

Tuesday 11 June 2019

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Constitution and External Affairs

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of its support for a second referendum on Brexit, what its position is on supporting a second confirmatory vote by referendum following the result of any future independence referendum.

(S5W-23531)

Michael Russell: Scotland voted clearly against leaving the European Union in 2016, and the Scottish Government therefore supports putting the issue back to the people, with an option to remain in the EU. The Scottish Government also supports Scotland's right to choose its own future. In 2016 the Leave campaign failed to set out any details of what Brexit would mean, which is one of the reasons we have chaos in Westminster today. The Scottish Government is determined that, as in 2014, that situation would not arise in any future independence referendum as full and comprehensive information and free and informed debate will be at the heart of the campaign.

Economy

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what the economic impact has been of the measures to "unlock innovation, drive increased productivity and tackle inequality" as a result of injecting £270 million into the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work budget as part of the total funding of £2.4 billion in enterprise and skills from the 2017-18 budget.

(S5W-23385)

Ivan McKee: The impact of this investment is clear. Scotland's economy is growing, unemployment is at a record low (3.2%) and below the UK (3.8%), exports are growing faster than anywhere else in the UK and productivity is increasing. We know that greater investment in infrastructure improves quality of life, boosts productivity and makes our country a more attractive place to do business. Our Economic Action Plan and Fair Work Action Plan set out our road map of positive actions to transform Scotland's economic future.

The £270m increase to the 2018-19 Economy, Jobs and Fair Work budget included:

Provision for the Building Scotland Fund, providing loans or equity finance which includes £15m to Scottish Partnership for Regeneration in Urban Centres (SPRUCE) for regeneration projects in Glasgow and Livingston. The Fund also provides an important boost to construction providing additional housing supply and improved facilities to allow businesses to improve

productivity and expand. To date more than 5,500 new homes are now being supported through the Building Scotland Fund

City Region and Growth Deals – £65.3m increase to meet priorities on existing deals and provision for new deals in-year including Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (SG has committed to investing £300m over 15 years) which was signed in August 2018.

An increase of £9.9m to employability and training budget which supported a £13.3m increase in the Employability Services . We are already seeing significant progress from this investment with most recent statistics showing that 10,063 people joined Fair Start Scotland in the first 12 months – 3 April 2018 to 29 March 2019.

Scottish Enterprise budget increased by £50.7m which has:

- accelerated investment in support of the Manufacturing Action Plan via the Medical Manufacturing Innovation Centre, Light Weighting Centre and Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District (AMIDS) projects and:
- enabled the Scottish Investment Bank to introduce 3 new products - the Scottish Loan Scheme, the Maven Buyout Fund and Edinburgh Alternative Lending Junction debt product. Allowing SIB to support new cohorts of companies, and bridge a gap provision, collectively resulting in £10.7m in-year expenditure, providing the ongoing development of the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland.

Provision of £10m for the South of Scotland to support the working of the new South of Scotland Enterprise Partnership which enabled additional activity to be carried out to being a fresh approach to economic development in the area supporting inclusive growth.

Such investments underpin our economic success, as well as the wellbeing and prosperity of our people, communities and businesses.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government when the Good Food Nation Bill was last discussed at a cabinet meeting.

(S5W-23431)

Fergus Ewing: The principle of collective responsibility, as set out in the Ministerial Code, requires that the privacy of discussions within the Cabinet should be maintained. In line with this principle, the Scottish Government does not release details of Cabinet meetings until after a period of 15 years has elapsed.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what progress SEPA is making in widening access to flood risk data to inform house purchase transactions.

(S5W-23549)

Roseanna Cunningham: SEPA does not plan to widen access to flood risk data to inform house purchase transactions. Flood maps available via SEPA's webpage are strategic assessment tools, and are not intended to provide information at property level. However, when considering purchasing a house, the flood maps can be used to check the likely flood risk for that area and therefore help make an informed decision.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to protect house buyers by ending the self-certification of flood risk in the property questionnaire in conveyancing transactions.

(S5W-23550)

Roseanna Cunningham: The self-certification questionnaire does include a question on structural damage caused by any storm, fire or flood during the householders ownership. There are no plans to introduce a flood risk assessment for conveyancing transactions.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many referrals were recorded in each contract area by Fair Start Scotland in the last year; how many starts there were, and how many participants (a) started a job after joining, (b) were in employment for at least (i) 13 and (ii) 26 weeks, (c) left the service early and (d) enrolled in the Health and Work Support pilot.

(S5W-23561)

Jamie Hepburn: Data for Fair Start Scotland (FSS) referrals and starts is already published at Local Authority (LA) area level. A table is provided in the Background Information section of the devolved employment services statistical publication that allows LA data to be matched with Contract Package Area. This publication can be found on the Scottish Government website: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-devolved-employment-services-statistical-summary-2/>

The number of early leavers, job starts and 13 and 26 week job outcomes at LA area level will be published in Scottish Government's next quarterly release, which means Contract Package Area data will be available at the end of August.

For ease of reference, the published LA referral and start data mapped to Contract Package Areas for the first year of FSS is as follows:

Fair Start Scotland referrals and starts by Contract Package Area (CPA), up to 29 March 2019

CPA	Referrals	Starts
East	3,172	1,729
Forth Valley	1,148	683
Glasgow	3,495	1,900
Highlands & Islands	664	417
Lanarkshire	3,256	1,837
North East	993	595
South West	1,829	1,059
Tayside	1,524	1,060
West	1,394	706
Unknown*	141	77
SCOTLAND	17,616	10,063

*Unknowns are due to the live nature of the data collection system. These records will be updated with a location in due course.

The numbers enrolling into the Health & Work Support Pilot is 598 in Dundee City and 332 in Fife (between June 26 2018 and March 31 2019). Service Delivery areas are different in the Pilot and FSS.

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether there should be a blanket ban on the mass release of balloons.

(S5W-23578)

Roseanna Cunningham: The Scottish Government is committed to preventing littering in all its forms. Local authorities are responsible for tackling litter at a local level and have powers to ban balloons and sky lanterns releases in their local area. A number of local authorities have already chosen to implement such bans.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the suspension of some European Social Fund grants, whether any projects or initiatives in the west of Scotland are affected and, if so, what it is doing to support them and ensure that workers are paid.

(S5W-23619)

Ivan McKee: Projects across Scotland, including the west of Scotland, are affected by the European Commission's pre-suspension procedure of payments of the European Social Fund to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government is working hard with the European Commission and stakeholders to resolve this situation as quickly as possible, to avoid any charity or third sector body from going out of business as a result of this issue and ensure that workers are paid.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what meetings it has had with European Commission officials regarding the suspension of some European Social Fund grants, and what measures it is taking to address the concerns of the European Commission on this issue.

(S5W-23620)

Ivan McKee: The Scottish Government has been engaging with the European Commission on this issue. On 19 March 2019, Scottish Government officials met with the European Commission in Brussels to explore resolutions to the suspension. On Friday 31 May 2019, we presented possible solutions to the European Commission and are awaiting confirmation that these proposals will allow for the suspension to be lifted.

Education, Communities and Justice

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much has been spent by the Child Poverty Fund in each year since 2017, also broken down by project.

(S5W-23383)

Aileen Campbell: The Tackling Child Poverty Fund, worth £50 million, was established following the publication of the first Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan on 29 March 2018. In 2018-19, £2.350 million was spent from the Fund, a breakdown of which can be found in the following table. The Fund is to support work over the period of the Delivery Plan (2018-22) and spend has been for the most part back-weighted to 2020-21 and 2021-22 to allow time for programmes to develop and roll out.

As made clear in the Delivery Plan, the Fund is part of a wider package of investment. Resource from other budgets includes, for example, the School Clothing Grant (£6 million in 2018-19), and the Financial Health Check (£1.8 million in 2018-19). Other major spending commitments with a strong child poverty focus include the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare, delivery of 50,000 affordable homes (35,000 of which are for social rent), investment in Council Tax Reduction, and a range of enhanced social security support, such as the new Best Start Grant payments and Carer's Allowance Supplement.

Tackling Child Poverty Fund 2018-19	Amount (£000s)
Parental Employment Programme	50.0
Innovation Fund	1,100.0
Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland	250.0
Preventative work for low income young people at college	242.0
National Coordinator, Improvement Service	68.5
Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit	20.0
Support for local authorities and Health Boards to produce local child poverty action reports	189.0
Holiday hunger	100.0
Healthier Wealthier Children	250.0
Marketing for lenders through the Affordable Credit Fund	80.0
Total	£2,349.5

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to bring the Care Experienced Students Bursary into line with the Living Wage, as recommended by the 2017 Student Support Review.

(S5W-23434)

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government provided additional investment of over £5 million in 2018-19 to increase the care-experienced bursary across Further (FE) and Higher Education (HE) to £8,100 per year. This additional investment funded an increase from the previous level of £7,625 in HE and

£4,185 in FE, providing a significant increase in the financial support available to care-experienced students.

We are continuing to work on improvements and focus additional student support funding on those students who are most in need.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many prisoners have been managed under the Management of an Offender at Risk Due to Any Substance (MORS) system in each of the last five years.

(S5W-23471)

Humza Yousaf: SPS' Management of Offender at Risk Due to Any Substance (MORS) Policy was introduced in December 2014 and ensures that there is a robust process in place for managing an individual who is at risk due to concealment or ingestion of any substances, including Psychoactive Substances.

The following table shows number of prisoners who have had the risk applied or removed, or where the risk is still currently applied, since the 1 st January 2015. These figures are drawn from the Scottish Prison Service prisoner records system. Figures from 2019 are correct as of 29 May, 2019.

Year	Number of Prisoners
2015	321
2016	406
2017	781
2018	1629
2019	1111

There has been a rise in the number of people who are being managed under the influence of unknown substance. In part, this is due to SPS's commitment to enhance staff awareness in spotting signs that someone may be under the influence, resulting in more individuals being managed under the policy.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what proportion of looked-after children from each local authority area have entered a positive destination, according to its most recent statistics.

(S5W-23475)

Maree Todd:

The requested information is published in Table 2.4 of the Education Outcomes for Looked After Children: 2016 to 2017 publication available here:

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2018/06/education-outcomes-scotlands-looked-children-2016-17/documents/00536998-xlsx/00536998-xlsx/govscot%3Adocument/00536998.xlsx> .

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what proportion of equality impact assessments (EQIAs) in (a) 2017-18 and (b) 2018-19 were published as "partial EQIAs".

(S5W-23481)

Christina McKelvie: The Scottish Government does not hold this information centrally. In line with The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (Regulation 5), which requires listed public authorities to assess the impact of their policies or practices against the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and to publish the results, Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) are routinely produced across the range of the Scottish Government's activities and can be found on relevant Scottish Government web pages.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how the cost of the day-to-day running of childcare services for private, voluntary and independent sector providers in Aberdeenshire will compare with that for North Lanarkshire by August 2020, and how any variance will impact on future provision.

(S5W-23485)

Maree Todd: From August 2020 all providers in the private and third sector, including childminders, who are delivering the funded early learning and childcare entitlement will receive a sustainable funding rate that reflects the cost of delivery. The funding to enable providers to receive a sustainable rate for delivering the funded entitlement was included as part of the multi-year funding agreement between the Scottish Government and COSLA to fully fund the expansion to 1140 hours. Local authority settlements were informed by detailed local financial planning.

The costs of delivering early learning and childcare will vary across the country, and will reflect local circumstances. In order to ensure that these local circumstances are captured it is for individual local authorities to set hourly rates for providers operating in their areas. Guidance was published on 29 April 2019 to support local authorities to set sustainable rates for providers from August 2020 and is available from:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/funding-follows-child-national-standard-early-learning-childcare-providers-guidance-setting-sustainable-rates-august-2020/> .

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to encourage local authority transparency in the setting of the hourly rate for providing childcare services.

(S5W-23488)

Maree Todd: Guidance was published on 29 April 2019 - Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers: Guidance for Setting Sustainable Rates from August 2020 – to support local authorities to set sustainable rates for providers in the private and third sector, including childminders, delivering the funded early learning and childcare entitlement.

The guidance, which was developed by Scotland Excel on behalf of the Scottish Government and COSLA, sets out the overarching principles and points that should be taken into account by all local authorities when establishing sustainable rates. One of the principles, as set out in Section 2 of the guidance document, is that Local authorities and funded providers should work together to be as transparent and open as commercially reasonable when discussing rates and costs .

The guidance is available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/funding-follows-child-national-standard-early-learning-childcare-providers-guidance-setting-sustainable-rates-august-2020/> .

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what measures are in place to address the reported increase in staff moving from private, voluntary and independent sector childcare providers to local authority-run services.

(S5W-23489)

Maree Todd: The Scottish Government's Delivery Support Plan for Providers, published on 19 December 2018, set out how we will ensure providers, including childminders, are supported through the transition to 2020. This includes the following measures which aim to support private and third sector providers with recruitment and retention:

- Funding COSLA to open up the myjobscotland public sector recruitment site for private and third sector ELC providers to post jobs on in the period up to 2020
- Confirmation that the funding agreement with COSLA will enable all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement to be paid at least the real Living Wage from 2020
- The provision of targeted advice and support to providers to help them to implement Fair Work practices and to deliver the real Living Wage commitment

We are also implementing a number of measures to support the recruitment and training of the additional staff required to deliver the 1140 hours expansion overall, including:

- Continuing our national recruitment campaign targeting school leavers and older career changers
- Working with the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland to create additional capacity in the college and work-based learning sectors to train the additional staff required for 2020
- Funding CEMVO to disseminate our national campaign messaging to ethnic minority communities, to broaden out the talent pool and diversify the sector.

In relation to retention issues in the partner provider sector: we would expect local authorities to consider the impact of recruitment exercises on their funded partners and recruit appropriately, and we know local authorities are considering the potential disruption to funded private and third sector providers when recruiting additional staff for the expansion of ELC. Indeed, many are recruiting from other areas, such as other Council services, to minimise their impact on private/third sector providers.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what measures are in place for private, voluntary and independent sector providers in Aberdeenshire that wish to comment on the decision-making process for the expansion for the delivery of 1,140 hours of funded childcare by August 2020.

(S5W-23490)

Maree Todd: Meaningful and genuine partnership working between local authorities and funded providers is key to the expansion of funded early learning and childcare.

The Scottish Government and COSLA established the ELC Partnership Forum to bring together local authorities and funded providers across Scotland to share and promote good practice in partnership working. The Forum met in Aberdeen on 12 December 2018, including a number of providers from Aberdeenshire. Any provider who wishes to participate in the national ELC Partnership Forum can get further information by emailing ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

Local authorities are responsible for developing local partnership working arrangements. Aberdeenshire Council has advised that funding provider meetings take place termly, and that senior council officers are contactable via earlyyears@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that the partnership between Aberdeenshire Council and private, voluntary and independent sector childcare providers will be able to deliver the expansion to 1,140 hours of funded childcare by August 2020, and whether it will publish the details of any analysis it has carried out of the effectiveness of this work.

(S5W-23491)

Maree Todd: All local authorities recognise that funded providers across the private and third sectors are vital to the delivery of the 1140 offer. This is reflected in local authority expansion plans which indicate that around a quarter of funded hours will be delivered by funded providers in the private or third sector or childminders by 2021-22.

The Scottish Government and COSLA have robust joint governance arrangements in place to ensure that all local authorities have the required capacity and capability in place and are well supported as they prepare for August 2020.

The Joint Delivery Board, which I co-chair with the COSLA Spokesperson for Children and Young People, is responsible for reviewing progress towards implementation of the 1140 hours offer across all 32 local authorities and for agreeing actions to mitigate risk, respond to emerging issues or put support in place where that may be required. The Board will publish further delivery progress reports at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/early-learning-and-childcare-delivery-progress-report/>

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Poverty and Inequality Commission's recent statement that "child poverty will continue to rise if no further policy action is taken".

(S5W-23556)

Aileen Campbell: The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan set out that, if no action were taken, levels of child poverty in Scotland could rise to affect one in three children by 2030. The independent analysis behind these projections noted that the key reason for these projected increases was the announced UK Government cuts, primarily the benefit freeze and the two child limit. The impact of these cuts was predicted to be most acute in the period to 2020.

To address this challenge, we committed to a range of concrete action within our first Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. This includes new support such as: a new minimum School Clothing Grant of at least £100 for every eligible child; a new Financial Health Check service, and; enhanced support through the Best Start Grant.

We will publish our first annual progress report by the end of this month and provide an update to Parliament on activity underway and future activity planned.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason the social security experience panels research on seldom-heard groups did not take place as planned in 2018-19.

(S5W-23573)

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The social security experience panels research with seldom heard groups is currently taking place as planned.

Health and Social Care

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the statement by the Minister for Mental Health on 22 May 2019 (*Official Report*, c. 43), what targets and timescales it has set NHS Tayside to improve the quality and safety of its mental health services.

(S5W-23426)

Clare Haughey: The Scottish Government is clear that everyone should feel safe whilst receiving treatment or working in our mental health services. We are investing significantly into mental health and expect services to be delivered to the highest standard.

The Scottish Government is providing Health Improvement Scotland (HIS) with additional support for oversight of mental health services in Tayside to ensure they are delivered safely and effectively. Health Improvement Scotland will continue to work with NHS Tayside on their improvement programme, including the timescale to ensure improvement is effective and sustainable.

I have set out my clear expectations that this should begin without delay when I met with the NHS Tayside Board on 21 May 2019. The Scottish Government has agreed to augment the local team at NHS Tayside to accelerate and support the pace of change. We will work closely with HIS and NHS Tayside to ensure the appropriate people are in place as quickly as possible.

The final report from the Independent Inquiry will provide a number of recommendations which will be used to shape how mental health services are delivered across Scotland. This Inquiry is independent and therefore the Scottish Government has no influence over the timescale in which the final report will be published.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of 49% of people reportedly having poor mental health while dealing with cancer, how it plans to reduce this number.

(S5W-23528)

Clare Haughey: Our vision for mental health is of a Scotland where people can get the right help at the right time, expect recovery and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma. This includes people who are experiencing physical health problems such as cancer and who may also experience poor mental health.

We recognise that timely access to psychological support is an important element of this. Our Mental Health Strategy is investing £150 million in services over five years, including £54 million to help NHS Boards improve their performance against waiting time standards for access to psychological therapies and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. This is being invested in workforce development, recruitment and retention, and service improvement support.

Our 2018-19 Programme for Government has mental health at its very heart. It contains a package of measures to support positive mental health and prevent ill health. These new actions build on the Mental Health Strategy and will be backed by a quarter of a billion pounds of additional investment.

At a local level, the Scottish Government expects NHS Boards to respond to the physical and mental health needs of their population. However, mental health is not simply a matter for the NHS – it is everyone's business, and a cross-sectoral approach is the best way of improving general mental health and wellbeing, as well as of supporting those who need treatment or other help when experiencing mental health problems.

If anyone living in Scotland needs help for mental health issues – whatever the perceived cause - they should in the first instance consult their local GP. GPs are well placed to diagnose and treat mental health problems. Out of hours, support can be obtained from NHS 24 on 111, and from Breathing Space on 0800 83 85 87.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many patients have been subject to delayed discharged from hospital in each year since 1999 because of issues with power of attorney.

(S5W-23639)

Jeane Freeman: Information on the number of patients delayed in hospitals in Scotland is available through the monthly Delayed Discharge Census. The most recent report, for April 2019, was published on 4 June 2019 and is

available at <https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Health-and-Social-Community-Care/Delayed-Discharges/Previous-Publications/> .

The census report records the number of patients who are delayed due to procedures associated with the Adults with Incapacity (AWI) legislation. Generally, these are patients who have not appointed a Power of Attorney, and lack the capacity to make decisions about their long-term care. Data on the number of AWI delays can be found in Tab 1 of the Delayed Discharge Census report (http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Health-and-Social-Community-Care/Publications/2019-06-04/Census_Tables_To_Apr_2019.xlsx?10:45:44), and is available from July 2016 onwards (data recording changes make data prior to this point incomparable).

Organisational Development and Operations

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S5W-22836 by Shirley-Anne Somerville on 8 May 2019, how many recipients of Carer's Allowance have had (a) recovery action and (b) criminal proceedings taken against them as a result of having had overpayments going undetected because of reduced compliance checks.

(S5W-23454)

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Under section 10 of the Carer's Allowance Agency Agreement:

DWP will not create new management information reports that detail performance specifically for customers resident in Scotland.

Management information will only be supplied showing performance, at a Great Britain level, of delivering the functions discharged on behalf of the Scottish Ministers. (DWP will not supply data specific to Scotland unless it is currently available and easy to access)

The information requested is not currently produced by the DWP.

The agency agreement can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carers-allowance-in-scotland-agency-agreement-and-service-level-agreement/carers-allowance-in-scotland-agency-agreement#management-information> .

Transport Scotland

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to increase low-carbon travel opportunities in the Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley constituency.

(S5W-23551)

Michael Matheson: We continue to invest in opportunities across East Ayrshire to promote low carbon travel opportunities. Including:

- Investment totalling over £1.3m in East Ayrshire to support the installation of workplace, domestic and public EV charging infrastructure and public sector fleet decarbonisation.
- £264,000 towards walking and cycling infrastructure projects in the Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley via the Community Links programme. In addition we have provided funding to promote cycling, walking and safer streets and cycle training in schools.
- Between 2013-16 provided £140,000 in funding towards bus infrastructure to encourage more people to use buses.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it had with the UK Government regarding the reduction of the Plug-in Car Grant in 2018, and what its position is regarding whether it is too early to scale back support for electric vehicle uptake.

(S5W-23604)

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Government regularly engages with the UK Government on matters relating to low carbon transport. With regard to changes to the Plug-in Car Grant, we received a week's notice from UK Government about their plans to scale back support for electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles until they chose to make the announcement in October 2018.

It is disappointing that the UK Government has chosen to cut support to the PiCG, particularly as sales of alternatively fuelled vehicles have dropped across the UK since the UK Government removed this support.

This view was echoed by other stakeholder groups including the AA and RAC who have also commented that this cut represents a backward step and could well stall progress on targets to ban the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government following the increase in the Low Carbon Transport Loan from to £20 million for 2018-19, what plans it has to increase and create further support measures for those seeking to purchase an electric vehicle.

(S5W-23605)

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to the phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2032. Our increase in funding for the Low Carbon Transport Loan (LCTL) from £8M to £20M is one of many measures we have taken to incentivise ultra-low emission vehicle uptake across Scotland.

We are considering a number of options on how we can incentivise ULEV uptake further through the loan fund and we will be able to provide further details in due course.

The Scottish Government has funded the development of one of the most comprehensive charge point networks in Europe. The 1,000th charge point will soon be installed on the ChargePlace Scotland (CPS) network and the average distance from any given location to the nearest public charge point is just 2.78 miles in Scotland, the lowest in the UK where the average is 4.09 miles.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much of the £700,000 Plugged-in Households Grant Fund has been allocated, and what future plans it has for the fund.

(S5W-23606)

Michael Matheson: The total value of the award allocated was £515,956. The remaining unused budget was used to support other low carbon transport initiatives designed to encourage consumers and businesses to make the switch to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs).

We launched phase two of the Grant Fund on 31 May 2019 which is due to close on 23 August 2019 with a budget of £500,000 to reflect our expenditure in 18-19.

As part of the Scottish Government's engagement, officials have been speaking with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) to promote and communicate this funding opportunity to their members. Delivery partners Energy Saving Trust have also been engaging with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) to capture housing associations who did not apply for phase one funding.