



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 5, No. 99, Session 100

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 25 March 2026

Note: (DT) signifies a decision taken at Decision Time.

The meeting opened at 11.40 am.

- 1. General Questions:** Questions were answered by the Deputy First Minister, a Cabinet Secretary and Ministers.
- 2. First Minister's Questions:** Questions were answered by the First Minister (John Swinney).
- 3. A Scotland-wide Ban on the Use of Mobile Phones in Schools:** The Parliament debated S6M-20881 in the name of Pam Gosal—That the Parliament notes what it sees as the dangers that mobile phones and social media pose to children and young people, especially in relation to their physical and mental health; expresses concern regarding the potential safeguarding issues associated with the use of mobile phones, such as exposure to harmful content that is not age-appropriate; further expresses concern regarding reported studies that state that two in three 11- to 17-year-olds find it difficult to put down their phones, with teenagers spending, on average, five hours and 30 minutes each day on their smartphones, including four to five hours on social media, as well as research that reportedly found that one in five 16- to 18-year-olds say that social media has made them feel that "life is not worth living"; notes the calls for a Scotland-wide ban on the use of mobile phones on school premises; understands that schools across Scotland, including in the West Scotland region, and the rest of the UK that have implemented such bans have seen promising results, and that countries across Europe and around the world have taken extensive steps to limit the use of mobile phones in schools, and commends what it sees as the great work done by organisations such as Smartphone Free Childhood, Kids for Now, One Collective Power and Delay

Smartphones, which are raising awareness of the potential dangers that come with mobile phone use.

4. Sustainability of Remote, Rural and Island Communities: The Parliament debated S6M-20849 in the name of Jamie Halcro Johnston—That the Parliament recognises a special duty to ensure the long-term sustainability of Scotland’s remote, rural and island communities; notes the view that addressing the needs of these communities requires policy that recognises and accommodates the particular circumstances of the Highlands and Islands region and other parts of remote, rural and island Scotland; acknowledges the challenges of delivering public services such as education, transport, local health and social care, policing and justice to areas with lower population density; believes that a range of local public services have been centralised or downgraded and no longer have a visible presence in many remote and rural communities; considers that the rural economy and rural businesses have faced unprecedented challenges in recent years with the farming and fishing sectors under real pressure and uncertainty, increased regulation impacting the visitor economy, and high streets and town centres struggling; believes that access to housing and affordable accommodation has become increasingly difficult in these communities, particularly for young people; recognises what it sees as the vital importance of connectivity to the prosperity of these communities, including preserving and expanding travel links by road, rail, sea and air and the need to plan for the future investment needs of essential infrastructure, and notes the view that building strong communities in all parts of Scotland will require a greater focus and consideration from across Scotland’s public bodies.

5. Portfolio Questions: Questions on Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, and then on Health and Social Care, and then on, Social Justice and Housing were answered by Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers.

6. Motion of Thanks: The First Minister (John Swinney) moved S6M-21180—That the Parliament expresses its thanks to its Presiding Officer, Alison Johnstone, for her dedicated service to the Parliament; thanks her Deputy Presiding Officers, and pays tribute to all of those Members who are standing down at the end of this session.

The motion was agreed to (DT).

7. Decision Time: The Parliament took a decision on item 6 as noted above.

The meeting closed at 4.58 pm.

David McGill
Clerk of the Parliament
25 March 2026

Appendix
(Note: this Appendix does not form part of the Minutes)

Committee Reports

The following reports were published on 24 March 2026—

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, 16th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Annual Report of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee 2025-26 (SP Paper 1079)

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, 5th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Legacy Report (SP Paper 1104)

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, 39th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Legacy report of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee (SP Paper 1107)

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, 13th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Legacy report of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, Session 6 (SP Paper 1101)

The following reports were published on 25 March 2026—

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, 7th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Annual Report of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee 2025-26 (SP Paper 997)

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, 6th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee Session 6 Legacy Report (SP Paper 1098)

Public Audit Committee, 3rd Report, 2026 (Session 6): Legacy report of the Public Audit Committee, Session 6 (SP Paper 1100)

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, 7th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Annual report of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 2025-26 (SP Paper 1103)

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee, 6th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Annual Report of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee 2025-26 (SP Paper 1105)

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, 8th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Legacy report of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, Session 6 (SP paper 1106)

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, 40th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Annual report of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee 2025-26 (SP Paper 1108)

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, 41st Report, 2026 (Session 6): Instruments considered by the Delegated Powers and Law Reform

Committee during the fourth quarter of the Parliamentary Year 2025-26 (SP Paper 1109)

Scottish Commission for Public Audit, 2nd Report, 2026, Session 6: Legacy report of the Scottish Commission for Public Audit, Session 6 (SP Paper 1110)

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, 17th Report, 2026 (Session 6): Legacy report of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, Session 6 (SP paper 1111)

Other Documents

The following documents were laid before the Parliament on 25 March 2026 and are not subject to parliamentary procedure—

Scottish Legal Complaints Commission Budget 01 July 2026 – 30 June 2027 (SLCC/2026/01) laid under section 29(10) of the Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 2007

Parole Board for Scotland Annual Report 2024/2025 (SG/2026/47) laid under Schedule 2, paragraph 6 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993

Reform of the Victim Notification Scheme: report for Parliament - March 2026 (SG/2026/56) laid at the request of a member of the Scottish Government and not under any laying power

Community Justice Scotland: Community Justice Outcome Activity Annual Report 2024/25 (SG/2026/30) laid under section 27 of the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016

Community Justice Scotland: Community Payback Order Summary of Local Authority Annual Reports: 2024-25 (SG/2026/31) laid under section 227ZM of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995

Heat Networks Delivery Plan: Review Report 2026 SG/2026/17 laid under section 93 of the Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021

Scottish Ministers' Code of Practice on the discharge of functions by Scottish Public Authorities under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (SG/2026/101) laid under section 60(5) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and regulation 18(4) of the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004

Evidential Requirements and Determinations by Redress Scotland (SG/2026/114) laid under section 106 of the Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Act 2021

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