paragraph speaks to the issues here in supporting Citizens' Assembly, recognising the negative impacts for people who are on lower incomes and so on, accepts the international consensus around the need for behavioural change and increased investment towards mitigation and away from fossil fuels and agrees that carbon pricing should be ring-fenced. The clarification I am seeking is on whether we are dividing on the issue of whether we accept the 2030 target, as set out by an independent body outside of this House, or whether we can find a mechanism to recognise that

target and not divide the committee. There may be a compromise. Instead of using the word “accepts” for the expert advice, perhaps we could say that we “recognise” the expert advice of the CCAC for a carbon price trajectory. Therefore, we would be acknowledging the outside expertise on this issue and we would be obviating the need to divide the committee on the issue.

Chairman: I want to clarify the amendment to the amendment that Deputy Corcoran Kennedy has put forward. The difference in language to Deputy Dooley’s amendment is that in response to the Citizens’ Assembly recommendation that the level of carbon taxation should be increased, the committee accepts the expert advice in favour of this measure from the Climate Change Advisory Council for a carbon price trajectory that rises to €80 per tonne by 2030 and this should be supported by legislation in 2019. The difference between Deputy Corcoran Kennedy’s amendment and Deputy Dooley’s is that it is saying the committee “accepts” the expert advice and it also names the price of carbon by the year 2030 which is at €80 per tonne and states that would be supported by legislation. Those are the three key points, namely, that: it accepts the advice rather than acknowledges it; that the carbon price would be set at €80 per tonne by the year 2030, which is in 11 years’ time; and that this should be supported by legislation in 2019. They are the differences. I accept the point that Deputy Dooley has really built around the support mechanisms in the rest of the amendment but they are the differences.

Deputy Pat Deering: This is an important stage of the proceedings. It is important that the committee starts to take responsibility. We have been here since last July, we have engaged quite constructively over recent weeks and months and the engagement has been particularly intense in recent weeks. It is about taking responsibility now. The time for talk is over. We have all engaged with those in our constituencies and at local and national levels, particularly with children and students in recent weeks. They want us to take action and they expect us to take action on this. While it is easy for some of us to say we will do this, that and the other in the media and elsewhere, now is the time for action. It is important that we have a figure on what the trajectory will be. If we do not have that figure, there we will never be able to achieve anything.

It is also important that we need to be able to carry out these measures over the next number of years, be it retrofitting houses or whatever. We are playing catch up in this regard. There is a great cost to this and somebody has to pay for it. We have been down the road with different issues in the past where expenses were involved and members of other committees did not take responsibility. We will see the end result of that over the next period of time because of certain members who spoke quite loudly and were prepared to bully members into making decisions and frighten members in respect of different decisions but now is the time that we stand up and take responsibility for our actions. We have been here long enough and it is time we did that. The amendment to the amendment that Deputy Corcoran Kennedy has proposed is quite straightforward. It is saying that we need this trajectory and to have the figure underpinned by legislation this year, which is very important.

Senator Tim Lombard: I support the amendment proposed by Deputy Corcoran Kennedy. It is an important amendment. In many ways it sets out what we have been looking for over the past nine months. We have spent nine months debating, going through issues and having Secretaries General before us. The general public needs to have clarity on what we are proposing when it comes to the carbon tax issue. The carbon tax issue has been one of the key issues we have been discussing since we came here. We just had amendments and now we have an amendment to an amendment. We are trying to get clarity for communities and society on what we will do on carbon tax for the next 11 years. It is a fair and balanced amendment and there

is genuine support for it in society. If one looks at the protests in the past few weeks, young people will not thank us if we do not take hard decisions. They will not thank politicians in Leinster House who want to fudge this issue. We need to take responsibility and move forward. Today is an important day, on which we must set the price of carbon for the next 11 years. If we do not do so, society will not thank us for engaging in shady politics and being afraid to take hard decisions.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: There are a number of different aspects to this. The words of the proposed amendment appear innocuous enough when looked at in black and white and one could say the amendment is acceptable. However, we also have to consider how little the Government has done in recent years. There has been no clarity on what it will do about the carbon price, which stands at €20 per tonne. My problem is that I do not trust this Government and would not trust any other Government enough to give it *carte blanche* to increase the carbon price to €80 per tonne immediately. It is vital that we retain ownership of the figure of €80 per tonne and tie it in specifically to measures that will help those who cannot afford to meet the requirements imposed by climate change. My problem with the proposal is that we cannot give a blank cheque to any Government. For this reason, I will not support it.

Deputy Martin Heydon: Since the committee was established in July last, all of the sessions with witnesses have been in public session. Since January, we have been meeting in private session to try to achieve cross-party political consensus and produce a powerful all-party report.

The children who went on strike from schools and marched on the Dáil and in my constituency were saying we need action. I explained to them that this committee is important because when members reach an agreement across party lines it carries considerable weight and gives the Minister of the day significant power to act upon its recommendations. It is easy to get consumed by the knowledge that the Minister is from the Fine Gael Party but we could have a Fianna Fáil, Labour Party or Sinn Féin Minister dealing with these issues tomorrow. I guarantee that we will have Ministers from other parties before 2030. That is the nature of politics. If we look back 11 years, Ministers have changed and they will change again in the future. We should not become fixated on who is in government and whether people trust it. The issue is this committee, as an all-party group, agreeing what is the best way forward. That gives us considerable power and we should not underestimate that.

It is disappointing that the Fianna Fáil Party amendment proposes to acknowledge rather than accept the need for increases in the carbon tax. Deputy Dooley states he wants an increase in carbon tax but his party, in this amendment, is watering down the wording of the recommendation by using the word “acknowledge” rather than “agree”. This removes the proposed trajectory for the carbon tax increase, which would give absolute certainty to individuals and businesses and give them a roadmap showing how we would reach a figure of €80 per tonne by 2030.

A key point to remember is that this is not a revenue-raising tax but a means of achieving behavioural change. If we remove the trajectory and tell people where this carbon charge will go, we will not achieve the crucial change in behaviour we are trying to bring about. It will be a fudge and the other positive elements of the report will get lost because the headline will be that the committee was not brave enough to set out a trajectory for carbon tax.

I do not have a problem with ring-fencing revenue generated from increases in the carbon tax. We should discuss how such ring-fenced money could be spent but I question the view

that we can dictate now how everything will be spent when we do not know what will be the spending plans of Governments of whatever parties in 2026 or 2027. That is where consultation is key. Fine Gael has been passionate about getting buy-in on carbon pricing. In the next two or three months, we intend having engagement, which will be led by the Department and involve town hall meetings being held across the length and breadth of the country. Every Tidy Towns group, local executive of the IFA or ICMSA and all other sectors of society impacted by this would have their say on how best to use an increase in the revenue raised to achieve behavioural change. That is what we need to do. Removing the proposed trajectory for increases to the carbon tax would weaken and water down the report and would be a retrograde step in the context of all the work we have done since July last.

Deputy Bríd Smith: If members of the public are confused about the reason the discussion has started on this issue and the way we are discussing it, I do not blame them because I am also confused. What is happening is similar to Henry Ford's statement that one can have any colour of car as long as it is black. That is what is being said to us in different ways here about carbon tax by both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Nobody should be fooled by this dancing on a pin about words such as "accept", "acknowledge", "believe" or anything else. This is about implementing a carbon tax on ordinary people that will rise fourfold in the next ten years without taking into consideration the circumstances in which they live. People living miles away from their workplace are forced to drive into work because we have poor public transport services. Others live in substandard accommodation that is damp, does not have double-glazing, has doors that do not fit or where there is no retrofitting and the occupant cannot afford to lag the attic. This goes on all over this country. I have an amendment proposing that Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil look at the fuel poverty in which people live before they even consider having this discussion. It is disingenuous and disrespectful of the Citizens' Assembly to say to the public that we must sort out this before we sort anything else out. It is unbelievable. Even the Taoiseach said to Deputy McDonald that carbon tax is only one measure in a suite of measures. Now we are making it the only measure because if we do not get this through, the whole strategy collapses.

Chairman: That is not-----

Deputy Bríd Smith: Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are totally hypocritical about it.

Chairman: That is not the case. Can I clarify?

(Interruptions).

Deputy Bríd Smith: Let me finish. I did not interrupt previous speakers.

Chairman: I will let the Deputy finish.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I have obviously hit a nerve because I did not interrupt. When reference was made to people bullying others I did not interrupt.

Chairman: That is okay.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I have obviously hit a nerve.

Chairman: I will let the Deputy finish.

Deputy Bríd Smith: What is going on here is a disgrace. The committee is evading the real issues that will deal in a radical manner with the issues that schoolchildren, some of whom are here in the Gallery today, were protesting about. They took strike action to tell the Government

to keep fossil fuels in the ground, yet Fine Gael, including the chairperson, have manipulated the system to block a Bill that would have kept them in the ground.

Chairman: I ask Deputy Smith to stop making accusations.

Deputy Bríd Smith: They have manipulated the situation and are now turning everything on the carbon tax. They are a disgrace. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are trying to tie a measure to deal with fuel poverty in with the acceptance of a carbon tax. They are trying to dance on a pin here to obfuscate. It is a bit like Groucho Marx's statement that he has principles and if people do not like them, he has others. The way in which they are messing around with words is disgraceful.

Chairman: I would like to clarify procedure and the reason we started with this issue. As members will be aware, we were to report as a cross-party committee at the end of January. We sought a further extension in order to deliberate. We have been working on this issue of climate action for the past seven months and, as we all know, we are under time pressure. The clock is ticking on how we deal with climate change. The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Deputy Bruton, is waiting on our cross-party report to feed in to his whole-of-Government plan. The reason we opened in public session on this issue was that we were to go into public session today and tomorrow and have a report published tomorrow. There was one issue that came up at very late notice last night and again this morning which created an obstacle. We had to overcome that stumbling block if we were to publish tomorrow. That is why we opened on this particular amendment to the amendment, as I explained earlier. I am giving all members an opportunity to give their views on this particular stumbling block.

I acknowledge and compliment members on the many hours of work that were done in private session. We have worked collaboratively. We are on the same page on more issues than not. As Deputy Smith said, this is only one small part of the overall solution to tackling climate change. Whether the Deputy agrees or not is a separate issue and she has made her views on that very clear. We have done an awful lot of work. We have more than 40 recommendations in the report and the price of carbon is just one small part of it. This is why I felt we needed to go into public session to get this started. Then we will go back to chapter 1 and start working our way through the whole of the report in order that we can report to the Oireachtas. What we have done over the past seven months has been very ambitious. It is a transformational piece of work that can feed into not just this Government but future Governments. On this, I want to move to our next-----

Deputy Bríd Smith: I want to correct the record before the Chairman finishes.

Chairman: -----speaker, Deputy Eamon Ryan.

Deputy Bríd Smith: The Chairman quoted me as saying this is one issue. I quoted her as saying it was one issue. It has become the issue-----

Chairman: It is not the issue. That is why-----

Deputy Bríd Smith: -----not because of us but because other committee members have-----

Deputy Timmy Dooley: That is the Deputy's opinion.

Deputy Bríd Smith: -----made it the issue.

Chairman: It is only one issue. We know that. That is why I want to move on to chapter

1. There are so many good recommendations in the report.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Absolutely, I agree.

Chairman: This is the stumbling block.

Deputy Bríd Smith: The Chairman has made it the issue.

Chairman: I do not want our report deferred over this one issue, which is only a small percentage of the work and the Deputy knows this.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I have no intention of deferring anything.

Chairman: I know the Deputy does not. I am just saying-----

Deputy Bríd Smith: I think what is going on here is disgraceful, with amendments to amendments that mean nothing.

Chairman: That is why I wanted to deal with it in public session now in order that we can move forward.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I agree with Deputy Bríd Smith that it is not ideal that this is the first item up. It almost seems inevitable that the issue of carbon taxation dominates. Certainly it is the first question that is always asked and then one does not get onto the wider work. It is important that we do so. I support the amendment because I want to keep that certainty in the ten-year period in order that we can start concentrating on the matters on which we really need to concentrate and on the big ticket items we need to get right. The committee has done really good work on setting a higher renewables target of 70%. The Government has responded to this and it was not going to do that at all. What we have said about needing a national land use plan is significant and important in terms of helping with the revised Common Agricultural Policy and a completely different future for Irish forestry and farming.

We must consider the scale of the change we need to make. We are all in favour of retrofit but we should recognise that the national development plan, which will have to change, states that by 2021 we will be deep retrofitting 45,000 houses to a B rating or higher. Last year we did 220. How will we go from 220 to 45,000 in two years? We do not have the workers or the financing mechanism set up. There are so many things we must do and it requires the political system. As we will not put the blame or guilt on the individual, it is up to us in the political system to work together collectively to make this transition. Irish people will be, can be and want to be good at it.

Carbon tax will not be the key measure but it will help. We heard research from UCD environmental policy masters students who are reviewing the literature that it will depend on what level it is set at but it could achieve 5%, 10% or 15% of the job. The analysis we got from the ESRI is that if we use the fee and dividend model, it would give an emissions reduction of approximately 17% by 2030. This is not exact but they are our best independent scientific experts who have applied their best independent thinking to come up with this figure. It could be lower or higher but it is not insignificant. It would help a country facing fines of €600 million or €700 million a year. The Irish public would really find us guilty if instead of going into social welfare, housing, health and education, money was going out of the country because we failed to take the type of action we need to take.

Deputy Dooley made a good point yesterday but he was reiterating the point we have all

been making throughout the process, which is that if we are going to do anything on carbon tax, we have to make sure we do everything we can to protect those on lower incomes. There are different views as to how we could and should do that. My understanding is we have all pretty much agreed that we need to spend the next four or five months working out with the Government the best way of doing this. We need to do this because by the end of this year, we as a country need to go to the European Union and agree a plan that is real and justiciable, in the sense the European Union will hold us to account on it.

The wording here is “acceptable”, in that the word “accepts” is not as strong as the word “agree” that we had earlier but it accepts the expert advice. It accepts what we heard from the Climate Change Advisory Council, which is our best independent adviser on the issue, on what we need to do. We are saying we will do it gradually. We will need to do a whole body of other work after that. I will be honest and say we will not get it all done in the next six months and we will probably not even get it done in six years. This will be a two or three-decade project of massive ambition, transformation and transition for our country that, first and foremost, has to be a just transition.

I would love to have a debate such as the one we are having on that just transition, forestry and transport. My God, we need to talk about transport. We are still heading completely in the wrong direction. Our entire transport plan has to change. A carbon tax will not do this; it will require political decisions of the Government to make it happen. However, we can start concentrating on it when we get over this issue that is dominating. It is the only issue ever discussed. Agreeing the amendment will not provide certainty because we are not agreeing the budget here but it will give a political signal and allow us to concentrate on what we need to concentrate on, which is how we protect those on lower incomes, transform our transport system, tap into the energy potential we have as a country and retrofit our homes. These will not be easy but they are doable. However, they will not be doable if we just break down on this issue at the very start.

I agree with Deputy Bríd Smith that it should not have been given such prominence. It should not be first up. Unfortunately, that is the nature of the politics and how it is played out. We should not divide on it. Even if we divide in a vote we should not lose what has been good on this committee, which is the collective approach.

Chairman: I agree with Deputy Eamon Ryan and I reiterate the excellent work we have all done, and I include all Deputies and Senators, on the report. When it is published the public will see how ambitious it is and the good work we have been doing over recent months.

Senator Máire Devine: I want to raise a number of points. Deputy Deering and others spoke about taking responsibility. Many people have stated we need to take responsibility and accountability but the committee has done so. We are coming to the endgame now and we are thrashing out what we believe and agree on. We agree the youth movement, whom I invited before the committee, made a fantastic presentation. The youth movement throughout the country, and not only those who were on strike, are very vocal not only on this issue but also on social justice. They stated they went on strike for the environment and to give the legislators a kick in the ass to do something. They also stated that in no way should the poorest in our country who suffer fuel poverty be landed with the tax or whatever it will be called, and as far as I can see it is a carbon tax.

Deputy Eamon Ryan said we will not put blame or guilt on people or individuals but we will. We will put blame, guilt and cost on individuals because the simple fact is that while we

may have a fee and dividend system, we will expect people to move into a green economy and a green way of living, working and enjoying life without offering an accessible and affordable alternative. We speak about behavioural change. In a psychological sense, if people were having therapy they would sit down and go through the need for change and how to do it but they would make sure it was realistic and the change that needed to be done was actually doable. I do not think we have got to that point with regard to affordability and accessibility and what people will use instead of fossil fuels and diesel cars. There are electric vehicles but at present they are quite out of the reach of a lot of people. A carbon tax would be punishment on people already trying to get on with life and to do their best. We have seen the capacity to change in this country and we are great at it. We have seen the capacity to have a green environment but not at the cost of pointing the finger at the people who can least afford it. I cannot support the amendment.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I have listened with interest to all concerned and still believe that the text, which I originally set out and which the amendment seeks to change, is adequate. There is a lot of talk about certainty. We need absolute certainty for the people who will be impacted by the measures to increase carbon taxation, which I support and agree with. I have done so at and outside of this committee. I support and accept the position of the Climate Change Advisory Council in that regard. It and the language in the report set out the trajectory very clearly. Fine Gael in particular seems to be clear about wanting absolute certainty on the value of the tax. It is less clear, however, on providing certainty on how it will be spent, what it will be spent on and whether it will address the real needs and concerns of the people who will be affected to the greatest extent by the taxes increasing over time.

Somebody talked about bravery. I will take no lecture from anyone in Fine Gael about bravery on climate action. Fine Gael has been in power for the past eight years and has done absolutely nothing to address climate change. All of a sudden, we now have a panic attack in this committee and need absolute certainty for everyone concerned. Fianna Fáil and the Green Party introduced the carbon tax, which has resided at €20 per tonne since. Had Fine Gael shown any regard for an increase in the carbon tax, it could have done so over the last eight budgets. It could certainly have done so last year with the public campaigns on recognition of addressing climate change, but it sadly failed to do so. Fine Gael, through its stewardship of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and public transport generally has failed absolutely to address climate change. This year alone, we are purchasing 110 dirty diesel buses. It has shown scant regard for people who want to address climate change through feed-in tariffs from their own energy generation within and around their own businesses, whether solar or wind energy. It has brought forward no proposals whatsoever for planning guidelines to assist with the continued roll-out of onshore wind energy. No supports have been provided for solar energy for the farming community who might want to use lands that would assist in generating an income and also contribute to the renewables.

Will Fine Gael help me in trying to understand why this newfound interest in climate change is of such magnitude that Fine Gael seeks to undermine what I have already set out in my documents? The party that I represent has, at all times, both in government and in opposition, taken a really responsible approach to climate change, long before it was fashionable. We protected the environment through the introduction of the levy on plastic bags, if one wants to go back that far. It was not exactly welcomed at the time but had phenomenal benefits. We introduced the carbon tax with the Green Party, at €20 per tonne, where it has resided since. This additional amendment is unnecessary and I hope that the committee will not support it.

Deputy Imelda Munster: It is fair to say that the carbon tax is just one small part of the report but nonetheless the report and this amendment propose a fourfold increase in carbon tax. The current Government and past Governments have done very little on this issue, and we are facing hundreds of millions in fines every year because of the lack of Government action. It is typical that tax is always the first response. We have to encourage behavioural change but the way to do it is to assist people to bring it about in order that they are enthusiastic about that behavioural change, but not without putting measures in place first. Other people mentioned our public transport system. It is on its knees. It has been starved of investment for years. There are parts of rural Ireland where people have no other option but to use their car. Parts of rural Ireland do not have a bus from one end of the week to the other. That is how bad it is. Our national rail service, Iarnród Éireann, is so badly underfunded that there are serious safety issues within it. Most ordinary people just cannot afford to retrofit their houses. It is not at the top of their agenda. Spare money is not sitting there for that. While a fourfold increase may not affect many people here or the proposers of the amendment or the Government, one has to consider home energy consumption and fuel poverty. The Government has to accept responsibility for bringing about that change by supporting people, by investment and by making it affordable for ordinary families to make that change. I will vote against the amendment.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I have been asked to substitute for Senator Grace O'Sullivan at very short notice. As others, including Deputy Bríd Smith, have said, I would have loved to be able to come in and have public debate in other areas such as about public transport or public procurement. There is significant potential for this report and this committee to transform the landscape with regard to climate change. I have some difficulty with this because I understand the distrust and the concerns that have been expressed. I believe that there are valid questions. It is, at times, difficult to see the urgency spoken of by Government when action has not been taken in the past. We hope that the urgency being reflected in this debate is also reflected in support for the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development (Amendment) (Climate Emergency Measures) Bill 2018 this week in the Dáil.

I note the mention of carbon pricing and I believe that carbon has a cost that needs to be recognised. The cost of carbon is not simply when people are purchasing fuel and the pricing of it. The cost is also for the damage which has been done to date, which is why I hope this committee will also look at levies on some of the sectors which have driven us to the point that we are at and contributed most to our carbon emissions in the past. There is also a cost of carbon that needs to be factored into public procurement, so that when we are spending, we think in a holistic way about it. When we look at the long term, 11 years in the future, knowing what we know about the 12 years remaining to avert catastrophic climate change, the greatest cost of carbon will be from climate change. The cost of not cutting our carbon usage will be felt by the most vulnerable, not just here in Ireland but around the world. That is why, even though it is with great difficulty and concern, I need to accept the advice of the Climate Change Advisory Council on this issue.

However, I believe that the rest of the Fianna Fáil amendment is much stronger than the original text. It addresses the balance and the issues of fuel poverty. I know we are discussing an amendment to an amendment, but one aspect of the Fianna Fáil amendment allows me to support it. It is that prior to the introduction of any increase in carbon pricing, there must be an examination and specific policy measures brought forward to assist certain people. Everybody would be given assurance if the Government indicated that the legislation in 2019 will not be brought prior to the specific policy measures mentioned in this text being brought forward. If that is not the case, I will battle these issues in the legislative space in the Seanad.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: This is one of the most important committees that I have ever sat on. I think I have attended most of its meetings. Every single person who sat around the table for the past few months is here because he or she cares about what the committee is doing. Nobody has a monopoly on caring about the country, the environment or anything else. We were in a period of austerity and while I would have loved to have seen much more progress being made on the environment, that was not possible because we had no money at the time. Things have changed, however, and the new Government formed in 2016 appointed a Minister with specific responsibility for the environment. It also established a Citizens' Assembly to specifically examine how we could be leaders in climate action. This committee was then established to examine the report of the Citizens' Assembly and how we might achieve this goal.

The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Deputy Bruton announced €500 million for the climate action fund earlier this year. Deputy Stanley stated that the carbon tax raised €150 million. We want to see much more progress. I completely accept the point that the carbon tax is just one aspect of a major debate that we must have. There is much more work to be done and many more things to be talked about. While I accept the bona fides of members, it is with some disappointment but not a surprise that Deputy Dooley has sought to be so political about this. I was happy to see his fine video produced at the weekend in which he seemed to be moving in the direction of accepting a carbon tax. He says he accepts a carbon tax but does not want to put a price on it. What we are suggesting here is to be realistic and to put a price on it. We all say we accept it to a degree but there should also be a price on it, which is something we have to do.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins made a point that I had intended to make to allay Deputy Brid Smith's concerns around fuel poverty. The remainder of the amendment more than adequately covers this. We are all very concerned about fuel poverty and ensuring that the people who will be impacted most will be supported most. For this reason, I am glad the fee and dividend approach will be considered and that those in fuel poverty will be protected. That is accepted and it is also provided for in the amendment. I appeal to the committee to support our amendment on this because it is the right way forward.

Chairman: Is the amendment to the amendment being pressed?

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: Yes.

Chairman: As there is less than the full membership present, under Standing Orders members are obliged to wait eight minutes, or until full membership is present, before proceeding to take the division.

Question put.

The Committee divided: Tá;, 11; Níl, 11.	
Tá;	Níl;
Corcoran Kennedy, Marcella.	Chambers, Jack.
Deering, Pat.	Chambers, Lisa.
Heydon, Martin.	Daly, Paul.
Higgins, Alice-Mary.	Devine, Máire.
Lawless, Billy.	Dooley, Timmy.
Lombard, Tim.	Healy-Rae, Danny.

Mulherin, Michelle.	Munster, Imelda.
Naughton, Hildegarde.	Murphy, Eugene.
Neville, Tom.	Pringle, Thomas.
Ryan, Eamon.	Smith, Bríd.
Sherlock, Sean.	Stanley, Brian.

Question declared lost.

Question declared carried.

Chairman: Now we will move on to chapter 1, which relates to the governance structure and the need for a new national framework. There are four recommendations. Members have the list. To try to keep us to-----

Deputy Martin Heydon: Should we not be taking a vote on the amendment?

Chairman: No. Oh, yes.

Clerk to the Committee: We will come to it when we are dealing with chapter 6.

Deputy Martin Heydon: Are we not dealing with it first?

Chairman: Do members want to take a vote on the amendment?

Deputy Martin Heydon: Yes.

Chairman: Okay.

Deputy Eugene Murphy: On a point of order, are we entitled to time to discuss this amendment?

Deputy Eamon Ryan: We will do it under chapter 6.

Deputy Eugene Murphy: This is a-----

Chairman: The amendment was discussed.

Deputy Eugene Murphy: No, we discussed an amendment to an amendment.

Deputy Jack Chambers: We discussed the amendment to the amendment.

Chairman: That debate referred to the amendment.

Deputy Eugene Murphy: No, there is an amendment to the amendment.

Deputy Jack Chambers: We were very clear that we were discussing the amendment to the amendment and not the amendment.

Chairman: I am conscious of time and of our desire to report by tomorrow. Many members referred to the amendment when they were talking about the amendment to the amendment. It is up to the members. I am totally in their hands. If they want to delay the process, and they feel they want to speak to the amendment, we can certainly facilitate that. I am conscious that we want to get through all the chapters here. We want to talk about all of the other recommen-

dations we have made. There are more than 40 recommendations in the report, which we want to publish tomorrow.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I agree with what Deputy Bríd Smith said at the outset. We should have started by doing this sequentially. It would be better to discuss the amendment when we are discussing chapter 6.

Deputy Martin Heydon: We have discussed it.

Chairman: We have discussed it.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: We are going to have to discuss it again.

Chairman: Can I get the agreement of the committee to wait to discuss the amendment when we come to chapter 6? At that stage, we can go back to chapter 1 and try to move through the good work we have been carrying out over the last seven months.

Deputy Brian Stanley: The amendment that has come in today from Fianna Fáil was introduced on the third or fourth opportunity after final dates being set and all the rest. We have voted on an amendment to the Fianna Fáil's substantial amendment, which sets out a clear course. It would be unusual to leave the Fianna Fáil amendment hanging by going away from it. We believe the amendment should be dealt with now. After we have dealt with it, we can go to chapter 1 and deal with the rest of the recommendations.

Chairman: If members are agreeable to that, we will-----

Deputy Bríd Smith: It could be a slippery slope for Fine Gael.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Having voted on the amendment to the amendment, we should not walk away from the amendment itself.

Chairman: Okay. We will vote on the amendment.

Question put.

The Committee divided: Tá;, 7; Níl, 14.	
Tá;	Níl;
Chambers, Jack.	Corcoran Kennedy, Marcella.
Chambers, Lisa.	Deering, Pat.
Daly, Paul.	Devine, Máire.
Dooley, Timmy.	Heydon, Martin.
Healy-Rae, Danny.	Lawless, Billy.
Murphy, Eugene.	Lombard, Tim.
Pringle, Thomas.	Mulherin, Michelle.
	Munster, Imelda.
	Naughton, Hildegarde.
	Neville, Tom.
	Ryan, Eamon.
	Sherlock, Sean.
	Smith, Bríd.

Question declared lost.

Staon: Senator Mary-Alice Higgins.

Chairman: Now we will move to chapter 1 to consider recommendations 1 to 4.

Deputy Pat Deering: Will the Chairman clarify where we stand now?

Chairman: The amendment and the amendment to the amendment have both been lost.

Deputy Bríd Smith: The report remains unamended.

Chairman: The report still has a recommendation.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: The draft report has a recommendation.

Chairman: Yes. There are four recommendations in chapter 1. I will confine each contribution to two minutes to keep us within our time limits as we try to get through the report. There are four recommendations. We will discuss all four of them and we can then vote on recommendations Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4, or perhaps we could accept them all in a group if the members are agreeable, but I will be guided by them.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I have a procedural amendment. Where will it be taken?

Chairman: Has it been submitted? A procedural amendment?

Deputy Bríd Smith: Apologies, it is a textual amendment.

Chairman: We could deal with that tomorrow. We will go through only the recommendations today.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Okay.

Chairman: Have all the members got a copy of the recommendations? There are four recommendations, regarding the governance structure, to chapter 1, the need for a new national framework. They read:

The Committee recommends that a new governance framework be established for delivering on climate action, and in that regard it recommends [a number of suggestions] that:

1. New climate change legislation be enacted by the Oireachtas in 2019 that will include, with regard to a new governance structure:

a. That action on climate should be considered a priority activity across all of Government;

b. the establishment of a new Climate Action Council to supersede the Climate Change Advisory Council;

c. The establishment of a Standing Committee of both the Houses of the Oireachtas on Climate Action;

And with regard to mitigation targets and performance:

- d. A target of net zero economy-wide emissions by 2050;
- e. A provision for a 2030 emissions target, consistent with the emissions reduction pathway to the 2050 target, to be set by 2020 by Statutory Instrument requiring the formal approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas following receipt of advice from the Climate Action Council;
- f. Provision for five-yearly carbon budgets consistent with the emissions reduction pathway to 2030 and 2050 targets, to be set by Statutory Instrument requiring the formal approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas following receipt of advice from the Climate Action Council;
- g. A target for the renewable share of electricity generation of at least 70% by 2030; and
- h. Strengthening the statutory obligation on public bodies to require that they perform their functions in a manner consistent with the 2050 target and interim targets. (See Sections 1.3. and 1.4)

Recommendation No. 2 provides:

A stronger mandate, expanded secretariat and budget should be given to the Climate Action Council. That mandate shall include the responsibility for developing and proposing five-yearly carbon budgets. The legislation should ensure:

- a. that the board of the Council has a mix and balance of both gender and expertise; and
- b. the Council be given access to the data and expertise held by Government Departments.

Recommendation No. 3 provides:

The Standing Committee of both Houses of the Oireachtas on Climate Action should:

- a. hold Ministers and public bodies to account for their climate action performance;
- b. examine selected public policy proposals for climate implications; and
- c. Report annually to both Houses of the Oireachtas on the performance of the State in meetings its obligations.

Recommendation No. 4 provides:

A coherent all of government approach, supported by the Climate Action Implementation Board, should be adopted for the delivery and management of climate actions. The central co-ordination and performance oversight role should be mandated to the Department of the Taoiseach.

That is an outline of the four recommendations, to which there is a Fine Gael amendment proposed. The Members will note it is on the draft amendment list. It is amendment No. 6.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I do not have a copy of it.

Chairman: I have a number of copies of the list of amendments. I will furnish the Deputy with one. Has everyone got a copy of the amendment list? The amendment proposes a new text, namely, that after the words “climate actions” to add the words “using a least cost pathway”.

Deputy Bríd Smith: The Chairman said the additional words are to be included after the words “climate actions”. In which the recommendation do those words occur?

Chairman: Recommendation No. 4. It is indicated in a little blue box at the bottom of the page. On the list of recommendations, there is a blue box at the bottom of the page.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: It is page 14, is it not?

Chairman: It is to the right of the document setting out the recommendations.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I see it.

Chairman: Does Deputy Corcoran Kennedy want to speak to the amendment?

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: In respect of the amendment, we are asking for the adding in of the words “using a least cost pathway” because, clearly, we want to have the least cost for everybody.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I strongly oppose that amendment. We have just been hearing of the costs and of our having to be serious about the cost of carbon and the costs obtaining. There is a cost associated with transition. With respect to inserting the words “least cost”, in the context of procurement, we know what using the lowest cost approach, rather than a best or a quality approach, resulted in. Attaching a least cost pathway to climate actions puts cost as a priority. There is a problem with that phase and I certainly will oppose its inclusion.

Chairman: I will bring in people as they indicate to me.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I also have a problem with this amendment. We would be linking costs to the whole process and making it about costs rather than about climate change. I would be very opposed to it.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I agree with the previous two speakers. Deputy Corcoran Kennedy has not given us an explanation for the inclusion of that amendment.

Chairman: I will come back to Deputy Corcoran Kennedy.

Deputy Bríd Smith: There is no logical explanation for it. We have to reject this amendment because it flies in the face of an attempt to deal with this issue seriously.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: The Deputy has not been listening. I said-----

Chairman: I will bring the Deputy back in at the end. I will bring in the other speakers first as they may need clarification. Senator Lombard is next.

Senator Tim Lombard: We would have gone over the large issues in terms of procurement such that there will be a carbon price involved going forward for all new capital structures for the State. Procurement regarding this issue is not an issue in itself. This is about ensuring we

use an economy of measures that will be less costly, if we can provide for that, to ensure we get to where we want to get. We are not trying to move away from it. We have proved that in the previous debate. We are trying to ensure we get to where we want to get but there must be a proactive measure in place that the least cost pathway is better for our society, people and the economy.

Chairman: I thank the members for keeping their contributions brief. I call Deputy Sherlock.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I seek an explanation as to whether the use of the words “least cost pathway” is an industry standard term. Does it denote a certain connotation? Is it a technical term?

Chairman: I will bring in Deputy Corcoran Kennedy at the end. I will bring in other people offering, in case there might be other forms of clarification. I call Deputy Dooley.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: To be honest, this is the reason I introduced the amendment earlier today. What we want from Fine Gael is absolute certainty in terms of the cost that will be imposed on the citizens, but when it comes to measures appropriate to assisting people in addressing climate change from their own perspective or within the curtilage of their own home, Fine Gael is very clear that, from a Government perspective, it wants to do it at least cost. I certainly will not be supporting this amendment because it is indicative of a plan by the Government to try to use this committee and this report as a means to support what it has been doing, which is very little in that it has failed to recognise the challenges that exist and is attempting to do this on a shoestring. We know that if we are to make that seismic shift, the Government will have to invest very significant sums of money in the way it does its business. If we note what Deputy Corcoran Kennedy sought in her previous amendment, she has no issue with setting the burden on the shoulders of the taxpayer, outlining that at an early stage, but not providing any clarity or certainty in terms of what the Government will do. We now get a little insight into it, however, which is that it will be done at the least cost possible.

Chairman: I call Deputy Jack Chambers to be followed by Deputy Corcoran Kennedy.

Deputy Jack Chambers: I agree with my colleague, Deputy Dooley. This is a great Trojan Horse. We have clarity on the pathway that is wanted around carbon taxes, but when it comes to mitigation and giving people support, there is a want and a necessity to have the least cost pathway. That shows why we need clarity on the other aspect of the report and why Deputy Dooley’s earlier amendment was needed. It seems to be the intention of the Fine Gael Party to give a licence to Leo to introduce the tax, but when it comes to everything else in this report, there is a contradiction and compromise. We should not give that licence to an Executive that has not shown any leadership in this area during the past eight years. We need to front up to that reality. Consensus works both ways. The Government cannot have a licence to tax to get clarity while at the same time wanting to fudge the leadership issue, not wanting to give back to the working families who need support and a bit of help with the cost so that they can deal with this issue in their homes, and wanting to lower the cost and fudge the issue of investment for working families. I reject this right-wing amendment, and the committee should reject it also.

Chairman: I call Deputy Corcoran Kennedy. Deputy Sherlock requested an explanation for the reasoning behind the proposal of a low-cost pathway and the intention behind it.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: It is extraordinary how once the cameras are on,

Fianna Fáil starts getting very political. I will leave it at that.

(Interruptions).

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: Perhaps it is not extraordinary. That is a good point. The point of this amendment is that it would involve the least cost to this citizen. I am hearing from Fianna Fáil that it wants a high cost to the citizen and everybody else seems to be looking for a high cost to the citizen. The point is that if they want to leave it out, that is fine, but maybe we would want to develop this a bit and discuss using a least-cost pathway to the citizen. That might be more what people want.

Chairman: This is on reducing cost to the citizen. I call Deputy Stanley.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I want to clarify something. What is the decision in regard to the amendments to the text? In what way are we going to deal with them? When will the committee members vote on this?

Chairman: If it is in the body of the text, we can deal with that tomorrow. We are just dealing with the recommendations today. We want to move through the report. It is easier to sort out the text-----

Deputy Brian Stanley: We are just dealing with recommendations now.

Chairman: Yes, it will clarify the text once we agree the recommendations.

Deputy Brian Stanley: We are dealing only with amendment No. 6 now.

Chairman: We are on chapter 1 and we are dealing with amendment No. 6. I will continue on the issue of low cost. I call Deputy Pringle.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Would the least-cost option in one of these cases be to pay the fine to Europe rather than dealing with some of the issues?

Chairman: This is in regard to the least cost to the citizen, I understand.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: The Government works on behalf of the citizens and it pays money on behalf of the citizens. Is the least-cost option to pay a fine rather than do what is recommended?

Chairman: I call Senator Mulherin.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: It has been suggested in the contributions that these few lines are pivotal. I think they make common sense. We should be guided but it should be looked at in a schematic way, and the schematic way is by moving towards reducing carbon emissions and taking carbon out of the way we live. I remind members that one of the requirements of the energy regulator when putting renewables on the grid and promoting that is to look at the cost of renewables. That is why we have onshore wind. I think members are getting pedantic. Maybe we have hit the kernel and it certainly sounds like we have hit something that is being blown out of proportion. This does not need to be there, other than for clarity and it is a good idea for clarity.

Deputy Bríd Smith: The more I hear the answers, the more I dislike this amendment. The term “least cost pathway” is a term used in procurement and it probably comes from the industrial manner in which we deal with how things are valued. The Deputy’s answer that it is the

least cost to the citizen indicates again that we see all costs going on ordinary people. There is no mention of the least cost to industry, the least cost to the financial world or the least cost on profits. It is always the least cost to the citizen. I think we should oppose it on that basis.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: That is not the wording.

Deputy Bríd Smith: That is what the Deputy said.

Chairman: What she said was the least cost to the citizen. I will go through recommendations Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 and ask if they are agreed. When we get to recommendation No. 4, I will ask if the Deputy is pressing the amendment. Is that okay? Is recommendation No. 1 agreed?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I sought clarification from Deputy Corcoran Kennedy.

Chairman: She gave the clarification.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: She did give the clarification but-----

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I really do not want to get hung up on this. I do not mind withdrawing this if it is going to be a big deal. It is a couple of words.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: That is great, if she does.

Chairman: Is recommendation No. 1 agreed?

Deputy Brian Stanley: Is that Deputy Bríd Smith's amendment?

Chairman: No. We are dealing with recommendations. There are no more amendments, as all amendments to do with this have been withdrawn. There was only one and that is why I went to Deputy Corcoran Kennedy in regard to the least-cost pathway. She has withdrawn that amendment. We are going to vote on the recommendations at the end of chapter 1. I will go through them one by one and ask if they are agreed. We will then move on to chapter 2.

On chapter 1, is recommendation No. 1 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 2 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 3 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 4 agreed? Agreed.

We now move to chapter 2, which deals with "Supporting a Just Transition" and contains two recommendations. The recommendation states:

The Committee recommends:

4. A Just Transition Task Force be established in 2019 to proactively consider the likely upcoming challenges of the forthcoming rapid transition to a low carbon economy. The Task Force should have an Independent Steering Committee and Chair and will involve workers and their unions, employers, communities, farmers, Government and civil society to plan the detail of delivering security and opportunity for workers. The Task Force should be invested with the requisite authority and resources, including a specialist mediation service and the facility to draw on expertise as needed. The Task Force shall:

- commission research in 2019 examining which regions and sectors of the economy are most likely to experience serious disruption over the next decade as part of our transition to a low carbon economy.

- address the need for sound investments in low-emission and job-rich sectors and

technologies by:

- (i) Carrying out early assessments of the social and employment impacts of climate policies;
- (ii) Addressing training and skills development;
- (iii) Identifying social protection needs in the changing industries, along with active labour market policies and [there is an amendment to this from Deputy Bríd Smith, to which I will return];
- (iv) Developing local economic diversification plans that support decent work and provide community stability in the transition.

The implementation of agreed interventions for transition, as developed in the framework, should involve a partnership approach involving Government, employers, farmers, trade unions and civil society (Section 2.4).

The second recommendation in this chapter states:

5. With regards to the immediate need to address the ongoing transition in the Midlands region, the Government should direct as soon as possible in 2019:

- a. The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan (REP) Committee to devise a Midlands Just Transition Strategy, in order to sustain the economic and social fabric of the region in a post peat extraction era. The strategy should make provision for specific funding, to finance amongst other things, a major project to rewet denuded peatlands in the Midlands. This should start with the peatlands owned by Bord na Móna
- b. Bord na Móna to undertake a review of the employment potential of deploying its current workforce to a peatlands restoration project for its landholding. This review should also outline the full cost of such a project and contain an assessment of the carbon impact of creating a carbon sink; and
- c. The SEAI to examine how best to deliver a major house retrofitting programme in the Midlands (Section 2.5)

Those are the two recommendations in chapter 2 in regard to “Supporting a Just Transition”. There is one amendment from Deputy Bríd Smith, who proposes, after “active labour market policies”, to insert that the reference to active labour market policies in this context excludes any obligation being placed on those made redundant as a consequence of the transition away from carbon-intensive industries to participate in the State’s JobPath or similar programme. The amendment proposes that, at a minimum, those displaced from or denied employment in carbon-intensive industries should never be subjected to punitive and damaging JobPath-type labour market activation policies currently outsourced to and implemented by private sector companies with such devastating impacts on unemployed people.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I hope that some of the members who are on the Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection will agree there are very serious questions to be asked about the State’s use of labour market activation methods, in particular Seetec and Turas Nua. We have had lots of studies into how these companies are used and the impact this is having on many people who are short-term and long-term unemployed and who are brought before them. If we do not insert something that alleviates the fear of people who are facing unemployment that they will be used in this way and subjected to the systemic manner in which

these companies deal with unemployment, we will not reassure them we are serious about a just transition for workers. We need to accept this measure to do that.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: We had extensive deliberations with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in regard to the just transition task force and I think we all arrived at a destination in respect of recognising the need for a just transition task force. I appreciate the points Deputy Bríd Smith is making in respect of the critique of the State's JobPath programme. My worry is that by making that amendment we could dilute recommendation 4(iv) which relates to transitioning people away from carbon production into local economic diversification, where workers themselves become partners in that transition. If they are active stakeholders in that transition, the risk of exploitation, as Deputy Bríd Smith is probably arguing here, is diminished because they are partners in their own transition. That was the point or philosophy behind the ICTU's submission to the committee. I accept the amendment that Deputy Smith is making but I would not want to introduce issues - I will not call them extraneous issues - into the purity of the just transition task force. However, if there is a critique to be had of social protection policy this might not be the chapter or the forum in which to do that. I accept the Deputy's right to bring forward the amendment, but I ask that we do not diminish in any way the success that we have managed to secure in this report through the mere existence of a just transition task force. That is a success in itself. Social protection policy should be critiqued, attacked or changed elsewhere but not necessarily in the forum of this report.

Deputy Brian Stanley: The section on the just transition is important. We put a lot of work into this and have met union officials and workers. It is particularly relevant in the midlands, and a major issue in Laois and Offaly is that the area does not become the rust belt of the country. It is very important that we have that. We had a section in the report, which was deleted, to insert the International Labor Organization, ILO, framework for a just transition, which we believe would have strengthened it. We are not 100% happy that it was removed and we would have preferred if the report was stronger to give some of the protections to which Deputy Bríd Smith referred, but the final recommendations provide a lot of protections. What happened in the past is that industry closed down, whether it was Bord na Móna or whatever else, and the fire engines arrived afterwards, or a task force was put together after the event. What we are trying to achieve by establishing this task force in 2019 is that it will be in place, it can foresee what will happen and it will start taking the necessary steps and actions and pulling the relevant parties together. We are disappointed that the ILO framework is not included in the final report but it contains some protections and we will support it. We will also support Deputy Bríd Smith's amendment.

Chairman: To clarify, the footnote to the recommendation states, "this should be based on the ILO guidelines".

Deputy Brian Stanley: It is down to a footnote.

Chairman: It is in it.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Our preference was that it be in the body of the text.

Chairman: There is a footnote on the page, though.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Yes, I know.

Chairman: I call Deputy Pringle.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I understand where Deputy Sherlock is coming from in that this report is not where the matter can be dealt with. However, Deputy Smith has the issue of former workers who might participate in training as part of this just transition being put under pressure by the Department to take up JobBridge posts, which have nothing to do with it. In fact, it would deflect from them doing training and retraining to participate in a just transition. JobBridge would be a barrier. There is some merit in it and a way of protecting those workers who will participate from JobBridge ----

Deputy Bríd Smith: JobPath

Deputy Thomas Pringle: JobPath, which would be of no value to them at all.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I wish to take up Deputy Stanley's comment about my county being a rust belt. I resent and reject that.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Or Laois.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: This is the second time that I have heard the midlands being referred to as that. We are working so hard to create jobs, based on our tourism potential, to change things and to deal with the changing society, that I deeply resent and reject this negative narrative. I ask Deputy Stanley to withdraw it. Using this type of language about our area is not on. I will leave that to one side.

A just transition task force is crucial. My county, Offaly, is the one that will be most gravely impacted by Bord na Móna's decision to change its *raison d'être* in the context of the necessity to transition to a low-carbon economy. The midlands regional task force which was put together, on which Offaly County Council leads the way, is positive and has turned up interesting evidence. For instance, many Bord na Móna workers are looking at moving to third level. Many would have started work very young as they had no other options. Interesting things are coming out of this and we need to be positive about giving people opportunities in this transition. Let us look at it as a way of enhancing people's lives instead of this constant negative narrative about my county, which I completely and utterly reject.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I am a bit taken aback that Deputy Corcoran Kennedy is so sensitive to what I said.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I did not call Laois a rust belt.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I did not interrupt the Deputy.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: How dare Deputy Stanley.

Chairman: Let Deputy Stanley finish.

Deputy Brian Stanley: If the Deputy had listened to what I said, I want to stop it from becoming a rust belt. The proposal is positive. What I said was that we are taking action to put in place a task force to be established in 2019. As a former employee of Bord na Móna - and several members of my family are employed by the company - I want opportunities for workers in the midlands, including Laois, south Kildare and Offaly. I acknowledge that work is being done and I have been involved in trying to do that in whatever way I can through IDA Ireland or Enterprise Ireland, for instance, as have other Deputies. We should look at this in a positive way. I am surprised that Deputy Corcoran Kennedy is so sensitive.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: The Deputy should not be one bit surprised. He called Offaly a rust belt. If he calls Offaly a rust belt, he will have me to deal with.

Chairman: I am conscious that we had been getting on so well.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: He will have me to deal with if he calls Offaly a rust belt.

Deputy Brian Stanley: As a former employee of Bord na Móna, I think it is important that we do not allow our counties or regions to become rust belts. That is exactly what this is about. This proposal is very positive and we should back it. There should not be any disagreement on it.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: The just transition task force is one of the most fundamentally important parts of the report. It is vital that it be supported. I also support the amendment. I might have framed it differently myself but the key point made by Deputy Smith is important. It is not that separate. We heard about the return to third level and training. One of my key concerns, which emerged in the hearings on JobPath, is that the programme makes it difficult for people to move into education or training. By its nature, it tends to push people towards employment opportunities only. In many cases, where an industry is changing and shifting, education and retraining are fundamental. JobPath would be an inappropriate tool. It is flawed in many ways, and while we do not address all of those here, but it is important that those making the transition are given options, including education and training. I will, therefore, support the amendment.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I am minded to support Deputy Smith's amendment. We must make a clear distinction. JobPath is often used to assist people at a certain space, often in their own development. As Senator Higgins correctly identified, what we are talking about is retraining, re-energising and reactivating and developing the skills of people who have worked hard throughout their lives, and who have the capacity and wherewithal to work and have been working in an active environment. We must go much further than just using the existing pathways to get people back to work, or to assist those who find themselves in between jobs. An entirely new programme must be developed to assist people in the sector. I would like to see it being fleshed out more. We want to ensure people who have been actively working, want, are able and have the wherewithal but not the opportunity to work receive every assistance.

Chairman: What if we were to include in that recommendation in part 4 (iii) "Identifying social protection needs in the changing industries, along with active labour market policies excluding JobPath"?

Deputy Bríd Smith: What are the other active labour market policies the State has? It may cease calling it JobPath and call it something else.

Chairman: I am trying to reach a compromise and move on, but if it is not workable, that is fine.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I think a broad view has emerged in favour of Deputy Bríd Smith's amendment. The wording before is: "The implementation of agreed interventions for transition as developed in the framework should involve a partnership approach involving Government, employers, farmers, trade unions and civil society". Trade unions are the backbone, specifically as it relates to the midlands. It will move into the farming sector and others. I would have thought the wording, as it stands, would have absolutely negated the opportunity for exploita-

tion because civil society and trade unions were included. Notwithstanding that, if members are landing on a particular view, I will absolutely and utterly support whatever compromise they want to reach.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I do not have the same faith in civil society to ringfence and protect workers that the Deputy has expressed. It would be appalling for workers, if and when they are made redundant, because we want to move to this being a carbon-free country. They need to be protected to the full. I do not believe labour activation market policies will help to protect them. That is why it was included as a full sentence, rather than a deletion, because this would give them more protection. People come to me daily who are compelled, harassed, feel damaged and punished by these activation measures and it would be an appalling outcome for workers in this attempt to move to a carbon-free economy. The representatives of the trade unions at the committee said Bord na Móna workers were being treated very badly. The level of discussion among and with them is not sufficient. We want workers to buy into this, not to be afraid of it. This would add a little protection for them.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: What is being proposed in the amendment is too prescriptive. It is quite clear that we are talking about active labour market policies which when read, as Deputy Sherlock said, in conjunction with the line at 3582, set out that the interventions agreed to can address concerns about the active labour market policies that might be put in place. JobPath may be no more. There may be something else, with new ideas about how to re-train, but I do not think we need to get to that level. If provision is made for further dialogue at some point to agree what the measures or active labour market policies should be, the provision for further dialogue should be sufficient. Otherwise it is just having a go at JobPath and this is not the committee to do that.

Senator Tim Lombard: I have listened to the debate and have taken in most of the contributions made. The view expressed by Deputy Sherlock is very fair. We have an active labour market and engagement involving all sectors. Why, therefore, are we going after JobPath? This is not the place to have that debate. It would not be appropriate to do so. If someone has a problem with JobPath, there is surely another forum in which to address it. This issue has been well thought out by the just transition task force. Setting it up in 2019 is a positive step because it anticipates what will happen. It puts a process in place to help those who will go through a transition. We need to stick with what is in the report.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I am conscious that the Chairman was suggesting a compromise. There are two sentences in the amendment, the first of which is fundamental as it makes it very clear that nobody should be required to participate in JobPath or a similar programme. I understand there are difficulties because it is difficult for others to agree with some of the other language used, although I agree with it, but the fundamental point is that nobody should be obliged to participate in JobPath or a similar programme, something which the Chairman said is captured in the first sentence.

Chairman: It would be good not to get into specifics because programmes could change. We should not name programmes but should be more general.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: JobPath or a similar programme. The first sentence might offer another compromise suggestion.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Why is it included if it is not intended to have workers included in these labour market activation programmes? That is why the wording is included because the

intention is that at some point workers may be included and the State would like them to face participation in labour market activation programmes which have been questionable to say the very least in the treatment of workers. We should be protecting workers who may lose their jobs in Bord na Móna, at Moneypoint or anywhere else and not subjecting them to the possibility of being treated in an appallingly bad manner.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: To be helpful, we would not be specific about JobPath. We would be saying no worker should be forced into a labour activation measure prescribed by the Government against their will or something like it. We have spent hours discussing this issue and I have made it a red line issue from my party's perspective. The idea behind a just transition was that a decision would not be made against a worker without bringing him or her on board, whether he or she was a peat worker in the midlands or working in a carbon intensive industry. No decision would be made over his or her head and he or she would be brought along or part of the movement towards a just transition.

I am not against what Deputy Smith is saying. The philosophy is absolutely right, but she is trying to prescribe something very specific. I do not think we should be so prescriptive about JobPath. We can talk about ensuring there would be no exploitation of workers or that no worker would be shoehorned into a scheme that would work against his or her transition or best or personal interests, but I want to ensure we will not lose anything in pursuing the concept of a just transition. I want to try to work with Deputy Bríd Smith and other members to come up with a wording. If we talk about ensuring there would be no exploitation of workers and find such a wording, we can find a compromise.

Chairman: Are members agreeable to working on a wording based on what Deputies Sherlock and Bríd Smith have said and come back tomorrow to agree to it?

Deputy Bríd Smith: I do not mind coming back tomorrow, but I am not accepting the wording proposed by Deputy Sherlock. I want to spell out that labour activation measures, as we understand them, are not appropriate to workers who suffer the loss of their job as a result of a just transition because it is unjust.

Chairman: We are not in agreement.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I want to have that inserted or to remove the words "along with active labour market policies".

Chairman: If we are not in alignment or agreement on this issue, there is no point in coming here tomorrow. Will Deputy Sherlock confirm that?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: We are obviously not in agreement. Is Deputy Bríd Smith saying she is opposed to any kind of labour activation programme? Is she saying that by their nature labour activation programmes, regardless of what they are called, are exploitative because if that is the case, we will have to divide on the issue?

Deputy Bríd Smith: I am saying the labour market policies of the State are punitive and not appropriate to workers who may lose their jobs in Bord na Móna, at Moneypoint or elsewhere. We do not have unanimous agreement on the amendment proposed by Deputy Bríd Smith. How stands the amendment?

Deputy Bríd Smith: I will press the amendment.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: Was the Chairman suggesting an amendment?

Chairman: I was putting forward something that was not agreed. The Deputy did not accept it. We have to be neutral on the language we use to name programmes because they may change over the years.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I propose that we park this issue and let things settle. Perhaps a compromise can be agreed to.

Chairman: We have tried that, but I am conscious that there is no agreement.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Members of the public watching this debate should know that this was discussed in private with advisers, and we have not reached agreement. I am happy for it to go to a vote, in order to let members of the committee vote however they wish.

Chairman: It is good that the members of the committee had the chance to express themselves.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I will note that I suggested the first sentence is the core of the issue. I understand the Deputy's wish to go ahead with the formal amendment.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I have been here for a long time, and I understand that people are here to deputise today. I absolutely respect their wishes to compromise. Deputy Bríd Smith has suggested that we divide on this issue. I am happy to discuss this matter further. It will have to be dealt with anyway, and taking it offline is not necessarily going to rectify the matter. I want to say very clear that I accept Deputy Bríd Smith's point about ensuring there is no exploitation of workers in a just transition to a decarbonised economy. We must find a wording that respects the premise but is not so prescriptive about one particular programme, which might cease to exist.

Chairman: Can Deputy Bríd Smith agree to that?

Deputy Bríd Smith: No. Deputy Sherlock misunderstands me. Workers are exploited everywhere. All workers are exploited all the time. We are not going to stop that. This is a measure to stop unemployed workers being pushed into JobPath.

Chairman: We have discussed this matter for hours in private session and both Deputies have well articulated their views. We should put it to a vote. We are discussing recommendation 1, part 3.

Question put.

The Committee divided: Tá;, 7; Níl, 9.	
Tá;	Níl;
Devine, Máire.	Brophy, Colm.
Higgins, Alice-Mary.	Corcoran Kennedy, Marcella.
Munster, Imelda.	Lawless, Billy.
Pringle, Thomas.	Lombard, Tim.
Ryan, Eamon.	McLoughlin, Tony.
Smith, Bríd.	Mulherin, Michelle.
Stanley, Brian.	Naughton, Hildegarde.

	O'Connell, Kate.
	Sherlock, Sean.

Question declared lost.

Staan: Deputies Jack Chambers, Timmy Dooley and Billy Kelleher.

Chairman: Is recommendation No. 1 in chapter 2, Supporting a Just Transition, agreed to? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 2 in that chapter agreed to? Agreed.

We will move to chapter 3, Citizen and Community Engagement, to which there are two recommendations. Recommendation No. 1 reads:

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment should enable each local authority to establish or designate a Climate Change Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), to be incorporated into the SPC schemes for each local authority after June 2019. External representation on this SPC should be inclusive of all social, economic and environmental stakeholder groups.

Recommendation No. 2 reads:

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment should enable each local authority, individually or jointly, to establish a one-stop-shop or other suitable structure, with appropriate resources and expertise. This should provide practical advice to households and businesses on significantly reducing GHG emissions and utilise information and advice from the SEAI and the Climate Action Regional Offices. This one-stop-shop must include a strategy for reaching out to all communities by the end of 2020.

There are no amendments to those recommendations. Is recommendation No. 1 agreed to? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 2 agreed to? Agreed.

We will move to chapter 4, Education and Communication. There are no amendments to the four recommendations made in this chapter. Recommendation No. 1 reads:

The Department of Education and Skills should by the end of 2019, in consultation with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and other relevant experts, review the curriculums for primary and secondary education for coverage and accuracy to ensure that students are fully literate on climate change and its potential impact.

Recommendation No. 2 reads:

Government Departments as part of the all of government approach to climate change should, before the end of 2019, develop and launch public information campaigns on the need to take action to address climate change, challenges and opportunities.

Recommendation No. 3 reads:

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland should, by the end of 2019, develop guidelines and measures to encourage and facilitate climate change broadcasting and on-demand service distribution to ensure comprehensive and accurate coverage of climate change.

Recommendation No. 4 reads:

That Met Éireann takes a more proactive role as the trusted source in weather forecasting to, where scientifically justified, link specific events to climate change. Furthermore,

Met Éireann should consistently reflect the scientific consensus represented by the IPCC. To this end, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government should resource a dedicated Climate Communications Section within Met Éireann.

Is recommendation No. 1 agreed to? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 2 agreed to?

Deputy Bríd Smith: I would like to comment on recommendation No. 2. While I absolutely support the recommendation, I would like it to be noted that my adviser made numerous attempts to have consideration given to the possibility of broadening it to cover public information on the role of industry and the privileging of private markets over the public good. In other words, we should recommend that the public be educated on the role of the fossil fuel industry and other global corporations in the impact of climate change. That would broaden the discussion and give people a clearer view on what was going on. Although I was unable to amend the recommendation, this type of education should be part of how we educate the population on climate change. If such education is not provided, the public will have a very skewed view on why we are where we are.

Chairman: Is recommendation No. 2 agreed to? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 3 agreed to? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 4 agreed to? Agreed.

We will move to chapter 5, Unlocking Potential.

There are two recommendations here, with no amendments to them. The first reads:

Developing climate change solutions represents an opportunity to show leadership and progress economic and social opportunities. Starting with the budget for 2020, a program of substantial R&D investments should be instigated focusing upon developing solutions to climate change. Priority should be given to those areas and technologies where there is the greatest potential for mitigation and adaptation.

The Second recommendation reads:

The Department of Health should carry out a review of the health risks associated with climate change and benefits associated with climate action. The results of this review and the preliminary report on the Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme should both be published by June 2019. Following this publication, if the evidence supports it, the HSE and DCCAE should bring forward a proposal on a national roll-out of the Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme. The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Minister for Health should report their progress on these matters to the Standing Committee on Climate Action no later than end Q2 2019.

Is recommendation No. 1 agreed?

Deputy Bríd Smith: It is important that we do not pose the challenge of climate change as some kind of business opportunity. We have to recognise that it poses a very serious and existential threat to human life and to all life on this planet. We should always begin by recognising that. Notwithstanding that, I believe the recommendation is pretty harmless, but if it stands alone without any acknowledgement that we recognise this as a threat to human existence and to the environment it is just being presented as a business opportunity.

Senator Máire Devine: I echo what Deputy Bríd Smith stated. Climate change has become nothing more than a green business opportunity. Businesses are covering themselves in the green and saying that it will help Ireland become climate friendly. I am a bit cynical about it; big business is not in it for the good of our health or for the good of the health of the popula-

tion but rather the profits that can be made.

On the second recommendation, covering the health risks associated with climate change, for clarity, we will look at localised and national climate change and its impact on public health. We will consider what we know so far and what is predicted. However, many international studies have been conducted as well. Will they be taken into account? We should also consider the effect of climate change on much poorer parts of the world; our lifestyles are having a massive impact on those places. We have to consider the local, but also what is happening world wide. Climate change poses a huge risk to our health, due to pollution, etc.

Chairman: The ongoing work of the standing committee could certainly look at those issues. The health aspect, as discussed in private session, is an absolutely critical part of climate action. Is recommendation No. 1 of chapter No. 5 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 2 of chapter No. 5 agreed? Agreed.

We will now move to chapter No. 6 now. I propose to take a break for 20 minutes. We are moving through the recommendations but there are amendments to be discussed.

Sitting suspended at 6.05 p.m. and resumed at 6.40 p.m.

Chairman: We are back in public session and are dealing with chapter 6, Incentivising Climate Action. This is the chapter that we considered at the very outset in the context of an amendment.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: This was one of the most contentious chapters and that is still the case. Would there be any benefit in considering it tomorrow? Could we defer it just to see if there is a way to agree on a different wording? It deserves further consideration and we are going to be coming back to it over the next four or five months anyway. We do not have to rush it now. I propose that we reflect on it overnight to see if there is a way of resolving our differences.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I second that proposal.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I have no problem in principle with that proposal but I seek clarification in respect of the previous votes that have taken place. What is the status of the wording in respect of recommendation No. 16, arising from the two votes that we have had? As I understand it now, we have reverted back to the original draft text-----

Chairman: Yes, exactly.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: If we are going to consider this overnight, the question arises as to what can conceivably be done overnight that will amend this or not amend it, as the case may be. Clear political fault lines are now emerging in respect of recommendation No. 16. I am of the view that we should keep going tonight, to be honest but I will listen to what other members have to say on that. I have specific amendments in respect of the contentious wording and would like an opportunity to discuss those further. Unless people are going to come back in here tomorrow with something new or innovative, we are just going to be rehashing the same old arguments again and I am not sure that is the best use of our time.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I do not want to be flippant but it is late in the day.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: It is only 6.45 p.m.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Deputy Sherlock has asked what can happen overnight. Lots of things happen overnight.

Senator Tim Lombard: Climate change did not happen overnight.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Senator Lombard is concerned about global warming and all of that and we have heard some really passionate contributions from the Senator and from others today. I am prepared to give it a shot overnight and see if we can come to an agreement.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: There is also the chance that we will have a bigger attendance for that discussion tomorrow. We are all busy running around today. It will give us time to reflect.

Deputy Bríd Smith: What is our time slot tomorrow?

Chairman: Our time slot tomorrow is 2 p.m.

Deputy Brian Stanley: The amendment to the Fianna Fáil amendment was carried.

Senator Máire Devine: It was not carried.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Sorry, it was a tie, 11 votes to 11.

Chairman: Yes, so it fell or was lost.

Deputy Brian Stanley: We have the recommendations of the committee in front of us. They are very clear. I propose that we vote on those recommendations now. There have been three separate opportunities to amend amendments in recent weeks. We have been trying to wrap this up since the third week of January and we are now in the last week of March. We should not delay this process any further. There is a very clear proposal in front of us in terms of what is in section 6.7, as well as in the first, second and third recommendations within that section. I propose that we deal with them now.

Chairman: Does anybody else wish to comment?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I thank the Chairman for letting me back in again. I am not going to speak for too long on the Labour Party amendment except to say that it seeks to give some power to the standing committee in respect of exploring issues like fuel poverty and the effects of a carbon tax on households. It gives a voice to the committee itself.

Chairman: We will be dealing with that once we decide whether we are dealing with the contentious matters tonight or tomorrow. The Deputy will have an opportunity to speak on his amendment. Is he concerned that he will not get such an opportunity?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: My concern is around the fact that we already have had an iterative process here in respect of the issues of fuel poverty and so on. There is scope within the wording of recommendation No. 16, even if we do not take my wording to the letter of the law, to allow for the standing committee, in its ongoing work after the publication of the report, to deal substantively with the issues that we all have in respect of fuel poverty.

Again, nobody has been able to clarify for me what it is that will happen overnight. It is only 6.50 p.m. now. I suggest as a compromise that if we are going to meet tomorrow, that we park chapter 6 and try to get the other chapters out of the way this evening. That might be a good way of doing it so that we are not reconvening-----

Chairman: Are members happy with that? Will we move on to chapter 7 and leave chapter 6 until tomorrow at 2 p.m.?

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Yes.

Chairman: Is that agreed? Agreed. We will now move on to chapter 7, Energy. There are five recommendations in this chapter. There is one amendment proposed to the fourth recommendation from Deputy Bríd Smith. Is the first recommendation agreed?

Deputy Bríd Smith: In terms of the first recommendation, the heads of the maritime area and foreshore (amendment) Bill concern me because they mainly focus on offshore gas storage facilities. I would like us to give a brief to the incoming committee to deal with that and look at it carefully. The main concern of the heads of Bill is the storage facilities - the liquefied natural gas, LNG, terminal - rather than renewable wind energy. We should make that point to the incoming committee.

Chairman: I would say it is a matter for the joint committee but a committee could certainly examine it.

Deputy Bríd Smith: The joint committee? It concerns a Bill.

Chairman: It is a Bill, yes.

Deputy Bríd Smith: But it needs to be flagged up-----

Chairman: It relates to the Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Deputy Bríd Smith: It is misprioritised for the purpose of addressing climate change.

Chairman: Is the first recommendation of chapter 7 agreed to? Agreed. Is the second recommendation of chapter seven agreed to?

Deputy Brian Stanley: It is not.

Chairman: It is that the Government should prioritise transposition. I shall put the question.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: There is no amendment.

Chairman: We are voting on the recommendation.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Is it recommendation No. 23(a)?

Chairman: No. It is that the Government should prioritise the transposition and implementation of recent EU directives.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: We are talking about paragraphs (e), (f), (g) and (h).

Deputy Brian Stanley: There is confusion over this.

Chairman: Does the Deputy wish to read through it?

Deputy Brian Stanley: Yes.

Chairman: Does Deputy Stanley agree to it?

Deputy Brian Stanley: Yes.

Chairman: Is it agreed? Agreed. Is the recommendation on community energy and small-scale renewable generation agreed to? Agreed. There is an amendment to the fourth recommendation. The recommendation is that the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, in conjunction with the ESB, EirGrid and Bord na Móna, continually examine the options available to the State to phase out coal and peat burning for electricity generation, and that the Department report quarterly to the standing committee. Deputy Bríd Smith's amendment, No. 30, is to insert the following after "the State to phase out coal and peat burning for electricity generation": "In the event of any decision to close Moneypoint or to end peat production, the Government, in the interest of a just transition, will guarantee to underwrite the current pay, conditions and pension rights of workers affected."

Deputy Bríd Smith: In case anyone believes I am overegging the pudding on the concerns of workers, I must state I am not. This is a very important aspect of how we get the whole country to buy into the measures that need to be taken to reduce carbon emissions. While we all know that, we must spell out what it means. I am referring to the workers who will be most affected, namely those of Bord na Móna and Moneypoint, the obvious places that will have to experience just transition. I spoke on the last occasion about the need to be very clear about what labour activation measures means. This is not about that. It is about guarantees if the workers move to another job. If we take workers out of Moneypoint and use them to deliver on the wind energy policies, their current pay, conditions and pension rights should be ring-fenced and protected for them.

Senator Máire Devine: It is important that we support this amendment. We have seen, particularly over the past 15 years, that transfer of undertakings regulations have been widely understood as protecting workers when they move from one company to circumstances under the ownership of another. "Ownership" is the operative word. I refer to the workers being owned by those running the company. Transfer of undertakings agreements have been broken continually, and we have seen small shop workers, retailers, farm workers and labourers of various descriptions almost fraudulently cheated out of their rights on transfer. The proposal is a beginning. It protects Moneypoint at this end but looks towards other cases of just transition that may arise.

Senator Tim Lombard: How would it work practically on the ground? The ESB, which is operating Moneypoint, is a semi-State company. How will the measure work if it is directed to underwrite the pay, conditions and pensions? I assume most of this will be done through negotiation and through the just transition process itself. That is why we have that mechanism put in place. Are we setting a legal precedent? Will we be doing the exact same thing in industry? Legally, have we the ability to impose such draconian measures on a semi-State company? I question what it will achieve.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I agree fully with the sentiment expressed in the amendment but believe it has no standing. I have no issue with including it in the report. It will not encumber the Government and it will raise the issue, which is helpful. For sure, we must consider the issues concerning just transition and we must ensure those who are affected are addressed. There is no point in trying to give people false hope, however, by stating that by putting something in this report, their futures will be protected. There is no way we can force the Government to do so. I cannot see how the Government would be in a position to guarantee what is proposed.

Perhaps if we had more time, we could get the wording right regarding the committee calling on various employers. Ultimately, notwithstanding that the ESB is a semi-State company, the Government is not the employer in the direct Civil Service way. I fully accept the sentiment of the amendment, however, and absolutely support the principle. In the absence of other language, we will support it. By saying we are supporting it, however, we must be honest with the people listening to us – the workers concerned. Just because this language is included does not mean they can take it to the bank and that their terms and conditions are guaranteed. Sadly, they are not and there will be a role for us to continue to ensure a just transition where jobs are lost in the circumstances in question. The State, as the shareholder in the ESB, can play a role in that regard. I hope we can achieve consensus on it. I certainly believe we should not divide on it. It should not be for us to second-guess how the Attorney General might address this but we should flag it and include it, purely as an indicative position to protect workers. Let us be honest with everyone, however.

Deputy Bríd Smith: On the concerns raised, Senator Lombard said the jobs are semi-State jobs and that the Government could not underwrite private industry. Somewhere else in the document, I argue that renewable energy production should be widely engaged in by the State. If we take seriously the power of wind off our coast and exploit it to produce energy, I hope the State will be heavily involved. Where workers from semi-State companies that are producing our energy move to a different type of energy production, the State should underwrite their terms, pay, conditions and pensions. That is what my amendment is getting at. If necessary we can add the words, “where workers engage in alternative energy production”-----

Deputy Timmy Dooley: It would be in a State or semi-State environment.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Yes, or alternative energy production. If the State does not take responsibility for the alternative energy production we are making a bags of this.

Deputy Pat Deering: While I appreciate the sentiments of the amendment, if we go along with this we will create a false impression for the public by putting that wording there. We were talking about honesty in the context of many things earlier so we must be very clear about what we put in this report and what can be delivered. If this cannot be delivered, we will create a false sense of security. That would be very wrong.

Chairman: Senator Devine and Deputy Sherlock are next.

Senator Máire Devine: My point has been made.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: If I am working in Moneypoint and I am given a redundancy package, and if I go out and start what becomes a multi-million euro business where I become an employer, for the sake of argument, is the amendment saying that all the rights and entitlements I had as an employee in Moneypoint would transfer automatically to me in my new lifestyle or profession? For example, if I was a general operative in Moneypoint and I went away and retrained as a lawyer or the like, is the amendment saying that everything that applied in the old job should now apply in the new job? I am trying to understand it.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I thought the Deputy was in the Labour Party and would understand the notion of trying to ring-fence labour rights.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: They are enshrined in legislation on labour rights.

Deputy Bríd Smith: It is not about ring-fencing the interests of millionaires or barristers

but those of workers who have to go through transition. I envisage it as the State involving itself massively in the production of renewable energy in the future rather than leaving it to private companies, and in that case people who are forced out of Moneypoint, Bord na Móna and so forth would transition into the new companies with the same jobs, conditions, pensions and so forth.

Chairman: I will try to wrap this up.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: To be helpful, and I support the principle, there is almost a second layer to this. First, the Government would have to engage in that so we would have to insert “in the event of workers transferring to or remaining within the employ of a semi-State company in the alternative energy sector”. Otherwise it becomes a little difficult to explain.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Can I ask a technical procedural question?

Chairman: Yes.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Was this amendment queried by any of the Deputies’ advisers before now or is this the first time they are discussing it?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: Can I respond to that?

Chairman: Yes.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: A pertinent point is being made here. Let us look at all the amendments that are crossed out here. I have a number of amendments, as have other members, that were, for want of a better expression, triaged by the advisers and dealt with at adviser level with political input. My understanding is that these issues may not have come up for discussion. Members can correct me if I am wrong.

Chairman: They were all examined. That was the purpose of it. Can we progress here? Can Deputy Corcoran Kennedy make her final point?

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I wish to obtain clarification from Deputy Bríd Smith. Let us say I am working in Bord na Móna, my salary is €40,000, I am 40 years old and I am one of the people who will be affected. Is the Deputy effectively saying that even though I will have no job the State should continue to give me the current pay, conditions and pension rights until I am 65 years old?

Deputy Bríd Smith: I am saying that the State would have an obligation to find the Deputy a job and would guarantee that the pay and conditions that were paid by a semi-State company will be guaranteed to her in the future.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: What if I do not get a job? Am I to be paid current pay-----

Deputy Bríd Smith: If the Deputy does not get a job then she falls into the category-----

Chairman: Where does it say that?

Deputy Bríd Smith: It is envisaged in the event of any decision to close Moneypoint or end peat production the Government, in the interests of a just transition, will guarantee to underwrite the current pay and conditions of workers whose rights are affected.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I was seeking clarification.

Deputy Bríd Smith: If one is unemployed, one falls into the previous argument-----

Chairman: Deputy Corcoran Kennedy's point is that the worker would continue to be paid full salary and pension rights until he or she is 65 years old.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: Is that what the Deputy is suggesting?

Deputy Bríd Smith: Yes.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I recognise that is what we should be trying to do and agree to, but let us not simplify this either. In areas such as the midlands and west Clare where the people the Deputy mentions are employed, their lifestyles and experience will not only be affected by this. The impact of the loss of the jobs in the community, regardless of the employment of the individuals, will also be significant because we are forgetting about the contractors who work in these areas. It is much broader than what this amendment seeks to address. That is why we would have to flesh it out, probably in the context of the just transition.

In addition, there are people who have reached a certain stage in their career who will be more than happy to take a significant redundancy and change tack. We are not going to rewrite entitlements in respect of one's job. It is highly unlikely anybody will be made compulsorily redundant in the semi-State companies. I do not mean to gild it but much better protections will be afforded to them than to the subcontractors who have no rights and entitlements other than the loss of what was a permanent job. There is a much broader dimension to it. I accept what the Deputy is trying to do, but I would like to broaden it. Perhaps we could look at trying to get more in there.

Deputy Brian Stanley: What Deputy Bríd Smith is trying to achieve is fair enough, and I accept it. The point I wished to make is that in Bord na Móna, in particular, many people are contractors, not employees. There are people working for the contractors as well, which complicates matters. The Deputy would have to state that they would have to be the employees but also - and this is important - where they continue to work for that company. Bord na Móna now has a number of subsidiaries such as AES or it could be the ESB and the person could be working for ESB International or one of the wings of the company. To achieve that we have to state that it is in the case where they continue to work for the company or a subsidiary of the company. The sentiment is good but there are difficulties with trying to implement that as it stands.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: Deputy Bríd Smith is talking about a just transition but what we are talking about here is energy. It is the energy chapter. If anything, it should be in a different chapter.

Deputy Bríd Smith: That is where it was originally. It is not my fault that it was put into the energy chapter.

Chairman: Is the Deputy pressing the amendment?

Deputy Bríd Smith: I would like to move it, albeit with the proviso that it is understood - perhaps somebody would like to insert a word there - that in the event of the closure of Mon-eypoint or peat production the Government will seek to protect the interests of workers should they transition to another State-funded company.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: That is fair enough.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I wish to make it clear for the public, more than for the Deputies and Senators who are present, that I would envisage the State playing a major role in the production of renewable energy, which would allow these worker to justly transition.

Chairman: Can we go over the wording again?

Deputy Bríd Smith: The wording remains the same: “In the event of any decision to close Moneypoint or to end peat production, the Government, in the interest of a just transition, will guarantee to underwrite the current pay, conditions and pension rights of workers affected and their continued employment in alternative energy production”.

Chairman: Can the Deputy give me a note on that?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: Within the State sector.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I hope that it is understood that it will be within the State sector. If I had my way it would only be the State sector.

Chairman: Within the State sector?

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Yes, within the State sector. To be helpful, in statements from the ESB it has indicated a significant desire to involve itself in offshore wind. It is clear that the energy would be brought ashore in a region such as Moneypoint because of access to the grid there. So Deputy Bríd Smith is right in stating that there would be opportunities. It is important that, regardless of whatever State entity has responsibility, a capacity transition would be there.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Do not forget the Bord na Móna workers. We heard from the union official who is here that they are being treated abysmally.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Moneypoint is the perfect location to bring off-shore wind ashore. When one talks to the experts in that area, they need connection to the grid, which it has, and a large platform where they put out the turbines, which it has. It has a deep sea jetty, which is critical, so it is perfect. Regarding Bord na Móna, I agree with the amendment as amended. We have a major problem because we can no longer get the workers to do the retrofitting. People involved in this business are saying that the biggest problem is getting workers. I wish to mark that there is significant employment potential for Bord na Móna, ESB and Coillte.

Chairman: Are members in agreement with Deputy Bríd Smith’s amendment, as amended?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: The Deputy is amending her own amendment.

Deputy Bríd Smith: The amended version reads, “will seek to guarantee to underwrite the pay and conditions of workers and their rights, as affected, and continued employment in renewable energy industries.”

Deputy Timmy Dooley: The Deputy needs to get the-----

Chairman: The Deputy needs to get the State sector in there.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Okay, it should read, “continued employment in State renewable energy industries.”

Chairman: How do members feel about that?

Deputy Bríd Smith: And after the revolution, they will only belong to the State.

Chairman: Is that agreed?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I think that is agreed, including the revolution bit.

Chairman: Is recommendation No. 4, as amended, agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 5 agreed? Agreed. We now move on to chapter 8, which deals with agriculture and land use. There are eight recommendations here. Do members wish me to read them out? Is recommendation No. 1 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 2 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 3 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 4 agreed?

Deputy Bríd Smith: Could we slow down because it is difficult for-----

Chairman: There are no amendments here. I will stop when we come to amendments. Recommendation No. 4 states that the committee “recommends that the Government develop a national strategy for sustainable anaerobic digestion”. Is it agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 5 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 6 agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 7 agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Bríd Smith has moved an amendment to recommendation No. 8, which is that given the significant sequestration potential of peatlands, the Committee recommends that the Climate Action Council together with National Parks and Wildlife Service develop a verifiable pathway for the rehabilitation and restoration of various peatland types in line with the overall national targets set out in chapter 1 to achieve net sequestration from peatlands nationally by 2050. This is not actually an amendment; it is a new recommendation. Is recommendation No. 8 agreed? Agreed. Deputy Bríd Smith wanted to add another recommendation? Is that correct?

Deputy Bríd Smith: Which one was it?

Chairman: It is amendment No. 37. I will read out what I believe is Deputy Bríd Smith’s new priority recommendation. The Deputy wants to add another recommendation to the chapter on agriculture that reads:

The committee recommends that the Department of Finance commission an enquiry into the revenue that could be realised through the introduction of a carbon tax on the profits of large agri-food producers and the feasibility of ring-fencing that revenue to help low-income farming communities move to sustainable low-carbon food production.

Does the Deputy wish to add this recommendation?

Deputy Bríd Smith: Yes. I do not think it should cause members too much of a headache because it is basically about looking into the possibility, investigating and having an inquiry to see what we might do in the future. I think there are three or four major food producers in this country that are of a global nature, are absolutely massive and make huge profits. We spoke earlier for a very long time, and probably will speak again, about the carbon tax that will be levied on ordinary people. This is a measure to look at the possibility of ring-fencing a tax on the profits of major agrifood producers. Please do not think I am going after the farmer. I am not and I am not arguing that this should be passed on to the farmer or consumer. Rather, I am arguing that it should be ring fenced with regard to these major global food corporations. I do not want to name them in this committee but this measure should be used to help to low-income farmers to move to sustainable, low-carbon production.

Senator Tim Lombard: I am completely opposed to this amendment. In my part of the world, large agricultural producers are the co-operatives and these are owned by farmers. They are co-operatives such as Dairygold, Carbery Milk Products and Drinagh Co-operative Ltd. They are all basically owned by farmers and are farming entities. This proposal would put a carbon tax on the production of farms. This is a major issue and am completely opposed to the recommendation on principle.

Deputy Bríd Smith: It is not. The committee is seeking an inquiry.

Senator Tim Lombard: Perhaps I might be allowed to finish. I did not interrupt the Deputy.

Chairman: I will let Deputy Bríd Smith back in later.

Senator Tim Lombard: This is a very serious matter. Realistically, what we are trying to do is bring everyone on board. The farming community feels pressure regarding carbon and where it will go in this space. If we were to go down the route of picking a vehicle over which the farming community has direct ownership and putting an actual carbon charge on their production, it would be a major step backwards in the context of this report. There is a need for buy-in from the people and communities. We could lose an entire cohort of society by pushing ahead with this proposal.

Deputy Pat Deering: In the same vein as Senator Lombard, in my part of the world, all the companies to which Deputy Bríd Smith referred are co-operatives. Even though she stated that she is not going after farmers, she is going after them indirectly because the profits of the co-operatives are funnelled indirectly back to the farmers on an annual basis. I know this is about an inquiry into the revenue that could be raised through the introduction of a carbon tax on profits but would it be possible to impose a carbon tax on the profits? I do not think it is possible.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Why?

Deputy Pat Deering: Companies pay corporation tax or income tax but I do not think a proposal to introduce a carbon tax on the profits of a company would have any standing.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Why does the Deputy think so?

Chairman: Is Deputy Deering finished?

Deputy Eamon Ryan: We did that when we were in government. We introduced a carbon tax on large corporations in the emissions trading scheme, ETS. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court ruled against the way we did it. I think there are mechanisms like this that we should consider again looking at that Supreme Court judgement because it is appropriate for us, particularly with regard to seeing companies in the ETS paying more as well. There was a difficulty with the Supreme Court when we did it. The case was taken during the tenure of a subsequent Government but it was possible.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: It seems that if we agree with the principle of pricing carbon so that the more carbon one uses, the greater the penalty one will pay, those very large companies that are major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions will be penalised more. I am sure that will act as an incentive for them to transition away from the production of carbon. Perhaps I am wrong, I hope I am, but what I think is at the base of this is that Deputy Bríd Smith somehow wants to penalise the companies that are part of the ecosystem that is our agrifood business.

Some of these companies are co-operatives while others are public limited companies but they all run on the same basis of profit and loss. If the cost of production and sales goes up, a couple of things will happen. The companies will force down the price they pay to their primary producers, whether they are co-ops or PLCs, meaning the farmer will certainly take a hit. They will also look at the elasticity within their employment numbers and the livelihoods of the 167,000 workers Deputy Bríd Smith has been trying to assist and protect will be affected, whether this is by restraining the capacity to get pay increases or reductions in their numbers. It might look well, from an ideological point of view, to go after big business and it might constitute a great slogan but the effects will not be on the directors or the shareholders so much as on employees and the people who supply the primary produce to the company.

We should look at this right across society, rather than targeting the agrifood sector. One section addresses agriculture and how we mitigate the effects of measures to deal with emissions in the sector. The approach is broad-based but this suggestion will have no meaningful impact on reducing emissions. Instead it will hurt between 167,000 and 170,000 employees in the sector, including farmers, and will have a negative impact on the overall economy.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: Paragraph 16 in respect of carbon tax, in which we have reverted to the original draft, speaks to the public consultation with citizens, NGOs, small businesses and other relevant organisations on how to fairly allocate whatever hypothecated or ring-fenced revenue was proposed to be collected. The worry I have about the amendment is that industrial jobs will be lost. There is a potential negative impact on prices at the farm gate and, in the co-operative model, there is a risk that employees who are not shareholders, such as accountants, technical advisers, marketing and sales staff, will get the chop if there is a profit warning. These people are living mainly in rural communities and in small and medium-sized towns that are allied to co-ops. By seeking to put in place an inquiry, I would fear that industrial workers in the areas I represent would be the first to be put out of the door. In any case, the wording in the body of the report could facilitate the process of an inquiry where there are specific recommendations by the Department of Finance for public consultation.

Chairman: A vote is taking place in the Upper House so Senators have had to leave.

Deputy Bríd Smith: It is important keep abreast of the queries, comments and innuendo against the amendment. It asks that we get the Department of Finance to commission an inquiry into ring-fencing a tax on the profits of major agrifood producers. I am not saying we should lash the farmer out of it, go after the co-op in Drinagh or take on the industrial workers of east Cork. I am not talking about Drinagh but Glanbia, Kerry Foods, Goodman and such companies that operate globally. They are worth billions and I am suggesting we give the tax back to the small, struggling farmers who are on low and middle incomes to help them transition to a sustainable model of farming. This amendment is not a big bombshell.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: If that is what the Deputy is about, it is a revolution she is waiting for.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: It is interesting that people are saying we should not hit companies because it would lead to jobs being lost. If that was the case, why would we tax these companies at all? Why would we not let them have a free-for-all, let them create jobs and then tax the workers and live off that? The arguments against the amendment are nonsensical. They suggest we should not tax business at all so that those companies can create jobs and make everything perfect. The gist of the amendment is to provide for a report to be made and I do not think a report should cause so much fear.

Chairman: Is Deputy Bríd Smith going to push this to a vote? If she is, we will have to wait until the Senators return.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I would simply like an indicative “Yes” or “No” that is somehow sincere. Some members have no moral problem with taxing ordinary people but have a problem with taxing big business. If we want to take climate action seriously, their approach is bizarre.

Chairman: What will we do?

Deputy Bríd Smith: We can park it until Senators come back.

Chairman: Is that agreed? This is an extra recommendation to the chapter on agriculture. We will wait for members to return.

In the meantime, we will move on to chapter 9, which relates to the built environment. There are four recommendations and a number of amendments. The first is No. 35, which states:

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment with the SEAI and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) should urgently carry out a needs assessment in order to determine the requirements for the delivery of the Government’s target for retrofitting 45,000 homes per annum from 2021 and explore increasing it incrementally to 75,000 homes. This should include:

- a. Prioritising the categories of houses to be retrofitted with a focus on those with the lowest building energy rating (BER);
- b. For all housing where the State is landlord, the DHPLG should set annual targets for each local authority to deliver deep retrofits of all of its public housing stock by 2030. The DHPLG should allocate necessary finances through the capital budget and explore finding support from the European Investment Bank (EIB);
- c. Producing a plan as a priority by Q3 2019 to meet the training and educational requirements of an enlarged workforce needed to deliver the retrofitting programme (early action in this regard can maximise the associated employment potential and economic, social and environmental benefits (Sections 9.3. 9.7).

There are two amendments. One is a Fine Gael amendment that suggests adding, after “needs assessment”, the words “guided by the amount of carbon abated per euro of investment”. Do members wish to speak to the amendment?

Deputy Thomas Pringle: It is the same as the previous amendment of Deputy Corcoran Kennedy and the same argument applies. If a carbon tax of X amount was cheaper than retrofitting a house, we could argue that we should pay the EU penalty instead.

Chairman: This is amendment No. 38 and it relates to recommendation No. 35.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: In terms of what we are trying to get at, some houses have some insulation, while some do not. There are different levels in that regard. We are trying to prioritise the houses with no insulation that are most damaging to the environment. That is all.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Obviously, we want to go where we can make the easiest gains, but sometimes there are other issues we have to take into account. One of the measures we could possibly take is targeting certain areas in the country. For example, for a variety of rea-

sons, there may well be a case, in retrofitting social housing or supporting the private sector, to look at rural Ireland first. If something is being done in a rural area, we know that we can put up a worker, whereas in Dublin it is very difficult to find accommodation for someone. This might be beneficial because we will want to protect rural communities if carbon prices increase. There are, however, other circumstances and factors that we have to take into account. If we were to just go with cost abatement curves, we would sometimes miss the social priorities we would have to apply. Obviously, we have to look at cost abatement curves, but being explicit on having a needs assessment for just that one category would restrict us in the social and other priorities we might want to apply to investment.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I want to ensure we will stick to the spirit of the Citizens' Assembly report. We had a specific amendment with a target of approximately 100,000 houses per annum, but as a committee we have settled on a figure of 75,000. I agree with Deputy Eamon Ryan on ensuring there would be a social element also such that we would not make it too technocratic. That may not be the specific intention, but it could be interpreted in a way that would be too technocratic. We want to ensure we will develop infrastructure that will have the requisite skill set and the pot of money required to do this and set clear targets for retrofitting. The 45,000 target is too low, notwithstanding the fact that in reality far fewer than that number are achieved on an annual basis. There is scope to beef up the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, SEAI, and work with stakeholders such as the Construction Industry Federation and academic institutions to develop short courses, for instance, to try to get more highly skilled graduates into the space to create a demand for retrofitting. We need to create an infrastructure that will ensure the primary user will not face an arcane or overly bureaucratic set of guidelines when he or she applies for a grant. That process should be made as seamless as possible. Our interaction with the Tipperary Energy Agency was very effective because it ensured it acted as an interlocutor with the service provider, the engineers and so on.

Chairman: I am trying to move forward.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I appreciate that. To conclude, we should keep the wording in recommendation No. 35 as simple as possible. It is on that basis that I ask Deputy Corcoran Kennedy to consider keeping it as it is.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I will withdraw the amendment.

Chairman: Is it agreed that the amendment be withdrawn? Agreed. The next amendment was withdrawn earlier. There is an amendment to recommendation No. 36. The recommendation reads:

The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government should provide a road map by Q1 2020 for the decarbonisation of the rental stock by 2030. This road map should include a timescale and associated measures for requiring a minimum C BER [rating] for residential lettings.

Deputy Bríd Smith has tabled amendment No. 40 which seeks to insert the following: "The Committee recommends the introduction of a measure (e.g. a tax allowance) to redress the higher energy costs which the increasing number of people now housed in rental accommodation will incur in those situations where landlords do not take steps to improve the energy efficiency of their residential rental properties". I think that is already included in our report somewhere.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Is Deputy Bríd Smith suggesting a tenant be given a tax allowance

for-----

Deputy Bríd Smith: Of course, but the tenant would have to be able to carry out the works.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: The tenant would have to do the work.

Deputy Bríd Smith: He or she should either carry out the works or be able to afford to improve his or her life somehow. We have to deal with people living in private rented accommodation that is substandard and where landlords are not willing to bring it up to the energy rating required. We all know that this is becoming increasingly. People are being forced into private rented accommodation because of the lack of social housing. One third of people in Dublin already live in private rented accommodation, much of which leaves a lot to be desired in terms of energy efficiency. Another measure could be brought forward to force landlords to make the changes required, but we should find a measure to give a tax allowance to address higher energy costs. I refer to persons who have to keep the fire on.

Chairman: I believe that is what recommendation No. 35(c) states. Am I right? It refers to landlords producing a plan. I am sorry. There is a reference somewhere to landlords.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Will the Chairman find it for us?

Chairman: It is in recommendation No. 36.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I believe the best approach which Sinn Féin included in a policy document the other day is that over a period we regulate to state landlords have to upgrade. That would be a far more effective measure. If we were to give a tax allowance to the tenant, there is a risk we would encourage landlords to keep the existing system. The rent would increase such that, like a lot of these things, the tax allowance would be sucked up by the landlord. It would be far better to regulate to get landlords to do the work. Such a measure has recently been introduced in the United Kingdom. Regulating landlords, rather than giving a tax allowance, is the better approach.

Chairman: It is implied that it would be the landlord because the recommendation states the road map should include a timescale and associated measures to require a minimum C BER rating.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: If I am earning €200,000 a year and renting in south County Dublin, would this apply to me? Would I get a tax allowance?

Deputy Bríd Smith: If the Deputy is on that money, he is hardly renting a substandard house.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: We have to be careful about the wording of the amendments we put forward. I understand from where Deputy Bríd Smith is coming, but we have to be careful in the way we word amendments.

Chairman: I believe recommendation No. 36 implies that it would be the landlord.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I understand fully from where Deputy Bríd Smith is coming on this issue. Deputy Eamon Ryan said it should be levied on landlords. In an ideal world it should be levied on them, but the problem is nobody would pursue them to make sure they would do it. The reality is that if the State had to give a tax free allowance to the tenant, it would then have an interest in making sure the landlord did the work to reduce the tax free allowance

in order that it would get more tax. The problem would arise if the State was to abdicate its responsibility to protect tenants. I take it that is the reason Deputy Bríd Smith-----

Deputy Bríd Smith: The Deputy makes a good point.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: That is the reality. We could put the onus on landlords, but the State would not pursue landlords to make it happen. It does not pursue landlords to do anything and would not pursue them to make this happen either.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Notwithstanding what Deputy Sherlock said, somebody may be renting a well kitted out penthouse or luxury apartment, but there is a lot of poor quality, poorly insulated accommodation available, with the most expensive forms of heating. Some of them use slot meters which are very expensive. That is accepted and the issue needs to be addressed. I am not sure whether this suggestion is workable. I agree that we need to do something about the matter, but we would have to deem whether a building had the proper energy rating and, from the Minister's point of view, give tax relief in that particular instance. It is a critical area. It is one of the areas we have previously tried to highlight and put forward measures to address. To put it another way, let us say I am in one apartment and Deputy Bríd Smith is in another. If I think mine is colder than hers, getting a determination on that or getting a landlord to allow it would be difficult. While it probably cannot be done here and now, I propose that private rental properties should have a minimum building energy rating, BER. In other words, they should come up to a certain standard, say a rating of B or C.

Chairman: There is already a recommendation to require a minimum C BER rating.

Deputy Brian Stanley: In other words, we would try to raise the conservation levels within the rental housing stock. We would save fuel and save the environment but would also ensure that tenants in private rental accommodation live in warmer houses. Trying to do it through that measure would be difficult.

Chairman: Is Deputy Stanley happy with recommendation No. 36 as it stands?

Deputy Brian Stanley: Yes.

Chairman: How stands the amendment? I think the measure it provides for is in the recommendations already.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Does the Chair think it is in the body of the text?

Chairman: No, I think it is in the actual recommendation itself. The rental sector is a key issue. This is something that we can push as a standing committee.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: For the benefit of the committee, I note that private landlords are supposed to register with the Residential Tenancies Board. They do not. Nobody makes it happen. That is the reality of the situation. We can include all the recommendations that we want, but unless we insert a provision for the State to go after those landlords to ensure that they do it-----

Chairman: The roadmap should include that. That is something we could do in progressing these recommendations as part of our hearings as a standing committee. We can push this issue with the Minister. This is a key recommendation. We have put on the record that this is our understanding of it.

Deputy Brian Stanley: The point made by Deputy Pringle is true. That situation is changing but it is not changing quickly enough. A lot of landlords are not registered.

Chairman: Can we apply pressure as a standing committee?

Deputy Brian Stanley: Local authorities are now inspecting private rental accommodation to see whether it is up to standard before housing assistance payments are made on it. We need more of that, but we also need to go further-----

Chairman: Can we do that as a standing committee-----

Deputy Brian Stanley: Absolutely, yes.

Chairman: -----and keep this recommendation as it stands?

Deputy Brian Stanley: We need to improve it.

Chairman: Deputy Bríd Smith's points are on the record. As a standing committee we can pursue this.

Deputy Bríd Smith: If it goes on the agenda of the standing committee and we have a further discussion, because I feel a bit disarmed here-----

Chairman: Absolutely. I do not think anybody disagrees with that.

Is recommendation No. 36 agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: To clarify, how stands the amendment?

Chairman: The amendment was withdrawn, was it not?

Deputy Bríd Smith: Yes; it is to go to the standing committee.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I would like belt and braces on this. Can I have included a line or sentence, stating the issues that have been outlined by Deputy Bríd Smith will be discussed, and that there is a specific-----

Chairman: We have that power as a standing committee. We are saying it here in public session and we will deal with it as a standing committee. We will put it on our agenda.

Deputy Bríd Smith: Put in a line that says "Deputy Smith is brilliant".

Chairman: We have stated on record that we are going to deal with it.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: Add the words "and modest".

Chairman: The next recommendation is recommendation No. 37 in my name. Is that agreed? Agreed. Is recommendation No. 38 agreed? Agreed.

We will now move on to chapter 10, which concerns transport. There are seven recommendations. The first recommendation has two amendments. I will deal with that first and then we will continue. The preface to the recommendations states:

The Committee notes that transport is a complex problem to address and that substantial further investigation shall be required by the Standing Committee, the Climate Action

Council and the Government as part of the all of government approach. The Committee in accepting the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly makes the following initial recommendations:

The first recommendation, recommendation No. 39, states:

The urgent delivery of proposed investment under Project 2040 and other programmes in low-carbon and zero-carbon modes of transport including major public transport infrastructure works, commencing in 2019 and calls for these and additional similar projects to be prioritised and expanded. (Section 10.5)

There are two Green Party amendments, Nos. 43 and 44. They are both new priority recommendations. Amendment No. 43 provides that all current transport infrastructure programmes should immediately be revised to achieve a ratio of expenditure on public transport to spending on roads of at least 2:1.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: This is a fairly self-explanatory amendment. An earlier comment referred to the scale of the challenge we face. No climate assessment was carried out in respect of the current national development plan and Project Ireland 2040. We learned that in our hearings. We also learned that even with all the projects that are included, the National Transport Authority, NTA, is projecting a 30% increase in transport emissions, rather than the 30% reduction that we need. We heard from the Secretary General of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport that the Department has no plan or understanding of how to bring emissions down. Clear and irrefutable evidence of this was presented. No major public transport projects were built in Ireland last year, and none will be built this year or next year. More than anything else, in my own city of Dublin we are widening all the approach roads. That is what is happening in reality. We know how difficult it is to change this approach because we heard it in our own committee hearings. All of these roads are popular. The most difficult thing for this committee to achieve would be to stop the development of a road.

The national development plan was not assessed. When it was assessed later as part of our work, we realised that it would deliver 30% of the emission reductions targets we have committed to for 2030. We have a 100 million tonne gap to close and there is no clear sense of how we are going to do so. We did not do a lot of work on reducing emissions in transport planning. We have to go back and do more work in respect of transport. We have a significant problem. If we are going to accept the Citizens' Assembly recommendations, the reality that we have to switch our transport spending to the ratio the amendment outlines must be front and centre. The ratio of spending on roads to public transport is currently 2:1. We have to switch that. If we do so it will be a better outcome because our people are being stuck in traffic. Dublin faces congestion costs of €2 billion, a figure which is growing every year. We have to be ambitious in switching the transport budget. I could make the same comment with regard to the other amendment.

Chairman: The Deputy is referring to No. 44. Is this in line with the Dáil motion on promoting cycling?

Deputy Eamon Ryan: This is not just about public transport. Cycling and walking are key opportunities to invest in improving our quality of life, the efficiency of the economy and the health of our people while reducing carbon emissions. There is no better form of low-emission transport than cycling, nor any means of transport that is better for personal health. If we are going to be serious about transport, these are the indications and directions that I believe we should give.

Chairman: We will deal with the two proposals together, if members are agreeable.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: That is fine.

Deputy Brian Stanley: The proposed new priority recommendation No. 44 concerns current transport infrastructure programmes. I presume that refers to new infrastructure programmes. It proposes that they should immediately be revised so that at least 10% expenditure is dedicated to facilitating cycling. I would suggest that we broaden that to cycling and walking.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I would prefer to provide for 20% to cycling and walking. That is the recommendation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD.

Deputy Brian Stanley: The two things can be done together.

Deputy Tom Neville: I understand the spirit of the amendment concerning public transport. Several public transport projects have been proposed and we want them to be pursued. We have to perform a balancing act here. Project Ireland 2040 is projected to deliver a 30% reduction in emissions, as was outlined. We also have to look at this economically and socially. We have to consider it in light of the *status quo* with regard to infrastructure and how to get from here to there. We cannot move from one transport infrastructure to another without a transition. We are always talking about transitions. It is important to manage that. Reading the recommendations, I note that a 2:1 ratio will have huge impact on the building of motorways and projects that are already moving through the planning process, projects that are shovel-ready and projects that are now under construction or to which commitments have been made. Examples include the Cork to Limerick motorway and, to be parochial, the Limerick to Foynes motorway through County Limerick. These are all major infrastructural projects that are economically required. The country needs them. Distance is now measured using time rather than kilometres. We talk about getting from A to B in half an hour instead of it being 40 km. This is important for our economic development, particularly for areas such as Shannon-Foynes Port. Some traffic is already using the motorway to come there from Kildare. That will probably increase and the best possible competitive advantage is needed.

The other side of this matter concerns rural Ireland. I understand Deputy Eamon Ryan may be speaking about Dublin city but I am referring to people in rural Ireland, who rely on cars and related infrastructure. What kind of knock-on effects will this recommendation have for road budgets and the resurfacing of rural roads? We will have to examine the implications of this recommendation for a 2:1 spend when a road budget is being drawn up for rural roads in County Limerick, or any county for that matter. We want to see an increase in public transport, of course, but to suggest there is going to be public transport in every town and village in rural areas is unrealistic. We are fighting to get public transport as it is. I am trying to think of the practicalities of this recommendation. I have major reservations. We have to think critically about this. We need to balance the reduction of emissions with economic development and how people in society currently interact.

Senator Tim Lombard: I also have an issue with this, particularly the 2:1 spending aspect. Regarding lack of investment in public transport, we have to talk about what is actually happening. A bus running on renewable gas, which is carbon neutral, was launched in Cork yesterday. We cannot just be talking ourselves down. We have to acknowledge positive stories like that and what is happening on the ground. There has been significant investment in bus services in my area. The public wanted that. Bus services from Kinsale to Cork have doubled in the last 18 months.

When it comes to the bare bones of infrastructure, we have 12,733 km of roads in County

Cork. Maintaining those roads is one of the biggest challenges we have, never mind building new ones. That is what people want in rural Ireland. They probably do not have broadband but they want to have a road and the ability to get to and from a location. People are struggling to do that at the moment. If we were to bring a recommendation forward of a 2:1 change regarding public transport we would lose a huge cohort of people. We would lose a real aspect of society.

This report could become centred on Dublin and that is a real worry for us. I refer to bringing people with us. I fear this proposal will do damage not alone to rural Ireland but to the report itself. I refer again to 12,733 km of roads in County Cork. There are no new roads being built and they are not needed. We need to maintain those we have. The budgets, unfortunately, are not available for that to happen at the moment. If budgets were to be slashed tomorrow morning, we would have a major problem in society.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I support the principle of the amendments. They are in line with the spirit of the Citizens' Assembly recommendations.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: But?

Deputy Sean Sherlock: There is a "but", unfortunately. I wonder if the two can be separated and whether there can be compromise regarding the amendments. If we have to recommend that all current transport infrastructure programmes be revised, I imagine the assumption is a revision downwards or away from investment in some of the projects Deputy Neville, for example, outlined. The people I represent rely heavily on cars. Deputy Eamon Ryan hopes there will be a transition from diesel and petrol cars to hybrids and electric vehicles, EVs. He is hoping that will happen as soon as possible and transport will be decarbonised in that way.

My fear is that large infrastructural projects will be taken off of the table. I refer to those necessary to move people and sustain their livelihoods. These projects are required to allow people get to their places of work, to college and to hospitals to access medical appointments and services. The transition from car to bus or train will not happen quickly enough if we start questioning or recommending another mechanism. I would like to see the standing committee take part of this amendment and have robust engagement on what a 2:1 ratio actually means. I refer to having real analysis of that suggestion and bringing in witnesses regarding what that means.

I am broadly in favour of what Deputy Eamon Ryan is trying to achieve. It would mean having to axe current infrastructure projects in the short term, however. That could have a detrimental impact on livelihoods. What the Deputy is proposing can be done in Dublin, Limerick or Galway. I am not sure it can be done in the towns and villages in between those cities. I would like to keep an open mind, however. I would also like the standing committee to engage further on this matter, if we are keeping in line with the recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly.

Chairman: I call Senator Higgins. I will then bring in Deputy Bríd Smith and Deputy Dooley.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: This amendment, as phrased, does seek a revision. That does not necessarily mean a massive revision downwards. This is about increasing the ambition for public transport. If we are to get anywhere near achieving our targets, we are going to have to massively increase our ambition for public transport. New strands of funding can and should be drawn on to do that. EU Invest has been unveiled at a European level. Sustainable

infrastructure is a theme within that and, potentially, includes public transport. We need a clear and ambitious target for public transport investment as there is a chicken and egg effect in that we will not be able to access those EU funds unless we have clear plans for delivery.

I grew up in the west of Ireland and I sympathise with Deputy Neville. He spoke about it already being difficult to access public bus services in towns and villages. I worked with young unemployed people in rural areas who told me about their difficulties in being able to access employment opportunities. The problem at the moment, however, is that the case for rural public transport tends to be presented counting only people who may want to use the service from that a certain town or its environs. To my mind, that actually strengthens the case for public transport in our towns and villages. Public transport might, indeed, include school transport. There is potential for us to examine many more layers to public transport in seeking to fulfil what is an ambitious target.

I also support the target for cycling. While we are looking at 10% of journeys, let us also have 10% of infrastructure. That might change down the line. At this stage, we need a big capital investment in cycling infrastructure because it is missing. It should not, however, be the case that people in rural towns and villages feel they cannot cycle. People often feel safer cycling in the city than in the countryside. That is ridiculous and it is just because the infrastructure is not there. This is an all of Ireland proposal. It would be constructive and the co-benefits are immense.

Chairman: I will read an ancillary recommendation within chapter 10. Reference was made to the standing committee working on this matter. It is already in the report that:

the Committee recommends that the public transport elements of Project Ireland 2040 be prioritised and that further public transport projects should also be re-evaluated with a view to their inclusion after the mid-term review of the NDP. The Committee further recommends that the Standing Committee on Climate Action should examine the changes in infrastructure, planning and delivery that would be required to give effect to the 2 to 1 recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly.

That is in the body of the report.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I wish we had a banner quoting the statement in the IPCC report that this challenge requires unprecedented, radical and utter reform. I do not think we are really getting it when I hear Deputy after Deputy saying, "Yeah, but." There should not be "buts" in revising our expenditure on transport with the ratio suggested by Deputy Eamon Ryan which would favour public transport by 2:1. It should be a no-brainer. We have to get cars, trucks and all other vehicles that are spewing out carbon off the road. I really do not understand the fears of Deputies. Years ago, there used to be loads of rural bus and train links. When the country had very little money, it had railway tracks to every part of east Cork, Kerry, Donegal and Sligo. We destroyed them and made a bags of public transport as the State developed. We could get them back by implementing these amendments. In rejecting them on the basis of fear we are not living up to what the IPCC report, the United Nations and the plethora of stuff that has hit us in the last while are telling us about climate change. We need to keep reminding ourselves of it. I have a radical amendment at the end that we commit to the implementation of free public transport, not tomorrow but eventually. That is being rejected all the time. We have to start thinking outside the box. It cannot be business as usual tomorrow.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I largely support what Deputy Sherlock said. It is not that I am in

disagreement with Deputy Eamon Ryan in where he is coming from. In terms of behavioural change, for me, what we need to try to do is get the carbon emitters off the roads. We are still going to need roads for public transport vehicles and so on. We really need to focus on having people switch from fossil fuel generated carbon spewing vehicles to electric vehicles. There are significant road blocks, the removal of which needs investment. We would be burying our heads in the sand if we were to suggest they should somehow go away. The ratio of 2:1 is a nice one, but what would it mean in effect? We have rightly identified the necessity to look at the carbon emissions impact of projects in the plan to 2040 to see whether they make sense in that respect. On putting another limiter on it that does not look into the detail, it is overarching and I do not know how it necessarily deals with the issues that arise, but it should not be seen as not wanting to invest in public transport. We need to invest aggressively in public transport, but I do not know if setting it against what we spend on roads on a ratio of 2:1 would benefit anyone or if it is necessarily the right thing to do. We should develop a comprehensive framework for what we need to do with public transport.

We can have a misty-eyed view of the past and expect everybody to toddle onto trains, but that is not going to happen either. We cannot expect people to somehow wait for the bus that comes every two hours, even if we were to increase provision massively and provide a service where there was none heretofore. In the rural constituency I know best we would need to put a lot of money into the roads to service the buses that would need to be put in place to provide a comprehensive service to meet the needs of a society that has largely become dependent on the just-in-time service provided by their own personal vehicles. We have seen an evolution away from crowds walking the roads together when they wanted to go to wherever they wanted to go. That does not happen anymore. Sadly, we are in a situation where there are three or four cars in many homes throughout rural Ireland, where sons and daughters still live at home. The first stage is to reduce emissions from the vehicles in which people travel. Over time we need to enhance and increase public transport in densely populated areas. That involves dealing with issues in planning and how we will develop cities into the future. We talked about this issue in the past of urban and suburban planning. I agree with the vast majority of what came from the Citizens' Assembly and would not like to fall out with it over this, but the 2:1 ratio is somewhat crude in meeting the objective we are trying to achieve.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I have no problem with the ratio of 2:1 as it makes sense. The reality is we have had no focus on public transport anywhere in society. That is the problem. We need investment in roads. We are not saying there should not be any as we will need roads to carry the buses that will provide transport because there will not be trains services all around the country. We should have it as a guideline to push us on to make sure it will happen. We need to find innovative ways to deal with rural transport to ensure services will be provided in rural areas. Not everybody can afford to buy an electric vehicle. Not everybody can afford to buy a car, but people do need to access employment also. Public transport will be the way they will access it. Everybody is going to have to be able to do it. We are all going to have to change in that way. I have no problem at all with the ratio.

Chairman: We are discussing the two amendments at the same time.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: The first message is that it has to be focused, first and foremost, on rural Ireland. I thank everyone for his or her honesty in responding and think people will agree with a lot of what has been said. It shows the scale of the challenge we face. Someone said we could not have public transport passing through every town and village. We should set ourselves a target that every single village and town will have a public transport service.

That is exactly what we should be doing. On cycling infrastructure, the first priority is that we set ourselves a goal that there will be a safe route to every school in the country. We should start with secondary schools. Currently, more secondary schoolgirls are driving than cycling to school. That is the reality in modern Ireland. It is also the reality that 30% of morning rush hour traffic is taking kids to school.

The car adverts always show us the ideal of a car moving down an empty road, while Deputy Dooley mentioned a just-in-time service, but we all know that has gone out the window in this country. There are cars everywhere. When officials of the Department were before the committee, one of them said we were at peak car use. We literally cannot cope. Adding two roads will not solve the problem. All it will do is add further to maintenance costs. Deputy Neville is right, or perhaps it was Deputy Dooley - I cannot remember who said it - that there is a terrible maintenance cost. If we keep building more roads, we will have greater maintenance costs and less for public transport. I do not believe, as I see in the national development plan, we have given up on the rail network. If we are thinking big and long term, we should be looking to electrify the entire rail network and have one-and-a-half hour journey times to Galway, Waterford, Limerick and Cork. At present, one cannot tell in leaving Dublin at 5 a.m. to travel to Cork if the journey will take four or six hours.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: Yes.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I am going to press my amendment, but the debate has been very useful because it shows the scale of the challenge we face.

Chairman: A vote has been called in the Dáil.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: We may not be 100 miles from each other on this issue. We will have to take public transport to bridge the gap of 100 miles. If the phrase “new road infrastructure” was included, we might be able to agree.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: No. We should keep it as it is.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: With respect, the difficulty I have is that although we are at peak car use in certain locations, that is not the case in a county the Deputy knows well, County Clare, or County Galway, as the Deputy sitting beside him knows. Once we move outside the conurbation or the major interurban routes, we are not at peak car use. In the villages most people here and I know best, where there is a service, even if we were to quadruple it, there would still only be a bus every four or five hours. I do not know from where the investment is going to come to have a bus service every ten minutes.

Chairman: Will we suspend the sitting while the vote is taking place? I will let Deputy Dooley finish first.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I read with interest the changes made to the proposed metro system and about where it would begin and stop. The proposal will lead to a high speed train running through Sandyford, Harcourt Street and the city centre every three minutes. Of course, that is required and it is right to invest in such transport services in densely populated areas. However, we do not want a situation to arise where we will allow road infrastructure in rural or semi-rural areas to deteriorate to such an extent that people will give up living there. A plank of government policy is in place to try to address that issue. I support all of the points made, but one cannot be at the expense of another. They are not competing interests, nor should they be. We should seek to address the issues in less densely populated areas in a different manner.

We cannot expect people to be happy that roads are not maintained to an acceptable standard.

Chairman: Many members have indicated that they wish to speak, but we will suspend the sitting to enable Deputies to participate in the vote in the Dáil.

Sitting suspended at 8.10 p.m. and resumed at 8.40 p.m.

Chairman: We will continue our conversation on the amendments to Deputy Eamon Ryan's amendments on transport. I call Deputy Sherlock who may have lost his train of thought at this point.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: No, I have not.

Chairman: Please excuse the pun.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: We are all on a journey on this one. As I believe Deputy Eamon Ryan is pressing his amendment, it is moot.

Chairman: I believe Deputy Eamon Ryan is pressing both amendments.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Yes.

Deputy Brian Stanley: May I ask a question, please?

Chairman: Yes.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I had a question before the break and had been trying to get in for a while. I have a question for the Green Party. There are a number of amendments.

Chairman: There are two.

Deputy Brian Stanley: Amendment No. 41 recommends that all current transport infrastructure programmes be revised to bring them into line with the ratio of at least 2:1. There is a similar amendment described as a new priority recommendation which states all current transport infrastructure programmes should be revised immediately to achieve an expenditure ratio of at least 2:1 in favour. My question is as follows. When discussing all current transport infrastructure programmes, is the Green Party talking about all road programmes, including rural road maintenance programmes and local improvement schemes, as well as county council budgets for rural roads? I am curious about how it would work. I can see how it would work in a city, but I am curious about how it would work in at least 22 of the 26 counties. I am thinking about the effects of the change. If it were done over a period of two years, public transport services would not have roads on which to drive. The aim is good and laudable and I can see how it might work within the four larger cities, in particular, as they are choked with traffic. We all want to use public transport which I try to use as much as possible. However, if one were to do this in the roads programme as it applies to any of the 22 counties which do not include a major city, the effect would be that there would be no roads.

The reality is as follows. As a Deputy and, previously, as a county councillor, I have faced situations where a person operating a school bus has refused to use roads because of their condition owing to lack of investment and maintenance. Where that happens, the 25 to 30 children using the bus have to be driven to school. Deputy Eamon Ryan is correct in saying it is very frustrating to see children being driven to school in cars. There is no car-pooling for a lot of them. There are ten cars leaving one housing estate to drive ten children to school. I see it hap-

pening and agree that we need to change these practices. However, the effect of the proposal would be to stop the school bus from travelling on rural roads. It would also affect Irish Rural Link which is being rolled out in some counties. Irish Rural Link and rural transport services would cease to function because the drivers and owners of the buses would refuse to travel on a lot of roads. While in my county, Laois, there are reasonably good roads by comparison with others, it is a huge challenge to maintain roads which are laid over peatland in neighbouring north Offaly. While I have to be careful in referring to County Offaly, I am sure Deputy Corcoran-Kennedy who is not here and Deputy Cowen would agree with me. If people do not believe me, they should drive from Edenderry to Portarlinton via Cushina to see what I am talking about. The county council is barely able to keep the tar on roads with the budget it has available. Any area engineer in any of the municipal districts in our counties will say it is like Blue Band margarine - it must be spread so thinly to keep the roads covered and repaired.

Chairman: The Deputy's point has been well made. I have three more members on my list, namely, Senators Mulherin and Lombard and Deputy Bríd Smith.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: Whether there was a whip applied in the vote on this amendment, I could never support something along the lines of what has been proposed as it shows a great lack of understanding. Primarily, it shows that there is a major divide in relation to urban and rural areas in who will carry the burden in meeting our climate action and climate change ambitions. In one fell swoop, rural areas are taking the wind farms and whatever other energy infrastructure and transmission lines are required. For the most part, it is rural people who are being asked to do so. In some quarters, they are talking about hammering farmers. There is that narrative, not only among extreme elements but also in the mainstream media. Now we are being told that we will not have roads. In my county 71% of people are deemed to live in rural areas. On average, in the west, taking out Galway, 66% of people are deemed to be living in rural areas. Not only will we not be talking about new roads, we will not be able to maintain the roads we have. Unrealistic and out-of-touch amendments like this make one despair, except in so far as we might, I hope, be able to have a more logical discussion about it.

During the period in which the Celtic tiger was roaring roads were not built everywhere. I am talking about strategic roads such as major inter-urban routes. As such, we are only playing catch-up in the west and the north west. The first piece of that infrastructure was the Tuam bypass, but no major road was built into the west during that time. We do not have a major inter-urban route. We would love to have a high-speed train service, but we do not even have that, although we have a train service. The roads are for the socio-economic benefit of the people living in the region to permit it to grow, develop and compete in some way with the rest of the country which it is unable to do at present. It makes a joke of conversations on a just transition and how this and that will impact when people in some areas are coming from so far behind in terms of investment in infrastructure. It is holding them back. Farmers in these areas need to work with multinational companies because their small farms are on marginal land, meaning that they cannot derive a living wage from producing food. There has to be a reality check in what we are about and how we are asking a lot more from some people than others in meeting our climate action ambitions.

This proposal is off the radar in the case of regions that have not seen investment. It is all very well to say we already have the roads we need when we do not have the major roads we need to serve our areas. The idea is to revise everything, throw it on the scrap heap and say, "I am sorry guys; you missed out." These are the same areas that are crucified by environmental designations as European sites under special areas of conservation rules and the habitats and

birds directives. We cannot have a road or a bridge built because of the freshwater pearl mussel, alluvial woodland and a list of species we have to protect, while at the same time there is no regard for humans in the equation. It is only wildlife. The green agenda is that this will be a wildlife preserve and that human beings can be tagged as wildlife in that picture, which is the only one being painted. It is absolutely ridiculous and I will not stand for it. I would not be worth my salt, coming from where I do, knowing and living among the people and seeing their struggles, if I was to listen to this.

Senator Tim Lombard: I have referred to the issue we have in some parts of Ireland in meeting maintenance requirements. There are 13,000 km of road in my county alone, which is a huge issue in respect of a 2:1 expenditure ratio away from public transport. However, we have to acknowledge what has happened. We have good stories to tell. People might not be walking to school, but they are driving part of the way and then joining school trains. These things are happening in villages and towns all over County Cork. We must acknowledge the positives, as well as the negatives. It is unfortunate that a negative twist has been put on it with the suggestion that every single person in a rural area drives a car. We do not. We car-pool because that is what one does in rural Ireland. We work together because we need to do so to survive. As such, the narrative used in the amendment is unfortunate. It has been very divisive and the urban-rural divide has really shone through in the last half hour of this debate.

Chairman: Deputy Bríd Smith and Senator Devine are next on my list. I ask them to be brief as I think we are going to a vote on the amendment.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I get it that people are frightened by what the IPCC states. During the break I asked for the IPCC quote to be inserted in the report, but that request was denied. I read it again:

Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems ... These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale.

Either we accept that or we do not. If we do not, it means moving into the realm of climate change denial.

I accept it, but I would like to respond to the contributions of the two previous speakers by saying I believe they are grossly misinterpreting what is intended by the amendments we are dealing with. Deputy Eamon Ryan's amendment proposes that "All current transport infrastructure programmes should immediately be revised to achieve expenditure at least 2 to 1 in favour of public transport." By the way, that includes roads which need public transport going up and down them to take kids to school and to bring rural villagers from one village to another. It includes infrastructure on roads which will be used by public transport. I think it is over-egging the pudding to say that those of us who come from urban areas, particularly Dublin, are somehow attempting to lash out of it the people who live in the west and in the far-flung regions. It is absolute nonsense. We are trying to reverse the damage that has been done to the planet and live up to our responsibilities. As politicians, we have a responsibility to look beyond the business-as-usual negative way of seeing our daily lives by trying to change them for the better. The Green Party amendments go a long way towards dealing with that without being punitive on anyone. I remind colleagues that Deputy Eamon Ryan said that these amendments apply particularly to rural Ireland.

Chairman: Senator Devine and Deputy Buckley want to come in, but I am conscious of

the time.

Deputy Pat Buckley: I will be brief. I have been more of a witness here this evening. Amendments Nos. 41 to 43, inclusive, seem to be related. I want to ask a simple question. I am looking for proper clarity on this. Will the roads budget for local authorities be affected by this 2:1 proposal? I suggest it will have to be affected. We are absolutely struggling at present. The idea is perfect, but I do not think it is doable because it will absolutely decimate rural Ireland. When I speak about rural Ireland, I am not suggesting that this is an attack on rural Ireland. I am talking about urban areas as well. As many speakers have said, there are almost 13,000 km of roads in County Cork alone. Councils are struggling to keep those roads surfaced, As Deputy Stanley said a while ago, we need the existing surface that is there to try to work with the transport we have. I could not see this being doable if it is going to affect budgets. I need clarity on that.

Chairman: Deputy Deering was on my list earlier, so I will bring him in after we have heard from Senator Devine.

Senator Máire Devine: As a Jackeen and a Dub, I agree that the onus seems to be heavily weighed towards rural areas. There is a focus on trying to stop people from using their cars so frequently and encouraging them to use public transport instead. If the intention of these amendments or recommendations is to take away the road transport budget that is used for the resurfacing and construction of roads, it is a ridiculous idea, as other people have said. I am not just talking about rural areas because this point applies to Dublin as well. When we had a bad winter, all the roads in Dublin crumbled because of the cheaper materials which had been brought in. I spent years on the council trying to get those roads repaired after they had completely crumbled. Buses would not go up and down different areas. This is not just a rural issue. I accept that rural areas seem to be taking the heavy hitting on this. When I was on the Dublin Bus forum, I learned that Dublin Bus drivers will not go down certain roads in this city because of health problems like back pain caused by jumping up and down on potholes. Poor road surfaces can have an impact on car transport, but it has a particular impact on buses as people try to get to and from their daily work. Will all of that money disappear in favour of public transport, with the juxtaposition of not having a road to drive on?

Chairman: I ask Deputy Deering to be brief because I want to call this vote.

Deputy Pat Deering: I thank the Chair. I apologise for not being back earlier. The simple and straightforward answer to the question posed by Senator Devine is “Yes”. The budget will be slashed.

Deputy Bríd Smith: It is a question of structuring programmes in favour of public transport.

Deputy Pat Deering: I did not interrupt the Deputy.

Chairman: I ask Deputy Smith to let Deputy Deering finish. Everyone is entitled to his or her view.

Deputy Pat Deering: I appreciate and accept the ambition behind this amendment, but there is a reality here. I live in rural Ireland, but I do not live in the sticks if I can put it as such. My county town has a population of 25,000 people. We are encountering challenges as we seek to develop public bus infrastructure within the town. I am not talking about getting people into the town; I am talking about public transport within the town itself. When people

try to get from one side of the town to the other, they find it is nearly impossible for them to do so. In my opinion, the ring-a-link service that links certain towns could be developed further. We have to accept the reality that roads in rural Ireland need to be maintained to an acceptable standard. We are not looking for more roads. Others have made this point already but it has to be emphasised again. Many people inside and outside this room have complained time and again over the years about the standard of the roads infrastructure in rural Ireland, and indeed in urban Ireland as Senator Devine has mentioned. It would be a sad day if we were to go down the road of letting our roads crumble, which would be the implication of this amendment.

Chairman: I am conscious of time. We need to move forward. I will bring in Deputy Ryan.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I will finish on this point. I would like to give reassurance, if I can. Obviously, safety comes first. The first priority in the roads budget must be maintenance. We must make sure our existing roads are safe. I believe that can be done while at the same time allocating two thirds of the budget to public transport - to rail and bus services. That is in line with the national planning framework, which was very good and very clear. It made it clear that we needed to bring life back into the centres of our towns and villages, to decarbonise and to pursue a completely different planning and development model, which would come with providing public transport. Unfortunately, the national development plan abandoned that and maintained the existing system of roads-based development. The best example I can think of is in the Chairman's constituency. I am aghast when I look at the development plans for Galway because they are out of date, old-fashioned and not properly sustainable. Galway is going to develop out to the motorway that has been planned. I would prefer to spend €600 million or €700 million on the western rail corridor than on such a motorway. This would ensure the 30,000 people who drive into Galway from distant locations every day are not stuck in roundabouts outside industrial estates. I think that would make for a city that works. If we keep going with the sprawling road-based development model, it will cripple our economy. It affects people's quality of life to have to spend so much of their time in cars rather than with their families and friends.

I want to reiterate that this is not anti-rural. I will cite my own example in support of that. My main job for 15 years of my working life involved getting people to Mayo and Kerry from Shannon and Dublin airports. Every time a tourist from Germany or elsewhere rang me to say he would be arriving in Shannon Airport at midday and wanted to know how he could get to Mayo or Kerry that day, I was mortified to have to say it could not be done in the same day. That was my lived experience. It was the same experience all over the country. We do not have a proper rural public transport system. I agree with Senator Lombard that we need to think about this creatively. The switch we need to make in transport does not just involve a move from petrol cars to electric cars - it also involves all sorts of clever and sophisticated car-sharing models which, first and foremost, should benefit rural Ireland. We should be looking at the other services that school buses can provide in local communities after the school run has finished for the day. We should make sure every post van that delivers to a rural community has seats in it so that it can turn into a bus. We can be creative and innovative in this area. The first priority should be rural Ireland because people in rural Ireland are suffering worst from the deficiencies in our public transport system. We will not be able to do that unless we spend money on public transport. If we keep going with a roads-based system, as the existing national development plan does, we will not deliver on the objective of the national planning framework to deliver public transport. All our people in rural and urban areas are being crippled by being stuck in our cars all the time. If we make a switch, we will have a better quality of life.

Chairman: We are on recommendation No. 43.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I want us to be clear about what we are talking about. I am asking for clarity on what is meant by the immediate revision of current transport infrastructure programmes. Does that include funding for the maintenance of county and rural roads?

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Yes.

Chairman: Yes, that is the intention.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I was wondering whether that was the case. This is not an urban-rural thing. I am supporting a public transport system in Portlaoise. I hope it will go ahead. Other attempts have been made to develop such a system. Regional transport links between towns like Portlaoise and Tullamore also need to be improved.

Chairman: Can we get back to this?

Deputy Brian Stanley: Yes. That is fine and that should happen.

Chairman: Yes.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I made a point about car pooling.

Chairman: Yes.

Deputy Brian Stanley: It is not an urban-rural thing. There is a practical problem that I cannot get my head around. Roads are needed if public transport is to function. Even if we got rid of cars in rural Ireland tomorrow, we would need to have minibuses going up and down rural roads and boreens to get people around. The only other way is by rail or by air. In reality, it has to be by road, even for cycling. My point is, and I can think of examples where this happened, public communal transport, for example, school transport, will not go up a particular county road because of the condition it is in-----

Chairman: The Deputy has made that point on the record very clearly earlier.

Deputy Brian Stanley: -----if one cuts back on the maintenance of it. I am not sure if it has been appreciated here or maybe I have not made the point sufficiently clear that already in some counties, particularly where there is a lot of boggy land, and Laois would not be the worst or most difficult of these, the engineers and the overseers of the local councils are at the pin of their collars with the current roads budget that they have.

Chairman: The Deputy stated that earlier.

Deputy Brian Stanley: If two thirds of that budget is taken away from them, there will not be a rural road to put the public transport on.

Chairman: The Deputy has made his points very clearly earlier and I want to proceed. Amendment No. 43 is a new priority recommendation and the question is that it be inserted in the report.

Question put.

The Committee divided: Tá;, 4; Níl, 16.	
Tá;	Níl;

Higgins, Alice-Mary.	Buckley, Pat.
Pringle, Thomas.	Butler, Mary.
Ryan, Eamon.	Chambers, Jack.
Smith, Bríd.	Corcoran Kennedy, Marcella.
	Daly, Paul.
	Deering, Pat.
	Devine, Máire.
	Dooley, Timmy.
	Lombard, Tim.
	Marshall, Ian.
	McLoughlin, Tony.
	Mulherin, Michelle.
	Naughton, Hildegarde.
	Neville, Tom.
	Sherlock, Sean.
	Stanley, Brian.

Question declared lost.

Chairman: We will now move on to amendment No. 44, which creates a new recommendation.

Question put.

The Committee divided: Tá; 12; Níl, 8.	
Tá;	Níl;
Buckley, Pat.	Corcoran Kennedy, Marcella.
Butler, Mary.	Deering, Pat.
Chambers, Jack.	Heydon, Martin.
Daly, Paul.	Lombard, Tim.
Devine, Máire.	Marshall, Ian.
Dooley, Timmy.	Mulherin, Michelle.
Higgins, Alice-Mary.	Naughton, Hildegarde.
Pringle, Thomas.	Neville, Tom.
Ryan, Eamon.	
Sherlock, Sean.	
Smith, Bríd.	
Stanley, Brian.	

Question declared carried.

Chairman: We will now discuss amendment No. 45 from the Green Party and amendment No. 46 from Deputy Bríd Smith together, if members are agreed. If they are pushed to a vote, I

propose that we vote on them one after the other rather than ringing the bells twice.

Deputy Brian Stanley: To clarify, the proposal is to reduce top speed limits to achieve immediate cost-effective emissions reductions. The top speed limit on some roads would already be very low, so we need clarity on what is being proposed here.

Chairman: The amendment was tabled by the Green Party. I will read it out for the benefit of the committee: "Reduce top speed limits to achieve immediate cost-effective emissions reductions."

Deputy Brian Stanley: The proposal is certainly workable in the context of reducing high speeds, but there may be an issue with different classes of road. Efforts are being made already by county councils to reduce speed limits on many roads within their functional areas. Are we talking here about the speed limits on motorways and national secondary routes like the N80 and the M52 or are we talking about regional roads like the R564 as well?

Chairman: I will ask Deputy Eamon Ryan to respond to that. Is it agreed that we will discuss amendments No. 45 and 46 together? Agreed.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: We will have to be succinct because Deputy Bríd Smith, Senator Lombard and I are due in RTÉ at 9.30 p.m. We will be sharing a taxi.

Senator Tim Lombard: Who will sit in the front?

Deputy Eamon Ryan: To answer Deputy Stanley's question, one of the evidence points we heard was from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. It did not have any plan or clear pathway over the next ten years for closing the 100 million tonne gap that we have. However, the one initiative that the Department did cite was a reduction in the motorway speed limit by 10 km/h, to 110 km/h for cars and 80 km/h for HGVs, which it estimates would save 2 million tonnes. That is not a small amount and the initiative might also improve safety too. It is a very practical measure. We have to figure out where we are going to get the 100 million tonnes in savings. It is all about the carbon and the speed limit reduction would yield a 2 million tonne saving.

Chairman: Does anyone else want to comment on that?

Senator Máire Devine: I wish to comment on both amendments. The Green Party proposal is to reduce the top speed limits to achieve immediate cost-effective emissions reductions, but Deputy Ryan has just said that the carbon saving that this would yield is only an estimate. I do not know if there is enough evidence available to warrant supporting this proposal. I would imagine that the estimate is probably correct and I do not want to walk away from the proposal. However, there is insufficient evidence to support it right now.

Amendment No. 46 from Deputy Bríd Smith recommends the introduction of free public transport. I know that this has happened already in a number of European cities but I am not sure how effective it has been. There is also the issue of ring-fencing funding for the promotion of public transport. I know that many European countries subsidise their public transport systems to a far greater degree than we do here. The public transport network in Ireland has been run down and neglected in comparison with Europe. That said, I would like this amendment to be referred to the standing committee because I cannot make an informed choice at the moment in the absence of sufficient evidence.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: My understanding is that we are moving towards electric vehicles and whatever other solutions we come up with. That is the way we ought to be going. This sounds like nanny state stuff to me.

Chairman: Is the Senator talking about both amendments?

Senator Michelle Mulherin: No, I am talking specifically about amendment No. 45 on the speed limits.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I hope that a nanny state is not one that would provide free public transport because the Senator would then be referring to Luxembourg as a nanny state. That country has just moved to provide free public transport. The idea has long-term-----

Senator Michelle Mulherin: I was not referring to Deputy Smith's recommendation.

Deputy Bríd Smith: I know Senator Mulherin was not. I was hoping she would grasp the irony of what I was saying. The reason I put forward the recommendation was because I believe we will find over a short period that it will be the way to go across many nations in Europe and beyond.

We costed this as a budgetary measure in our last pre-budget submission. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport gave us separate figures and the figures tally. Lo and behold, it was approximately €600,000 per year to provide free public transport on all bus and railway networks. Obviously, the previous discussion included how the bus and railway network we have is not sufficient and we would like to see it expanded. Would it not be wonderful as a start at least to make a commitment?

I appeal to colleagues to read the recommendation. I am not saying we should ditch everything tonight and go for free public transport in the morning. People should not misinterpret it. The committee is being asked to recommend that the Government would make a commitment to introduce free public transport as a long-term policy goal to help reduce our emissions and to take people out of private car usage. Advanced states like Luxembourg are moving rapidly towards this. That is evidence of how it helps to change people's behaviour. The discussion tomorrow, like an earlier discussion, will all be about how we change behaviour. This is a sensible measure to change people's behaviour and get them out of cars, and I hope committee members will support it.

Deputy Tom Neville: I wish to comment on the speed limit. Again, it goes back to practicality especially when we are talking about distance and time. What matters is whether we are half an hour or an hour from a given destination as opposed to thinking in kilometres. I share the view expressed by Senator Devine about the facts and figures around this. We have different types of cars and fuel consumption as well as different driver behaviour and habits. It is different depending on whether there is congestion. All these different parameters are relevant if we are to find out by exactly how much we could reduce the figures.

If anything, we should focus more on implementing and policing the speed limits we have currently. Many drivers are driving above the current speed limits. Maybe we could look at it in that way. I have reservations around bringing the speed limits back. It might get people's backs up too much. We are trying to bring the public with us in trying to address climate change. It could be a matter for discussion in the standing committee further down the line. At the moment I have reservations about it.

The flip side of free public transport is that we have to see how to pay for it. Again, that is a matter of practicality.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I want to speak on both of the recommendations. The first recommendation suggests reducing top speed limits. It makes perfect sense. We are talking about reducing the speed limits by 10 km/h. A major advertising campaign is under way to reduce the speed limit on the M50. It is counter-intuitive but it makes everyone get through quicker because all the traffic goes at the same speed and everyone moves better instead of some of us racing on and getting into a traffic jam and sitting there waiting. It makes sense. I drive from Donegal every week to this place. I know that I can drive like a madman and get here ten minutes quicker. It makes sense to reduce the speed limits. We should consider our cars. They perform far better at a lower speed.

Chairman: There is a vote in the Dáil. I am sorry for cutting off Deputy Pringle. I am trying to get through my speakers. I gather he wants to speak on the two recommendations.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: Deputy Smith made a point on the second recommendation. We are not talking about the world of communism when we are referring to places like Luxembourg. Free public transport makes perfect sense. We need to think outside the box. We need to look at alternatives to make this work and it makes sense.

Chairman: I thank the Deputy for keeping it brief.

Deputy Pat Buckley: Recommendation No. 45 relates to reducing the speed limits. We built motorways to speed up connectivity between cities and so on. If we are moving towards electric vehicles in future and they are travelling on the motorway at 120 km/h, there is the possibility of zero emissions. The question of balance arises here. There is also the effect on business and deadlines and whatever goes through. I do not see it. I could possibly go with Senator Devine's suggestion and put it back in for further discussion, but I think the situation is ludicrous at the moment.

Deputy Martin Heydon: I wish to comment on recommendation No. 45. We have the experience in Kildare of the M7 where the third lane is being built at the moment. The cars are reduced to 60 km/h. I can assure committee members that those cars are on the road for longer. There is a question of balance. They are on the road pumping out fumes for longer. As Deputy Neville has said, there is a question of balance between time and distance that needs to be factored in. I would struggle to support recommendation No. 45.

Recommendation No. 46 calls for free public transport. We need to be realistic when we talk about a panacea and lovely ideas of free transport for all, something we would all love. Ultimately, that would take away from the likes of Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann and others. The part of their income that does not come from the State subvention comes from paying passengers who use the service. The experience in some countries of this measure is that people who would walk small distances take the bus when it is for free. They hop on because it is available free rather than pay a €1 fare. It could have a negative impact in terms of usage. Certainly, it would mean that the taxpayer and the State would have to fill the gap that would be lost. This coupled with principle from the same Deputy of not increasing income from carbon pricing suggests it is simply fairy-tale economics. Who is supposed to pay for all this?

Chairman: I do not know if we have time for this, but Deputy Deering and Senator Lombard have both indicated.

Deputy Pat Deering: My point is a carry-on from Deputy Heydon's point on recommendation No. 46. There is no such a thing as free anything in this world, or if there is I have not found it yet. Someone has to pay from somewhere. If there is to be free transport or free water, dare I say it, or whatever, someone has to pay. It will have to come out of the overall kitty and it will not be free.

Another point arises on speed limits. I remain to be convinced on the matter. I suggest that as a compromise the idea should be referred to the standing committee for further investigation.

Senator Tim Lombard: I will try my best to be as brief as I can on the free transport element. We need to acknowledge the difference between one part of the world and another. In my part of the county there are villages and major towns with poor transportation links. If we were to take away the funding in place at the moment, we would have a major deficit to try to promote more actual transportation, especially rural transportation.

We really need to think about the motorway issue. Are we really going to say that Cork is an extra 50 minutes from Dublin? How would that work out for a regional spatial plan?

Chairman: We will suspend and when we come back we will go straight into the vote.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Unfortunately, I will be unable to come back because I have a prior commitment. Is there any possibility we could have the vote tomorrow? It would not take long tomorrow.

Chairman: Okay. We will defer these two recommendations. There is also the recommendation on agriculture that we deferred yesterday. Are people in agreement? Agreed. We will adjourn and resume at 2 p.m. tomorrow.

The joint committee adjourned at 9.30 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Thursday, 28 March 2019.