



OFFICIAL REPORT  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament (Virtual)

Thursday 4 June 2020

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - [www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot) or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

---

**Thursday 4 June 2020**

**CONTENTS**

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME</b> .....	1
<b>SOCIAL SECURITY AND OLDER PEOPLE</b> .....	1
Social Isolation and Loneliness .....	1
Older People (Increased Fuel Bills in Lockdown).....	2
Benefit Claims (Lockdown).....	4
Older People (Easing of Lockdown Measures) .....	5
Older People (Support as Lockdown is Lifted).....	7
Older People (Easing of Lockdown Measures) .....	8
Older People (Volunteer Contact) .....	9
Older People (Support during Covid-19 Outbreak) .....	9
<b>FINANCE</b> .....	11
Business Support (North Ayrshire) .....	11
Tourism (Extended Support) .....	12
Dental Practices (Funding) .....	13
Tax Revenues (Estimated Shortfall).....	14
Town Centre Regeneration .....	15
United Kingdom Government (Covid-19 Funding Commitments).....	16
United Kingdom Government (Business Grants and Charity Support Direct Grant) .....	17
Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund.....	18
<b>ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND REFORM</b> .....	20
“A Greenprint for Building a Cleaner More Resilient Economy” .....	20
Fly-tipping .....	22
Fly-tipping .....	23
Fly-tipping and Waste Management.....	24
Fly-tipping and Littering .....	25
Environmental Targets (Impact of Covid-19).....	26
Solway Barnacle Goose Management Scheme.....	28
Nitrogen Balance Sheet.....	29

---



# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 4 June 2020

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 14:01]

## Portfolio Question Time

### Social Security and Older People

#### The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):

Welcome to this virtual meeting of the Scottish Parliament. I remind members that I have grouped together questions 4 to 8, so any supplementary questions to those questions should come after question 8.

#### Social Isolation and Loneliness

1. **Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the Covid-19 outbreak, how it is working to tackle social isolation and loneliness across the country. (S5O-04364)

**The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie):** I am acutely aware of the increase in social isolation and loneliness as a result of Covid-19. Building on our social isolation and loneliness strategy, we have been working with stakeholders to put in place a range of additional support to mitigate the impact. That includes support for national organisations, such as Befriending Networks, Generations Working Together and Age Scotland. We have also provided an additional £3.8 million to expand the work of national health service mental health and wellbeing services. I urge older people who want to hear a friendly voice to contact the Age Scotland helpline, which we have supported with an additional £700,000.

Through our Connecting Scotland programme, we will support 9,000 individuals who are considered clinically at risk and who are on a low income, including older people, with access to digital technology and training so that they can access services via the internet and remain connected to others.

**Emma Harper:** It is interesting to hear about digital technology, because we know that people are using Zoom, FaceTime and other outlets. How is the Government supporting people in rural communities, such as Dumfries and Galloway, to learn how use that technology?

**Christina McKelvie:** Connecting Scotland is a very exciting programme that is being delivered by the Scottish Government in partnership with local authorities, including Dumfries and Galloway

Council, as Emma Harper will be pleased to hear. The programme is also supported by Healthcare Improvement Scotland, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and the digital and information technology sectors, led by ScotlandIS.

Eligible digitally excluded people will be identified by local authorities and third sector organisations and offered a device with a mobile internet data package, which will be delivered to their homes. A digital champion will provide phone and online support for an initial period of six months. After that period, the project will be evaluated to assess what support is needed in the longer term, including in rural areas. Training and support for digital champions is being co-ordinated by SCVO and will be delivered through local authorities and our valued third sector bodies.

#### Older People (Increased Fuel Bills in Lockdown)

2. **Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is giving to older people who are facing increased fuel bills during the Covid-19 lockdown period. (S5O-04365)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** I recognise how difficult some older people will be finding the current situation, which is why, despite energy markets being a reserved issue, we have put in place additional support.

We have committed an additional £45 million to the Scottish welfare fund to help meet immediate financial needs. Advice and support is also available through Home Energy Scotland, which can advocate on behalf of people with energy companies as well as refer people for financial assistance. We have also provided £700,000 to increase the capacity of the Age Scotland national helpline, to enable the organisation to respond to the pandemic.

I would encourage anyone who is worried about their fuel bills to contact Home Energy Scotland or Age Scotland.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** More older people are at home as a result of lockdown, and energy costs will increase for many. Will the cabinet secretary commit to monitoring how energy costs, alongside other additional expenses, may have increased for older households during the outbreak? Will she take into consideration those who live in Scotland's more remote and rural communities, particularly in my Highlands and Islands region, where it may be less possible to monitor people on a day-to-day basis?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** It is very important that we ensure that people who are in difficulty with fuel costs are given the support that they

require. That is why we have put money into the Age Scotland helpline. In addition, Home Energy Scotland is keen to reach out and assist people.

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning wrote to the United Kingdom Government, calling on it to provide additional help with energy bills and to reassure vulnerable households with older people and people with long-term conditions that they can afford to stay in their homes and heat them.

Given the powers that the Scottish Government has, we are keen to ensure that we keep a close eye on older people and get their feedback. We are also keen to work with stakeholders. For example, I spoke to Age Scotland yesterday to ensure that the feedback from across Scotland—including from the areas that Jamie Halcro Johnston mentioned—that it is getting from its helpline is included in our work.

**The Presiding Officer:** I have supplementary questions from Maureen Watt, Liam McArthur and Pauline McNeill.

**Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** Has the UK Government provided any clarity yet on whether it will give the Scottish Government the £35 million of Barnett consequential that it is due for charity support? If we do not get that money, what effect might that have on the Scottish budget?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** In April, £35 million of consequential was earmarked for the Scottish Government in respect of charity support direct grants, but the Treasury amended that amount to £25 million at a later date.

The First Minister has committed to ensuring that every penny of consequential funding that comes to us is passed on to support the Scottish response to Covid-19. We have taken swift action to ensure that we properly support our response on the basis of the funding expectations that have been created following UK Government announcements.

We have very limited room for manoeuvre in our budget. That is why the Cabinet Secretary for Finance will continue to make the case to the UK Government for an increase in funding and for the flexibility to allow the Scottish Government to respond fully to the crisis.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** The cabinet secretary will be aware that Orkney consistently has the highest rate of fuel poverty in Scotland. She will also know that households in fuel poverty are particularly vulnerable to Covid. How is the funding that she mentioned being targeted in order to support those in island and rural areas, who are worst affected by high fuel bills?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I cite the Scottish welfare fund as an example. The Scottish Government is in close contact with all local authorities, which, of course administer the fund, to ensure that they are being supported and encouraged to use it as proactively as possible, and that they are encouraging people to apply for it. That includes applications for assistance with fuel costs at a time of crisis.

However, it is important that we ensure that the funding works for everyone across Scotland, including those in Liam McArthur's constituency. We will be sure to take on board his points.

**Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** What engagement on fuel poverty and the impact on older people in particular has the cabinet secretary had with the energy companies? Older people are a diverse group, and some have younger people living with them.

I have written to all the energy companies. So far, they have done a decent amount. However, does the cabinet secretary agree that they could do more, especially as they are not dramatically affected by a drop in profits? We should expect them to do more to help people so that they do not build up arrears or fall into debt.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** As I pointed out in my original answer and in response to some of the supplementaries, there is a reserved aspect to the issue. We require some of the work to be done by the UK Government. Indeed, we have welcomed the important work that is being done by the UK Government and the energy suppliers, which includes suspending all credit meter disconnections and taking a more flexible approach to the extension of discretionary credit in relation to prepayment meters.

Pauline McNeill raises an important point. There is an obligation on not only Government but the private sector, including the energy companies, to take cognisance of the situation that people find themselves in. This is not a time for companies to take a hard line against older people or anyone else experiencing fuel poverty. The Scottish Government is determined to ensure that it lives up to its responsibilities on the issue—just as the United Kingdom Government must.

### **Benefit Claims (Lockdown)**

**3. Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether there has been an increase in the number of benefit claims made to Social Security Scotland during the Covid-19 lockdown. (S5O-04366)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** The number of applications received, decisions made, payments and expenditure for the best start

grant, funeral support payment and young carer grant since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak has remained fairly consistent with the numbers seen prior to Covid-19. However, as the impact of the outbreak is already evidenced in increased universal credit claims, we therefore expect that there will be a corresponding increase in applications and subsequent expenditure for the low income benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland in the coming months.

**Peter Chapman:** As the cabinet secretary has said and knows quite well, being eligible for universal credit makes a claimant eligible for many Scottish benefits. There has been a huge rise in claims for universal credit. Can the cabinet secretary outline why there has not been a similar uptake of the benefits that are devolved to Scotland?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** That simply comes down to a matter of timing and I am sure that we will see an increase in the number of claims in the next couple of months. The Scottish Government has a responsibility, and we are taking it very seriously, to ensure that we are doing all that we can to raise the profile of the benefits that we are responsible for. We are very aware that there will be a number of people who may be using the welfare system for the first time and will be unaware of benefits that they may be eligible for, such as the best start grant or the additional funeral support payment, that were unavailable in the previous Department for Work and Pension scheme.

We are determined to raise the profile of those benefits and to do everything we can to work with stakeholders to ensure that the people they are working with know about the benefits that they might be entitled to. We are very aware of our responsibility of having to get the message out that if a member of the public is on universal credit now as a new claimant, they may be entitled to additional benefits through Social Security Scotland. I would encourage all members to ensure that their constituents are aware of that as well.

#### **Older People (Easing of Lockdown Measures)**

**4. Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had regarding the easing of lockdown measures for older people, particularly those who are shielding. (S50-04367)

**The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie):** The Scottish Government continues to focus on fairness and the human rights of older people. We continue to engage with stakeholders and, on 21 May, I chaired an online meeting of the older people's strategic action forum. However, the fact remains that the risk to

older people of the impact of Covid-19 remains higher than in the general population.

We are examining the issues related to shielding very closely. The initial 12-week period that we have asked people to shield for in Scotland ends on 18 June and we will be announcing the next steps shortly as well as writing to people who are shielding, which is an important development. We will continue to base our approach on the evidence base as it develops.

We have been conducting user research interviews with people who are shielding to inform our thinking. This week, Public Health Scotland launched a survey on the experiences and attitudes of people who are shielding. People of all ages who are shielding are central to our thinking as we move forward, through and out of the crisis. I make that point sincerely: people who are shielding will inform our next steps. I would urge anyone who is shielding to take part in that survey.

**Maureen Watt:** I thank the minister for her response. The restrictions have been difficult for many, and their continued support of shielding is to be applauded. Many organisations have been helping those who are shielding, including Community Food Initiatives North East, Aberdeen Cares, Aberdeen Association of Social Service—VSA—and many others in Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland. With the minister join me in recognising their fantastic contribution and provide further details of how they will be supported in the future to support shielded people?

**Christina McKelvie:** I am delighted to pay tribute to CFINE, the Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations, Aberdeen Cares and all the other amazing third sector organisations and—as this week is volunteers week—to all the volunteers who have made those community contacts so important.

The Scottish Government recognises the fundamental role that all our third sector organisations, charities and volunteer groups play in supporting vulnerable groups across Scotland, not just during the pandemic but in better times, too.

To support the continuation of their work, we are providing £40 million for the supporting communities fund to help community groups in their work to support local people at risk and to build local resilience. Awards totalling over £13.7 million have been made to community anchor organisations across Scotland through intermediate partners, and further awards are being approved on a daily basis.

In addition, our £50 million wellbeing fund is supporting third sector organisations that have expanded their work to provide vital assistance to communities to deal with the risks that they face

from Covid-19. Some 558 organisations have been offered that funding, including 28 organisations that work in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, which collectively have been offered well over £321,000.

#### **Older People (Support as Lockdown is Lifted)**

**5. Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how older people in the North East Scotland region will be supported as the country enters the next phase of lifting the Covid-19 lockdown. (S5O-04368)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** Older people in the north-east and across Scotland will benefit from additional support that is currently being offered as we work to keep them and the rest of the population healthy, cared for, connected and with access to the essentials that they need.

We have provided around £1.7 million to organisations that are directly supporting the needs of older people during the Covid pandemic, including funding for helplines, food distribution and keeping older people connected. Yesterday I spoke to Age Scotland about its helpline and the work that it is doing to support older people. Fairness and the human rights of older people will, of course, remain at the heart of our approach.

**Bill Bowman:** The cabinet secretary will be aware of the dementia sufferer who was discharged from NHS Tayside with a do not resuscitate form in her belongings, which became known about only because her family chanced upon it. Especially during dementia awareness week, shocking incidents such as that will have a real impact on public perception and the morale of elderly Covid sufferers.

In light of that, what will the cabinet secretary do to assure older people and their families that their needs are being taken into consideration and that they are not being left behind?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I thank the member for that very important question. Everyone should be supported by health and social care services, and they should be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.

Absolutely no one should feel pressured to agree to a specific care plan or to complete a do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation form. I want to make absolutely clear that the Covid-19 outbreak has brought no change to the use of do not attempt CPR forms in the Scottish national health service. I encourage everyone to make sure that that message is out there loud and clear.

I appreciate that there has been concern about the issue, and the case that the member raises is

extremely concerning. I understand that the health board has apologised—rightly so—and it is reviewing the circumstances of that specific case.

#### **Older People (Easing of Lockdown Measures)**

**6. Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what further advice it can provide for people aged over 70 who have no medical conditions on how the easing of lockdown restrictions applies to them. (S5O-04369)

**The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie):** That is another very important question, and I thank the member for it. The route map that was published by the First Minister on 21 May set out a phased approach to lifting lockdown measures, based on a balanced assessment of all the available evidence, with a clear emphasis on health, of course.

On 28 May, the rules changed for those who are not shielding, including older people who do not have a medical condition. That means that they can sit in parks and open areas and can meet members of another household while outside. Those who are over 70 are still classed as being at an increased risk of severe illness from Covid-19 and should be particularly careful to practice physical distancing measures, as well as hand washing and good cough hygiene.

**Alexander Burnett:** The current advice is confusing for essential workers aged over 70, who are now being asked to return to work. What measures is the Government taking to ensure that the guidance is clarified for older people who are concerned for their health and safety but are being asked to return to work? How will that guidance be communicated to them?

**Christina McKelvie:** Alexander Burnett may have heard my response to part of Maureen Watt's question about the work that we are doing now to make sure that the shielding advice for older people is informed by people who are shielding. We also need to balance protecting older people who are more at risk and making sure that they have their own agency and independence to do what they need to do.

I will take the question of workplaces back to my fair work colleagues and double check what is being done in that regard. If Alexander Burnett or any other member has constituents who are in that category, we ask those constituents to complete the survey that was put out this week. The results of the survey will inform our next steps; therefore the constituents whom Alexander Burnett is worried about can be involved in the process. Such involvement will hopefully make people aware of what older workers and volunteers in



particular need to do in order to get back to volunteering and the good work that they do.

### Older People (Volunteer Contact)

**7. Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to continue volunteer contact with older people who have been identified and supported during the Covid-19 outbreak beyond the current lockdown. (S5O-04370)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville):** It is important that we are committed to continuing to support those in need, and volunteers will undoubtedly have a critical role to play. Volunteers are delivering essential support to older people by identifying those in need and, for example, delivering food and medicines. It is important that that support is available if people require it.

One aspect of support for local initiatives has been our wellbeing fund, which has been provided from the £350 million of support for communities that was announced at the start of the crisis. In the first round of the fund, 78 projects that specifically focus on older people have been funded, to a total of £1.7 million.

**Alison Harris:** As we move further away from lockdown to phase 4 and beyond, it would be a travesty if we were to let those older people slip back into living a life of chronic loneliness and self-isolation. What further steps can the minister take to ensure that the network of volunteers that has been built over the past few months is supported and encouraged to continue to be involved in providing what has become a vital service for our older population?

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** As Christina McKelvie pointed out earlier, it is volunteers week, and I also pay tribute to the volunteers, whether they have been volunteering for some time or began during the crisis, for their fantastic efforts.

The Government's initial concern was to ensure that volunteer schemes were in place and were being funded. The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, Aileen Campbell, and I are now giving serious consideration to what happens in the next phases, and we will update Parliament on those plans in due course.

### Older People (Support during Covid-19 Outbreak)

**8. James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support older people during the Covid-19 outbreak. (S5O-04371)

**The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie):** James Kelly is probably going to hear some of the information that we have already given in response to the previous seven questions.

Additional Covid-related funding for members of our older people's strategic action forum totals almost £900,000 and includes around £700,000 for Age Scotland; £41,000 for Generations Working Together; £12,000 for Hourglass Scotland, which was formerly Action on Elder Abuse Scotland; £10,000 for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender health and wellbeing sector for its older members; £17,000 for Outside the Box; £2,800 for the Scottish Pensioners Forum, which is putting out a great newsletter on social media every couple of days; and more than £110,000 for the Scottish Ethnic Minority Older People Forum.

We recognise that some people need additional assistance. We launched a national helpline on 14 April in response to that, to help people at risk access essential help—essential food and medication, emotional support and contact with local volunteer groups, who have done an amazing job—should they not have family or other support.

**James Kelly:** What is being done to support older people with Covid-19 medical conditions—[*Temporary loss of sound.*]*]*—to ensure that those can get monitored and do not deteriorate—[*Temporary loss of sound.*]*]*—and get appropriate follow-up?

**The Presiding Officer:** I hope that the minister heard that question.

**Christina McKelvie:** The sound was pretty intermittent, so I do not think that I did. I only caught something about health conditions.

**The Presiding Officer:** It was about ensuring that people had the appropriate medical follow-up for underlying health conditions.

**Christina McKelvie:** Yes, absolutely. One of the threads in our work with the older people's strategic action forum is all about health and social care. As Jeane Freeman has explained on a number of occasions, we have obviously had to suspend a lot of our normal processes, such as screening programmes, and looking after older people is a big part of that work. The work that we are now doing alongside health colleagues is to ensure that those programmes start to gradually build up again. The older people's strategic action forum has been a key partner in ensuring that we do that right and that we start to open the right programmes soon.

If James Kelly has a particular interest in a local case in his constituency or region, I am keen to

hear about it. We can address the issue if it is specific, so it would be helpful if James Kelly dropped me a note.

**The Presiding Officer:** That is a good idea. I was going to go back to James Kelly's question, but the line quality was pretty poor, so I did not want to extend our time. I thank all members and ministers for their contributions.

14:26

*Meeting suspended.*

14:30

*On resuming—*

## Finance

**The Presiding Officer:** Welcome, again. Parliament resumes with portfolio questions on finance. I remind members that questions 6 and 7 are grouped together.

### Business Support (North Ayrshire)

1. **Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how much funding it has made available to support businesses in North Ayrshire during the Covid-19 pandemic. (S5O-04372)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes):** The Scottish Government has provided funding worth around £35 million to businesses in North Ayrshire that are facing hardship during the pandemic. That includes the provision of more than £21 million through the business support grants scheme.

**Ruth Maguire:** Although supermarkets remain open, selling a range of products, small retailers across my constituency—indeed, across Scotland—are experiencing significant challenges as a result of coronavirus and face the prospect of having to deal with financial pressure for some time. Will the cabinet secretary consider providing further support for those really important businesses in the longer term?

**Kate Forbes:** I absolutely recognise the point that Ruth Maguire makes about the huge pressures on those business and the worries that are plaguing small business owners. That is, of course, why we acted very quickly to deliver 100 per cent relief and the grant schemes. However, I continue to listen and to adapt the approach of the Scottish Government to meet changing circumstances. Most recently, we moved to allow small businesses that pay rent instead of rates to get the grants, and to extend the cumulative limit for small business chains.

Ruth Maguire will know that our challenge is that the Scottish Government cannot borrow and that we are, therefore, reliant on the United Kingdom Government providing further funding to meet those on-going needs. I continue to engage with the Treasury in the hope that additional funding will be forthcoming and that we can extend our support.

### Tourism (Extended Support)

2. **Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what extended financial support the finance secretary will make available for the tourism sector should the lockdown measures directly impact on the summer season. (S5O-04373)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes):** That is a critically important question. I recognise the devastating impact that the pandemic is having on our tourism sector. We have already put in place a package of support, which Willie Rennie will know about. However, I have listened closely to specific needs, and the tourism and hospitality hardship fund is an example of our having moved to extend our support. Most recently, we announced this week a £3 million extension of support to bed and breakfasts without a business bank account, through money that is being repurposed.

We need to continue to work with the industry to ensure that tourism is supported when it comes to recovery and to press the United Kingdom Government to do the same.

**Willie Rennie:** That is helpful; however, it does not answer the central point of my question. We have heard today about the prospect of major job losses in the tourism sector. Although I share the Government's caution in wanting to avoid a second economically damaging spike, if the lockdown is extended, tourism businesses will need financial support to be extended as well. Will that happen?

Is the publication of a future date for safe reopening being considered in the cabinet secretary's discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Tourism, to allow businesses to get ready and to signal to visitors who are planning a holiday now?

**Kate Forbes:** The short answer to both questions is yes. The caveat in relation to safe opening is, of course, that we want to give as much clarity as possible. The Scottish tourism emergency response group published the final elements of its action plan on May 26, on the VisitScotland website, and we continue to work with all members of that group, including VisitScotland, the Scottish Tourism Alliance and the enterprise agencies, to ensure that there is

clarity and certainty for the sector when it comes to reopening safely.

On the point about additional financial support, that is something that I keep under review at all times. We have a fixed budget and it is very challenging to identify additional resource, having already spent more than the consequentials that we received. However, if resource can be found, there is a strong case for extending financial support to the tourism sector, which will clearly be one of the hardest-hit sectors experiencing the longest-lasting impact.

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** What discussions have the cabinet secretary and the Scottish Government had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the 14-day quarantine and how it will affect people in Scotland who have paid for their holidays but are now concerned about the quarantine period when they return home?

**Kate Forbes:** We have been calling for public health measures to be introduced at the border for some time, and we have been in regular contact with the UK Government to discuss the detail of those proposals. I appreciate that people will have made plans for holidays, but it is important to have on-going measures to reduce and prevent the transmission of the virus and to protect public health. We will lay regulations in Parliament in the coming days, which will come into force next week, in line with other nations of the UK.

### Dental Practices (Funding)

**3. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what specific funding the Cabinet Secretary for Finance is providing to ensure that dental practices remain viable during the Covid-19 pandemic, and are able to meet any increase in demand when the outbreak is over. (S5O-04374)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes):** The Scottish Government is providing additional emergency funding to the national health service general dental services budget to support NHS dental practices for the temporary loss of patient contributions.

We are confident that we have the capacity within the NHS to meet any additional demand for dental services. As Monica Lennon will know, access to NHS dentistry is at a record level, with 95.7 per cent of the Scottish population now registered with an NHS dentist, compared with 51 per cent in 2007. Dentists might also be eligible for the small business grant scheme and have applied to the pivotal enterprise resilience fund.

**Monica Lennon:** Hundreds of dental practices, such as L & H Dentalcare Ltd in Hamilton, are struggling to access support. The British Dental

Association wrote to the cabinet secretary on 22 April to express serious concerns about the financial viability of wholly or mainly private practices. What assessment has been made of how many dental businesses do not qualify for current support? Will the cabinet secretary commit to expanding business funding for mixed NHS and private practices that have a high percentage of private patients so that they can remain viable?

**Kate Forbes:** That is a fair question. Depending on the circumstances, dental practices might be eligible to apply for other support measures, including furloughing staff through the job retention scheme, or they might be able to access the grants that I mentioned earlier. There is also the bounce back loan scheme and the United Kingdom Government's coronavirus business interruption loan scheme to support small and medium-sized businesses. Such situations are among the reasons why we introduced £185 million for additional grants, including through the pivotal enterprise resilience fund.

The enterprise agencies are working extremely hard to process applications as quickly as possible and to get money out the door. Dental practices are eligible for a wide range of support, but I will take the point away. If the BDA has written to me, it will get a reply.

### Tax Revenues (Estimated Shortfall)

**4. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what projection it has made of the estimated tax shortfall for the current financial year as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. (S5O-04375)

**The Minister for Public Finance and Migration (Ben Macpherson):** As Colin Beattie will be aware, the independent Scottish Fiscal Commission is responsible for forecasting devolved tax revenues. Its most recent forecasts were published alongside the budget, prior to the pandemic, and no forecasts have been published since.

The SFC recently highlighted the considerable uncertainty about the economic and fiscal effects of the pandemic. The scale, nature and duration of economic downturn is unclear, so the effect of Covid-19 on forecasts for devolved and local tax revenues remains highly uncertain, at this point. However, as members would expect, we are working closely with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Revenue Scotland and local government to develop our understanding of the impact on tax revenues.

**Colin Beattie:** Are discussions currently being held with the UK Government to assess the implications of tax shortfalls?

**Ben Macpherson:** Yes. We have pressed, and will continue to press, the UK Government to co-ordinate timely and targeted measures to support the key sectors in Scotland that are negatively impacted by lockdown, and to mitigate the impact on our tax revenues.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance has made the case clearly to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that Scotland's public finances should not face undue risks via the fiscal framework on account of differential impacts of Covid-19, and that the UK Government needs to consider solutions to avoid that.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** What estimates has the minister made of the loss of income from land and buildings transaction tax? That needs to be accounted for in the current financial year. Current reserves amount to £164 million. Will that be sufficient?

**Ben Macpherson:** The Scottish Fiscal Commission will provide a forecast for LBTT at the appropriate time, as I highlighted in response to the initial question from Colin Beattie.

As Ms Baillie might be aware, Revenue Scotland's statistics show that total LBTT receipts fell by £31.8 million in cash terms, or 68 per cent, between April 2019 and April 2020, as they were impacted by the pandemic. We look forward to seeing forecasts on LBTT from the SFC in due course, and we can seek to have a dialogue with Ms Baillie in more detail at that point.

### Town Centre Regeneration

**5. Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how much funding the Cabinet Secretary for Finance plans to allocate to support the regeneration of town centres in the aftermath of the Covid-19 outbreak. (S5O-04376)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes):** We are committed to working with partners to support communities and businesses in town centres and beyond to ensure that the right investment and support are available, as town centres start to recover.

The budget revision, which I published on 27 May, confirmed that overall spending to counter the pandemic had reached just over £4 billion, and that our budget spending plans to support regeneration initiatives total £47.4 million, which includes support for town centres.

Our capital spending review and infrastructure investment plan, which we will publish later this year, will also help us to respond to the challenges of Covid-19 and to prepare for the economic recovery that will be very important to us all.

**Finlay Carson:** Town centres and high streets have a significant impact on local economies, particularly in rural towns. Can the cabinet secretary ensure that Business Gateway and the enterprise agencies do more to help small and medium-sized enterprises on our high streets to take advantage of the growth in online sales, in particular while their trading potential is hugely restricted by the Covid-19 lockdown, by providing easy-to-understand general advice and—as a matter of urgency—by providing support to businesses to assist them in complying with social distancing measures when they reopen?

**Kate Forbes:** I thank Finlay Carson for those questions, which are very fair. We have provided significant financial support.

On his other two questions, we have seen a rapid increase in digitalisation of small businesses. I am very keen that there is funding to ensure that support continues so that businesses can trade online and ensure that they still make some income at this difficult time.

As Finlay Carson will know, on 1 April we established a new enterprise agency, South of Scotland Enterprise, whose remit is to further the economic and social development of the area that he represents, and to tackle inequality and promote fair work. South of Scotland Enterprise will make a real difference to people in the region. It is clear that that support will be needed more than ever as we rebuild rural and urban economies after the pandemic.

### United Kingdom Government (Covid-19 Funding Commitments)

**6. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what the finance secretary's response is to reports that extra funding commitments pledged by the United Kingdom Government to assist with the response to the Covid-19 outbreak have not been fulfilled. (S5O-04377)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes):** It goes without saying that it is vital that Scotland has absolute clarity and certainty about Covid-19 funding from the UK Government.

We have committed to pass on all associated consequential to protect Scotland from the effects of Covid-19, and I have done so swiftly, in line with the expectations of members from around the chamber. The problem is that, if we commit that funding and the UK Government cuts it, that will reduce the Scottish budget and affect spending elsewhere. That is why I wrote to the UK Government on 22 May to seek assurances that no in-year reductions would be applied to our budget, as happened last year, and that on-going

notification of consequentials would be guaranteed.

**John Mason:** Is the UK Government being deliberately misleading, or is it just in a muddle?

**Kate Forbes:** I think that the UK Government is trying hard to ensure that funding is provided for the various initiatives in response to Covid. However, the Scottish Government is trying to do that as well, and we need either guaranteed funding, which will not be reduced, or the tools to manage uncertainty.

We continue to work with the UK Government on funding requirements, but it is not too much to ask for minor powers and flexibilities to ensure that we can manage the on-going uncertainty. My concern is that, after the UK Government announced £60 million for business support and then clawed it back, we are now dealing with estimates across the board and funding might be clawed back in other areas without our having the tools to manage the uncertainty.

**The Presiding Officer:** We now have question 7 from Alasdair Allan. We cannot see him, but we can hear him.

#### **United Kingdom Government (Business Grants and Charity Support Direct Grant)**

**7. Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what engagement it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the funding consequentials following from recent extensions to business grants and the charity support direct grant. (S5O-04378)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes):** I have welcomed the on-going constructive dialogue with the Treasury. Throughout those discussions, I have made it clear that this year—of all years—we need certainty over the level of Barnett consequential funding. We have taken policy decisions to allocate funding that has been announced, often after Opposition politicians have demanded that we move quickly to do so. That funding being later withdrawn results in cuts in other parts of the budget, as we still have to honour our commitments.

I will continue to make the case that it is vital that we have more certainty this year over the Barnett consequentials that are provided, and that the Treasury moves further than just giving us estimates.

**Dr Allan:** Given what the cabinet secretary just said and what she said in response to the previous question about needing the tools to manage uncertainty, does she agree that the case continues to be made for the devolution of greater

financial powers to the Scottish Parliament to cope with these questions?

**Kate Forbes:** Absolutely—I do not think that anybody in any party could disagree with that in the light of this year's uncertainty. The fiscal framework and the Barnett formula were not designed for a pandemic, and I have emphasised to the UK Government that we need additional fiscal flexibility. Even when we lay aside the significant impact of Covid, the reserve and the resource borrowing powers in the fiscal framework are insufficient to deal with the inherent volatility in the operation of the framework.

I have always been clear that full fiscal responsibility would provide us with greater flexibility and opportunities. This year, in particular, highlights just how critically vital additional fiscal powers and flexibilities are in enabling us to continue to respond to coronavirus.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** Despite the £3.5 billion of Barnett consequentials that have come to Scotland from the United Kingdom Government, and generous schemes such as furloughing, many companies are still cutting staff and laying people off. In my region, Rolls-Royce has announced that hundreds of jobs will be lost. What conversations is the Scottish Government having with big employers in Scotland to ensure that they are aware of the schemes that are available to them from the UK and Scottish Governments and do not lay people off despite funds being available?

**Kate Forbes:** That is a fair question. We have had extensive discussions with small, medium-sized and large employers in Scotland. The Scottish Government speaks regularly—almost daily—with business representation organisations such as Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Confederation of British Industry to draw their attention to the support that is available.

The question also highlights the point that I made earlier, which is that if we are to continue to develop our grants and to help some of those businesses, we need headroom—additional resource. The UK Government can borrow for that purpose, but we cannot. I hope therefore that Conservative members will work with us to ensure that we get support to businesses by enabling us to have additional flexibilities and powers.

#### **Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund**

**8. Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government for what reason the eligibility criteria for the newly self-employed hardship fund exclude those who have applied for universal credit. (S5O-04379)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes):** The newly self-employed hardship fund was designed specifically to fill the gaps of the United Kingdom Government schemes which, although generous, have not covered everybody who needs assistance. That is why this scheme was established: to reach those who were not able to access any other form of business support, or who were not in receipt of working-age benefits. Those who are in receipt of universal credit payments, including advances, are therefore not eligible for that support. However, it is important to clarify that people who have applied for but not yet received universal credit, or an advance on it, are still eligible to apply.

**Colin Smyth:** Does the cabinet secretary accept that, even if some people receive universal credit, it is often a very small amount? For example, a self-employed constituent of mine has just been given £10 a week in universal credit, so it will take them more than four years to get up to the level of the £2,000 self-employment grant. Does she not accept that the criterion of universal credit is a blunt instrument, is unfair and should be reconsidered? If she is not willing to reconsider that criterion, will she at least consider giving councils more discretion in how they allocate some of the funding that they have been given specifically for grants, particularly if they have unused surpluses?

**Kate Forbes:** I remind Colin Smyth that our newly self-employed hardship scheme does not replace the UK Government's self-employment income support scheme. It is because that scheme, which was designed by the UK Government, did not at source cover everyone that we have stepped in and used resource that we were not given in order to reach those people. We must reach those who need it.

I accept Mr Smith's point that universal credit is not at all generous—I think that a lot of people recognise that point, which has been made a number of times in the past few years. However, with the resources that we have, we can only do so much—that means filling the gaps and looking for the people who have not had support to date.

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** The newly self-employed hardship fund has been a lifeline for many of my constituents in Glasgow Cathcart, and I thank the Scottish Government for stepping in to fill the gap in the UK Government's support package. I appreciate that we are working under financial constraints, and that we are already spending more money on business support than has been provided by Westminster, but will the cabinet secretary commit to keeping the situation in mind to see whether any further support could be provided in the future?

**Kate Forbes:** It is good to hear James Dornan say that the fund has been a lifeline for his constituents. I know that this is an extremely difficult time for individuals and families and, although we have put in place a range of measures to support as many people as possible that go beyond what the UK Government has offered, I still recognise that there are many who are not getting as much support as they need. My commitment on all those schemes is to be open to feedback, to listen and to consider very carefully the ways in which we can provide further support. Our challenge is the resources that are available to us, but James Dornan has my assurance that we will continue to look at how we can best support people at this time. We will look at all the schemes that we provide and see whether there are further tweaks that can be made.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** How many people have benefited from the Scottish Government's newly self-employed hardship scheme who would not have received anything from the UK scheme?

**Kate Forbes:** Under the newly self-employed hardship fund, we have already supported 4,160 self-employed people across all 32 local authorities with much-needed support that they would not have got through the UK Government's scheme.

**The Presiding Officer:** I thank the cabinet secretary, the minister and all other colleagues. That concludes portfolio questions on finance. We will suspend for a few minutes then resume with environment, climate change and land reform questions.

14:56

*Meeting suspended.*

15:00

*On resuming—*

## **Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform**

**The Presiding Officer:** Our final item of business today is portfolio questions on environment, climate change and land reform. I remind members that questions 2, 4, 6 and 7 are grouped together, so I will take all the supplementaries to those questions at the end of question 7.

### **“A Greenprint for Building a Cleaner More Resilient Economy”**

1. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how its climate

change targets could be supported by the recommendations in SSE's report, "A Greenprint for Building a Cleaner More Resilient Economy". (S5O-04380)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** I welcome SSE's report, and I note that its five policy areas complement the Scottish Government's strategy for creating a green, resilient, wellbeing economy. It is clear that meeting our world-leading targets to reduce carbon emissions will require a truly national endeavour that will involve significant public and private investment, and I hope that SSE—along with others—will play its part.

**Jamie Greene:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that helpful response. Is the net zero target still in place, despite the difficulties that we have had with coronavirus over the past few months?

I would also like the cabinet secretary to comment on the home improvement stimulus proposal in the SSE report, which recommended that the Government should move towards phasing out gas and oil heating for homes. Is the Scottish Government actively looking towards doing that? When might we expect to see some progress on that?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** All the targets are in place. As the member will recall, they are statutory targets, which are now fixed—the target for net zero is 2045 and the target for the 75 per cent reduction in emissions is 2030. Until and unless Parliament decides to change those targets, they will remain in place.

Mr Greene also asked about the home improvement stimulus, which, as he is probably well aware, is a little outside my portfolio. The home improvement stimulus is extremely important. As part of our budget, we announced the new heat transition deal. We have increased support for the energy efficient Scotland programme and, over the coming months, a heat transition deal will come online in phases to support economic recovery in the energy efficiency, heat and low-carbon energy sectors. We have also introduced the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill to Parliament, and there will be further publications this year on heat decarbonisation, as well as an update to the energy efficient Scotland route map.

A lot is still in place and intended for the future. We will require to work closely with the United Kingdom Government on some aspects of the decarbonisation process if we are to achieve what we want to achieve in that respect, but that is an on-going conversation.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** What discussions is the cabinet secretary having

across Government portfolios on the opportunity to use incentives or grants to deliver emissions reductions by businesses, and, as we start to move out of the Covid lockdown, to support businesses that work in renewables manufacturing and the circular economy?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As Claudia Beamish probably realises, across Government, a significant number of conversations are taking place right now about managing our way out of the immediate economic situation and moving towards a green economic recovery. Within that, there will be as many incentives as we can reasonably expect, although all colleagues will be aware that there are now very significant financial challenges for Governments everywhere to manage.

Those conversations are continuing; I am having bilaterals with colleagues, as well as broader conversations and discussions. The issues that Claudia Beamish raises are live issues as we manage our way out of the current difficult situation.

### Fly-tipping

**2. Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what the current fine is for illegally dumping rubbish in the countryside, and whether it will increase the fines as soon as possible to deter this behaviour. (S5O-04381)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** Fly-tipping is illegal, dangerous and unnecessary. I am disappointed that there has been an increase in fly-tipping during the lockdown period, and I know that that will be of significant concern to the landowners and communities affected.

In 2014, we increased the penalty for fly-tipping to a minimum fine of £200 and a maximum fine of £40,000, with a range of penalties in between. In addition to fines, there is a currently a national campaign to help people to understand how to manage waste, and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency is working to check the credentials of businesses that have started offering waste uplifts.

**Richard Lyle:** Will the Government actively encourage the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss with councils the setting up of mobile cameras to cover areas that are being blighted by illegal dumping, so that car registration numbers can be identified and those drivers can be prosecuted?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We are already working closely with SEPA and local authorities to ensure that we have effective prevention and enforcement measures in place. Ideally, we would

be able to identify the individuals responsible for fly-tipping and to make them pay for clearing it up. SEPA has a vital role to play in ensuring that the public and waste carriers understand their responsibilities, and in targeting illegal waste carriers and prosecuting them, where necessary.

Local authorities can already use cameras and other technology to target fly-tipping hot spots. They can also provide support to private landowners in relation to fly-tipping. There are several local fly-tipping partnerships, which are engaged in work on that, and I encourage landowners to contact their local authority or partnership to understand what support is available. I agree whole-heartedly that prevention and deterrence are the most beneficial approach.

### Fly-tipping

**4. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to address the reported increase in incidents of fly-tipping in the countryside. (S5O-04383)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** Responsibility for managing fly-tipping rests with local councils as part of their role in delivering waste services. There has been disruption to services during recent weeks, but limited access to other services is no excuse for fly-tipping.

I am pleased to see that the situation is now much better and is continuing to improve. The reopening of household waste recycling centres this week is a step forward, and several councils have reintroduced bulky waste uplifts. We are working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Zero Waste Scotland to consider what else can be done.

**Murdo Fraser:** I agree that there is never an excuse for fly-tipping. We have seen an increase in fly-tipping while council tips have been closed, but I hope that the problem will start to lessen now that they are reopening.

Under the current law, it is the responsibility of the landowner to bear the cost of clearing up rubbish on their land in the countryside if the fly-tipper cannot be identified. Does the cabinet secretary think that that law is still fair and appropriate? Is it not time to review that law?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** We are keeping all aspects of that under review. We are engaged in a continuing conversation with SEPA, which is looking closely at a variety of ways of addressing the issue. It is clear that the problem has been exacerbated by the most recent experience. I understand why landowners are frustrated when,

by law, they become responsible for what is on their land, but Murdo Fraser will know that such responsibilities are embedded in the law in Scotland.

The big issue becomes how to manage the situation, make identifications and carry out enforcement. Compensation provision is available, but that, of course, requires the individuals who have carried out the act to be identified.

I have had a conversation with SEPA not about the specific issue that Murdo Fraser has raised but about the wider issue of what has been happening over the past couple of months, and I have asked SEPA to look at whether there are different and better ways of managing the situation. I expect that conversation to continue.

### Fly-tipping and Waste Management

**6. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it can offer local authorities to address reported increases in fly-tipping and promote waste management as recycling centres begin to reopen. (S5O-04385)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The Scottish Government has established a waste and resources sector forum that brings together key partners in the waste sector to ensure that we work closely together during the pandemic. The forum includes local authority representation as well as waste industry bodies, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Zero Waste Scotland. Communication with the public about responsible waste management has been a key area of activity.

Alongside a focus on recovering services that households and businesses rely on, we have been working on developing a route map for a green recovery as part of our broader work on economic recovery. I see recycling and the circular economy as a key element of that.

**Clare Adamson:** Although the reopening of recycling centres—some for limited use—has to be welcomed, the safety of workers and the safe operation of the centres is, of course, paramount. Has the cabinet secretary had discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the wider waste industry about appropriate safety measures, including appropriate personal protective equipment being available to workers in the waste management sector?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** It is right that the personal health and wellbeing of those who work in the sector is safeguarded at all times. The Scottish Government has published guidance that was worked on jointly with COSLA to support local authorities in the reopening and operation of



recycling centres. Alongside the guidance, Zero Waste Scotland has commenced a national communications programme to advise the public on arrangements for visiting recycling centres. The programme includes a clear message about the zero-tolerance approach to the abuse of staff, for example.

The guidance on recycling centres is intended to be read in conjunction with other published guidance, including that from Health Protection Scotland and the United Kingdom waste industry safety and health forum. All of that has been part and parcel of the conversation that we have been having with local authorities about how to safely reopen recycling centres. The matter is as much a concern for local authorities as it has been for us.

### Fly-tipping and Littering

**7. Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to help reduce fly-tipping and littering. (S5O-04386)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The Scottish Government published a revised code of practice on litter and refuse in 2018, which sets out statutory guidance on the responsibilities of local authorities and other duty holders, and promotes a focus on prevention. As I mentioned in my earlier responses, we have recently developed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and local authorities a national waste management marketing campaign and web resource that sets out how the public can manage waste responsibly at this difficult time, and which includes messages on fly-tipping and litter prevention.

**Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):** During the past week, with the easing of lockdown—[*Temporary loss of sound*]*—*we have seen thousands of people flocking to beauty spots across Scotland, including in the Borders and along the East Lothian coast, to enjoy the sun. Many of those visitors were not respectful of the environment and dumped beer cans, cigarette butts and other litter in their wake, leaving locals to clear up the mess.

One complaint that I have had from quite a few constituents is that, because all the car parks are closed, large litter bins are not accessible to visitors. Has the Government considered reopening car parks and providing litter bins to prevent the constant dropping of litter all over the place?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As the member probably understands, we are almost constantly having conversations about aspects of the lockdown and how to manage behaviours that we

see developing. There are active conversations about how best to deal with the issues that arise around local hot spots. First and foremost, it is the public health issue that gives us concern. Equally, there are indirect results such as those that the member discussed. The issue about car parks, public toilets and so on is a bigger issue with respect to the public health message.

We might be able to look more carefully at how litter bins can be made more available and more easily accessible. As the member will be aware, that discussion has to be had with quite a large number of organisations, from the national parks to the local authorities, and we need to think about the fact that there might be different solutions for different areas. We also have to be careful not to incentivise even worse behaviour. I refer back to the public health issue that arises when people do not pay as much attention as they should.

### Environmental Targets (Impact of Covid-19)

**3. Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government when a review will be carried out on the impact that the Covid-19 outbreak has had on it meeting its environmental targets. (S5O-04382)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** The Scottish Government has, of course, set many targets to encourage progress in Scotland on many different aspects of environmental protection and climate change mitigation. To understand the full impact of the Covid-19 crisis on those targets, we will continue to review them as part of on-going monitoring.

**Maurice Golden:** A litany of environmental targets were missed or were on track to fail before the coronavirus. Now, understandably, a host of measures face delays, but nonetheless the deposit return scheme will go ahead. Can the cabinet secretary guarantee that every vending machine for the DRS will be built here in Scotland?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I will not make that kind of global guarantee. We are actively discussing the next steps in the progress on the DRS, and discussions are taking place on the setting up of the scheme administrator. A lot of the conversations that the member might be interested in having about the DRS will require the active involvement of the scheme administrator when it is finally set up.

**The Presiding Officer:** We have supplementary questions from Sarah Boyack and Richard Lyle.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I am keen to know the cabinet secretary's response to the plans made by more than 80 civil society organisations

that want the Scottish Government to invest in green recovery and a wellbeing economy as we come out of Covid-19, so that we can transform society and the economy to meet the first of our new climate emissions targets while greatly enhancing biodiversity and our environment.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I reassure Sarah Boyack that that is an active conversation across almost all ministerial portfolios and in the economic recovery group, which is chaired by Benny Higgins. I have also set up a revised group, which we are calling the sustainable advisory group and which is principally targeting the promises that we made to Parliament about updating our climate change plan in the light of the 2030 targets. That work is all on-going.

We welcome the contributions that are beginning to emerge across society. I am grateful that they are emerging, and I try to keep abreast of them as far as possible. I hope that we will see even more contributions. We all agree that we must build an economic recovery that looks better than where we were before.

**Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** We have seen increased rates of walking and cycling in recent months, coupled with improved air quality in our towns and cities. What investment is the Scottish Government making, as part of its response to the pandemic, to encourage people to use sustainable forms of transport beyond the Covid outbreak?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** The Scottish Government has been very clear in its support for sustainable travel. I am certain that Michael Matheson, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, would want me to remind the member of the £10 million for the spaces for people programme. That money is funding pop-up cycle lanes and wider pavements to provide safe infrastructure for walking and cycling at this time, and that initial investment has now been tripled to £30 million.

That is an immediate commitment to the immediate scenario, and it sits alongside the broader national transport strategy, which continues to provide guiding principles for transport. Those principles include stressing the importance of walking, wheeling and cycling, and they will form part of Scotland's route map out of Covid-19.

Transport will be a complicated area in our work towards a green economic recovery. I am nervous about a sudden rush back to cars by people who—*[Temporary loss of sound.]*—transport. We must think across all forms of transport to ensure that we continue to have the emptier roads and cleaner air that we currently enjoy.

## **Solway Barnacle Goose Management Scheme**

**5. Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its plans to continue the Solway barnacle goose management scheme beyond 2020. (S5O-04384)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment (Mairi Gougeon):** We are currently reviewing all goose management schemes and have begun work to explore what future schemes might look like, including the scheme on the Solway. That process will involve Scottish Natural Heritage working with Scottish Government officials and liaising with the Solway goose group, which includes farmers, landowners, RSPB Scotland, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, and sporting interests.

**Oliver Mundell:** Certainty is needed: it is important not only for farmers but also for the wider local tourism industry and for the environment. All those benefits are underpinned by that crucial funding. I hope that the minister will be able to get the Scottish Government to guarantee a year of continued funding now, instead of leaving the groups that she mentions in the lurch at such a difficult time.

**Mairi Gougeon:** I completely understand the importance of this, which Oliver Mundell has highlighted. Development work is happening now and will continue throughout 2020. Future provision will start to take shape by early next year.

The Government anticipates that, at least for the Solway, a goose management scheme that is broadly similar to the current one is the most likely option. I give the member that assurance. I feel that there is no need for an extension at this time, because there is still enough time for us to conduct the review and ensure that any other support is in place.

**The Presiding Officer:** I think that Liam McArthur has a supplementary question about geese, but not the Solway.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** Yes. I will take members to the other end of the country. The minister will be aware that measures to tackle the large and growing resident greylag goose population in Orkney had to be shelved because of Covid. That has left local farmers having to spend more time and resources on desperately trying to control numbers. Will the minister look at using the money that would have been spent by Scottish Natural Heritage on those measures earlier in the year to cover some of the increased costs that local farmers face, including the cost of cartridges?

**Mairi Gougeon:** I would be happy to look at that. There is the potential—*[Temporary loss of sound.]*—that type of support if the goose control is done through the co-operative adaptive management scheme and, of course, if it observes all the relevant protocols.

We are looking at a range of ways in which to provide support. For example, we have recently secured European Union agreement that goose meat from the Orkney scheme can be sold throughout Scotland.

I appreciate how important the issue is, and we will look at ways in which we can offer support.

### **Nitrogen Balance Sheet**

**8. Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government for what reason it has delayed the deadline for the creation of a nitrogen balance sheet. (S5O-04387)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham):** Although our immediate focus has to be on responding to the Covid-19 crisis, we remain fully committed to our climate change goals. That includes the establishment of a national nitrogen balance sheet.

Parliament recently unanimously agreed a limited extension to the deadline for the development phase of that project. That represents a pragmatic flexibility that is intended to minimise any risks to the quality of the balance sheet from factors associated with the current public health crisis. For example, the project will need to engage widely across areas such as agriculture, waste and transport in order to be effective.

**Tom Mason:** None of us doubts the importance of focusing all the Government's resources at the moment on tackling Covid-19, but people might struggle to understand why that means that the climate change deadline that is 16 months away cannot be met. The policy memorandum for the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Bill said that no stakeholder consultation for the nitrogen balance sheet was possible in the time available. Has that consultation been undertaken now? If not, when will it take place?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** In fairness to Tom Mason, I am not sure that he understands that the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 commenced only in March 2020, which was just prior to the Covid lockdown. We therefore had to look very carefully at how we were going to manage things.

The amendment to the emergency Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Bill was unanimously accepted,

and we spoke across all the parties to ensure that there was understanding and agreement.

That the wider statutory requirements around the balance sheet changed is an issue, but we would have had significant difficulty in managing the work that would have been required through the lockdown. Therefore, we have simply looked at a fairly modest extension of the time for that in order to ensure that it is done as well as it can be.

The nitrogen balance sheet will be the first for Scotland, and I would not be happy if we ended up with something that was not as good as it could have been for reasons that we could not control in this year but that we can control by allowing more time in which to develop it.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes portfolio question time. Parliament will resume in plenary session at 2 pm next Tuesday.

*Meeting closed at 15:30.*



This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

---

Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

---

All documents are available on  
the Scottish Parliament website at:

[www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot)

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers  
is available here:

[www.parliament.scot/documents](http://www.parliament.scot/documents)

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact  
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: [sp.info@parliament.scot](mailto:sp.info@parliament.scot)

---



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba