



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 5, No. 36, Session 6

Meeting of the Parliament

Thursday 2 October 2025

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. Investing in Rail to Unlock the Wealth and Economic Potential of the Highlands: The Parliament debated S6M-18953 in the name of Ariane Burgess— That the Parliament believes that the Highland Main Line is a crucial transport link supporting tourism, freight transport and many vibrant communities; understands with concern that, despite this, two thirds of the 118-mile line, which it considers to be a critical route, remains single track and diesel operated, resulting in journey times that are reportedly similar to those from the Victorian era; believes that this results in frequent delays and causes limited capacity for passengers and freight; notes what it sees as the economic opportunities that can be offered by expanding and improving the nation's rail network, including connecting communities and boosting sustainable freight capacity to support major industries, such as the whisky and forestry sectors in the Highlands; considers that the work of the Highland Main Line Community Rail Partnership has been fantastic in improving the rail network by finding uses for redundant buildings and supporting passenger services; acknowledges the work of Network Rail in exploring additional passing loops, and notes the view that the line should be electrified and dualled to develop more reliable and environmentally sustainable rail transport for communities in the Highlands and

neighbouring regions, as well as inter-city commuters and tourists visiting the north of mainland Scotland.

4. Portfolio Questions: Questions on Social Justice and Housing were answered by Cabinet Secretaries and a Minister.

5. Ministerial Statement: The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs (Angela Constance) made a statement and answered questions on Scotland's Prison Population.

6. Dog Theft (Scotland) Bill: Maurice Golden moved S6M-19121—That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Dog Theft (Scotland) Bill.

The motion was agreed to (DT).

7. Urgent Question: An urgent question, to ask the Scottish Government what urgent action it will take to address the reported crisis in the college sector, in light of the findings in the Audit Scotland publication, Scotland's colleges 2025 was answered by the Minister for Higher and Further Education (Ben Macpherson).

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

9. Commending Give Blood 4 Good's Efforts to Secure Scotland's Blood Supply: The Parliament debated S6M-18736 in the name of Fulton MacGregor—That the Parliament commends the charitable work of Give Blood 4 Good (GB4G), which was founded in 2019 in memory of Patrick Smith, an Edinburgh student who passed away and who was a passionate advocate for blood donation; understands that GB4G was established to address a significant gap in the number of young people becoming blood donors, and to encourage a new generation to step forward; recognises what it sees as the effectiveness of its educational initiatives, including the Young Ambassador Programme for high school students, which uses e-learning and hands-on activities to inform and engage students; believes that this programme not only educates young people on the lifesaving importance of blood donation but also provides them with transferable skills that can be used on CVs and university applications; understands that each blood donation has the potential to save or improve up to three lives; welcomes the charity's work, and recognises the importance of blood donation in Coatbridge and Chryston and across Scotland.

The meeting closed at 5.37 pm.

David McGill
Clerk of the Parliament
2 October 2025

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

Committee Reports

The following reports were published on 2 October 2025—

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, 4th Report, 2025 (Session 6): Strengthening committees' effectiveness (SP Paper 878)

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, 71st Report, 2025 (Session 6): Delegated Powers in the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill (as amended at Stage 2) (SP Paper 883)

The following report will be published on 3 October 2025—

Economy and Fair Work Committee, 9th Report, 2025 (Session 6): Stage 1 report on the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill (SP Paper 879)

Subordinate Legislation

Affirmative Instruments

The following instrument was laid before the Parliament on 2 October 2025 and is subject to the affirmative procedure—

Early Release of Prisoners (Scotland) Regulations 2025 [draft]
laid under section 3D(1) of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993

Negative Instruments

The following instrument was laid before the Parliament on 2 October 2025 and is subject to the negative procedure—

Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Amendment Rules 2025 (SSI 2025/277)
laid under section 42 of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989

Other Documents

The following documents were laid before the Parliament on 2 October 2025 and are not subject to parliamentary procedure—

Heat in Buildings: Progress Report 2025 (SG/2025/156) laid under section (62) of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009

Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland Annual Report 2024/2025 (SG/2025/223) laid under section 18 of the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008

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