

Monday 10 August 2020

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Constitution and External Affairs

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what the outcome was of its latest review into border health measures, and whether there will be any changes to the regulations.

(S5W-31109)

Humza Yousaf: We have reviewed the border health measures closely over the last three weeks and have assessed that there remains a requirement for them to remain in place to reduce the risk of transmission and safeguard health.

We continue to keep countries under review and where there is clear evidence we will not hesitate to make changes to our country specific exemptions list.

Economy

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to additional support for the oil and gas sector, in light of low oil prices caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020

(S5W-30657)

Paul Wheelhouse: A holding answer was provided.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government what measures it will put in place to prevent further mass culling of mountain hares when the mountain hare closed season ends on 1 August 2020.

(S5W-30664)

Mairi Gougeon: The Scottish Government has always been clear that any large-scale culling that threatens the conservation status of mountain hares is not acceptable.

However, as I stated during the stage 3 debate in Parliament there are a number of issues that must be fully considered ahead of the introduction of a licensing regime. I am now giving careful thought as to how that regime will

work and when the protection will come into force and I will be discussing that in detail with stakeholders over the coming months.

We will be following the situation carefully for any indication of attempts to carry out excessive culls and will take steps to address this if necessary.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what guidance it has given to its departments and agencies on carbon-offsetting for domestic and international air travel, and whether, as a matter of policy, it regards carbon-offsetting as an acceptable action to counter all emissions caused by air travel.

(S5W-30849)

Kate Forbes: The Scottish Government has not issued guidance to its agencies on offsetting air travel emissions.

Offsetting and the use of established carbon market mechanisms are one way of mobilising private finance towards much needed investment in natural assets such as forestry and peatland restoration.

The Scottish Government's position on offsetting is that it can be an important means of mobilising private investment into projects as long as offsetting projects for carbon credits are in addition to action to reduce emissions, rather than instead of it. Any offsetting projects should also use credits verified according to the highest available standard (the Woodland Carbon Code and Peatland Code).

The following guidance is published on the Scottish Government's internal intranet page:-

Carbon emissions levy

The carbon emissions levy aims to compensate for the carbon that our business travel generates. It raises funds that are put into projects that will remove the same amount of carbon from the atmosphere. Typical examples might be forestry or alternative power generation, either overseas or within Scotland.

The carbon emissions levy is applied to all journeys undertaken by air as follows:

Domestic – £5 per journey

European – £6 per journey

International – £15 per journey

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what guidance it has given to its departments and agencies on the appropriateness of officials undertaking domestic and international air travel.

(S5W-30851)

Kate Forbes: Scottish Government guidance, which has been in place since 2011 to assist public bodies in complying with their statutory climate change duties under the Climate Change Scotland Act 2009, says that business travel policies can lead to a reduction in emissions and that public bodies should seek to put in place a travel plan for business travel, travel by staff to and from work, and travel by visitors to and from the service provided and to reduce emissions associated with staff travel by using more sustainable modes of transport and travelling less frequently. The guidance has a specific section on transport with suggestions on how public bodies can reduce their operational emissions or influence wider emissions reduction from the transport sector.

Agencies set their own travel policy for undertaking domestic and international air travel.

All core Scottish Government staff must follow the sustainable travel policy to choose the most efficient form of transport.

The following guidance is published on the Scottish Government's internal intranet page:-

Domestic flights

Air travel within the mainland United Kingdom should only be made with Director level (or above) approval.

Last minute bookings should be avoided. In exceptional circumstances, or where the Director is not available, retrospective Director level approval can be sought. However, before bookings are made you should discuss it with your line manager and inform your Director's office of your intentions.

Travel to London

Sustainable Scotland's "Doing their Duty" report published in 2013 states that Public Bodies should put in place robust travel policies that rule out air travel, except in exceptional circumstances, for travel between the Scottish Central Belt and London.

Therefore, the presumed method of travel for staff going to London on official business is rail. Staff who intend to fly to London must obtain Director level authorisation. The journey time from central Edinburgh or Glasgow to central London by train is around 4 hours 40 minutes which is comparable with the

equivalent journey by air. The SG's Travel Agent can provide more detailed information on fares and ticket types.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what guidance it has given to its departments and agencies on the use of air travel loyalty schemes by officials engaged in frequent air travel.

(S5W-30852)

Kate Forbes: The Scottish Government has not issued guidance to its agencies on the use of air travel loyalty schemes by officials engaged in frequent air travel.

Agencies set their own policy on the use of air travel loyalty schemes.

The following guidance is published on the Scottish Government's internal intranet page:-

Frequent flier schemes

These schemes offer benefits to regular travellers, e.g. the use of special lounges. However, they should be used sparingly and not for personal gain. Air miles may be donated to a charity of the travel operator's choice.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what guidance it has given to its departments and agencies on the use by officials of business or first-class travel for international flights.

(S5W-30853)

Kate Forbes: The Scottish Government has not issued guidance to its agencies on the use by officials of business or first-class travel for international flights.

Agencies set their own policy on the use of business or first-class travel for international flights.

The following guidance is published on the Scottish Government's internal intranet page:-

Class of Travel

The class of air travel is governed by the airline's fare structures on the various routes, the level of the officer travelling, and the duration of the flight. The table below sets out entitlements. Countersigning Officers may however exercise discretion.

Fare Structure Available on Flight	Level of entitlement
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Economy	All staff
Business	Senior Civil Service – however economy is encouraged
First	Senior Civil Service in exceptional circumstances with prior approval of Director General.

The SG wishes to show leadership in getting best value for money, and prudent use of the public purse. Economy Class must be used in all circumstances where this is available, unless the Countersigning Officer is willing to sanction a higher level of ticket in accordance with the exception:

Where a member of staff, who is not a Senior Civil Servant, necessarily travels for official reasons, in company with a person who is not a United Kingdom civil servant, and who is travelling in a higher class.

Overseas travel

When travelling on official business staff should travel economy on any individual flight when the flying time (one way) is less than 10 hours.

Business class travel is only permitted when:

- the flying time (one way) for that flight is more than 10 hours, or the Countersigning Officer is willing to sanction a higher level of ticket in accordance with exception noted in part 2.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of mountain hare culling restarting on 1 August 2020, when the licensing scheme in compliance with the Animal and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020 will be enforceable.

(S5W-30899)

Mairi Gougeon: I refer the member to the answer to question S5W-30665 on 30 July 2020. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S5W-30120 by Aileen Campbell on 17 July 2020, what consideration was given to including church halls in the scheme, and whether the potential for discrimination was reviewed as part of any decision.

(S5W-30928)

Kate Forbes: In addition to the £350m Communities Fund, including the Third Sector Resilience Fund, the Scottish Government has provided over £2.3 billion of support to businesses through grants and reliefs. The Small

Business Support Grant was available for church halls which met the eligibility criteria.

The criteria for the Coronavirus Business Support Grant Scheme was linked to the non-domestic rates system. Church halls were listed as a qualifying purpose and to be eligible, the premises had to be in receipt of the Small Business Bonus Scheme, or eligible for Small Business Bonus Scheme but in receipt of a range of other reliefs, including Charitable Rate Relief.

Education, Communities and Justice

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that drug-related deaths have increased during the COVID-19 lockdown, and whether Police Scotland will publish this data.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020 (S5W-30667)

Humza Yousaf: A holding answer was provided.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many prison officers have been tested for COVID-19, and how many tested (a) positive, (b) negative and (c) inconclusive.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020 (S5W-30670)

Humza Yousaf: A holding answer was provided.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to tackle the consumption of unauthorised substances in prisons, which reportedly tripled between 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020 (S5W-30671)

Humza Yousaf: A holding answer was provided.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of statistics that show 1,757 incidents of assault were recorded in prisons in 2018-19, an increase of 45% compared with 2017-18, how it plans to tackle this growing problem of prisoner violence.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020 (S5W-30673)

Humza Yousaf: A holding answer was provided.

Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government when it anticipates being able to relax the restrictions on attendances at weddings and wedding receptions.

(S5W-30784)

Ash Denham: With effect from 15 July, Scottish Ministers removed the restrictions in the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 affecting attendance at marriage ceremonies and civil partnership registrations, subject to the need to maintain physical distancing within the couple's chosen venue.

At present, we are advising that no more than 20 people should attend a marriage ceremony or civil partnership registration, even where a larger number could be accommodated. This limit will be reviewed again on 20 August.

Receptions or other celebrations related to a marriage or civil partnership must continue to comply with the restrictions on public gatherings under the Health Protection Regulations.

We will continue to consider how to permit all marriage ceremonies and civil partnership registrations to take place, with improved hygiene and other precautions, during Phase 4 of our route map, taking account of medical and scientific advice. During Phase 4 we also anticipate that further relaxations on gatherings of family and friends will be possible.

The Scottish Government continues to keep the position under careful review. In relation to the Health Protection Regulations, as soon as the Scottish Ministers consider that a restriction or requirement in the Health Protection Regulations is no longer necessary to prevent, protect against, control or respond to the incidence or spread of the infection, the Scottish Ministers must end the restriction or requirement.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government on what date marriages will resume in places of worship and civil settings as part of the easing of lockdown restrictions.

(S5W-30831)

Ash Denham: With effect from 15 July, Scottish Ministers removed the restrictions in the Health Protection (Coronavirus)(Scotland) Regulations 2020 affecting attendance at marriage ceremonies and civil partnership registrations, subject to the need to maintain physical distancing within the couple's chosen venue.

This means that it is now possible for a marriage ceremony or civil partnership registration to take place in any venue permitted to open under the Health Protection Regulations, such as hospitality venues, places of worship and registration offices.

The Scottish Government has [published guidance](#) for couples and celebrants to coincide with this change. At present, we are advising that no more than 20 people should attend a marriage ceremony or civil partnership registration, provided they can be accommodated safely with the necessary physical distancing in the couple's chosen venue. This limit will be reviewed again on 20 August.

Health and Social Care

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether its COVID-19 daily testing statistics include the number of home test kits sent out or of tests completed and returned.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020

(S5W-30659)

Jeane Freeman: A holding answer was provided.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government, following the agreement between Vertex Pharmaceuticals and NHS England to make the cystic fibrosis drug, Kaftrio (trikafta), available in England, what discussions it has had with Vertex on making the drug available in Scotland.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020

(S5W-30660)

Jeane Freeman: A holding answer was provided.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason the data it is using to commence quarantine checks for international arrivals in Scotland was not considered to be of sufficient quality on 22 June 2020.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020

(S5W-30668)

Jeane Freeman: A holding answer was provided.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to put in place a system to recompense mesh-injured women

who have had to pay for private surgery to remove a mesh implant originally implanted by the NHS, given that full mesh removal by the NHS is not available in Scotland.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020

(S5W-30691)

Jeane Freeman: A holding answer was provided.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will establish a third sector recovery and renewal fund for third sector health and care organisations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Holding answer issued: 10 August 2020

(S5W-30695)

Jeane Freeman: A holding answer was provided.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the safety of allowing outdoor fitness activities for adults in groups, provided appropriate health and safety measures are in place.

(S5W-30736)

Joe FitzPatrick: Decisions on what sectors and activities to re-open on our route out of lockdown were guided by the principles set out in our Framework for Decision Making. Proposals are technically assessed using the best available evidence and analysis of their potential benefits and harms to health, the economy, and broader society to minimise overall harm and ensure transmission of the virus continues to be suppressed.

Public health and wellbeing remains a key priority and we must all continue to play our part in suppressing the spread of the virus. Everyone should continue to adhere to the guidance to ensure the transition back to sport is as safe, swift and effective as possible.

The Phase 3 route map, published on 30 July, notes that certain restrictions on sports coaches may be relaxed from 3 August once relevant guidance is agreed and implemented. Sport Scotland is working closely with the sporting sector and will provide coaches with the necessary guidance to enable a return to outdoor fitness classes, once the parameters and guidance documents are approved by Ministers.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with outdoor fitness providers regarding (a) when they can restart all activities and (b) the

guidance that will underpin such activities, and when it expects this guidance will be ready.

(S5W-30737)

Joe FitzPatrick: We have been working with sport scotland and the sporting sector throughout the pandemic.

sport scotland has produced guidance for coaches, leaders, personal trainers, and instructors, which can be found on its website at: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/getting-coaches-ready-for-sport/>. This will be updated to reflect additional changes as soon as possible after changes are announced.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government when it anticipates cricket matches will be able to be played without any restrictions, in light of many cricketers reportedly stating that this can be done safely.

(S5W-30741)

Joe FitzPatrick: We are continuing to work with sport scotland and our sporting governing bodies to enable all sports to return when it is safe to do so. Should the virus continue to be controlled, inter-club matches should be permitted to take place.

sport scotland will continue to liaise with Cricket Scotland, who will continue to provide clubs with updated guidance.

Organisational Development and Operations

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to take steps to review its procurement tendering practices to ensure that ingredient origin is accounted for in local buying.

(S5W-30783)

Kate Forbes: The Scottish Government take account of factors including origin, traceability, animal welfare and environmental standards in our catering contract and will continue to do so. We place an emphasis on healthy eating and nutrition and promote fresh and seasonal produce. Typically, 97% of fresh beef, 99% of fresh cream and milk and all bakery goods are Scottish.

More widely, our procurement legislation and guidance encourages other public bodies to be mindful of animal welfare and fresh and seasonal produce in their food procurement. We also support participation in the 'Food for Life' programme for a number of local authorities across Scotland.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it has taken to promote (a) local, (b) Scottish and (c) UK sourcing in (i) central and (ii) local procurement policies.

(S5W-30793)

Kate Forbes: The Scottish Government recognises small businesses as being critical to the economic health of the country. To promote opportunities for local economic development, the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 requires public bodies to consider and act on opportunities to facilitate access to procurement for SMEs, the third sector and supported businesses. Public contracts must be advertised through the centrally-funded PCS advertising portal and we partner with other public bodies in Scotland to support the Supplier Development Programme whose aim is to help Scottish SME and third sector organisations to win work and grow their business.

The steps we are taking are having an impact. Proportionally, Scotland already spends more with SMEs than any other country in the UK. The usage figures below are the most up-to-date, having been published last year in the PCS Progress report.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what the cost was of each external public relations contract that has it let in the (a) 2018-19, (b) 2019-20 and (c) current financial year.

(S5W-30837)

Kate Forbes:

Contract	Agency	Award Date	End Date	Spend 18-19	Spend 19-20	Spend 20-21
Healthier Scotland						
PR	Smarts	06-Mar-18	05-Mar-21	£77,331.00	£75,020.00	£75,405
Greener						
PR	Stripe	03-Apr-18	02-Apr-21	£36,005.00	£35,000.00	£0.00
Smarter, Wealthier and Fairer						
PR	Stripe	21-Jun-19	20-Jun-21	N/A	£11,000.00	£0.00
Safer						
PR	Smarts	02-Aug-19	01-Aug-20	N/A	£17,400.00	£75,995

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what formula it used to allocate the additional £22 million of COVID-19 funding for the Scottish Welfare Fund, and how much each local authority has been allocated.

(S5W-31014)

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I refer the member to the answer to question S5W-28039 on 3 April 2020. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what its planned date is for the commencement of the Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2020, and whether it will provide an update on progress towards this following Royal Assent.

(S5W-31080)

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2020 passed its final Stage in the Scottish Parliament on 23 June 2020, and received Royal Assent on 28 July 2020.

The Scottish Government is currently developing its approach to implementation of the Act. There are a number of tasks to be taken forward as part of this, including:

- A package of legislation in the Scottish Parliament
- An order under section 104 of the Scotland Act 1998 to make provisions on reserved and cross-border matters
- Public-facing guidance
- Guidance and training for registrars
- IT changes to registration systems

As part of our work on implementation, the Scottish Government is taking into account that some couples have expressed an interest in entering into a mixed sex civil partnership. We are committed to implementing the Act as soon as possible.

However, the public health emergency is ongoing and there are still uncertainties about what the coming months may hold. Accordingly, the Scottish Government does not feel able to provide assurances now about mixed sex civil partnership becoming available on a particular date.

We will publish information about our implementation work on the Scottish Government website as it progresses.