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Scottish Parliament

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[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 12:20]

One Minute's Silence

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon, colleagues. Before we begin, as members might know, Saturday 15 August marks the 75th anniversary of VJ—victory over Japan—day. I invite members to join me in observing one minute's silence to remember and thank those who fought for our freedom.

First Minister's Question Time

12:21

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Before we turn to First Minister's question time, I invite the First Minister to update Parliament on coronavirus and a very serious rail incident.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Thank you, Presiding Officer. Before I give an update on coronavirus, I want to address briefly the impact of the serious storms across Scotland last night. There has been significant travel disruption, and efforts are under way across the country to restore services and roads to normal.

However, of most urgent concern is an extremely serious incident on the rail line west of Stonehaven, where a ScotRail passenger train derailed earlier this morning. The emergency services are currently on site, and a major incident has been declared. I have just come off a call with Network Rail and the emergency services. Although details are still emerging, I am afraid to say that there are early reports of serious injuries. The Scottish Government resilience room is operational, and I will be convening a SGoRR meeting with partner organisations as soon as possible this afternoon. Updates will, of course, be provided as they become available. However, my immediate thoughts—and, I am sure, the thoughts of everyone across the chamber—are with all those who have been involved in the incident.

I turn to the daily update on Covid. An additional 47 positive cases were confirmed yesterday. That represents 1 per cent of the people who were newly tested yesterday, and it takes the total number of cases to 19,126. A full health board breakdown will be available later, but my provisional information is that 24 of the 47 new cases are in the NHS Grampian health board area. It is not yet clear how many are connected to the on-going outbreak in Aberdeen. I will say a bit more about that shortly.

A total of 265 patients are currently in hospital with confirmed Covid, which is four fewer than yesterday. Three people are in intensive care, which is the same number as yesterday. I am also pleased to say, yet again, that in the past 24 hours no deaths have been registered of patients who had tested positive in the previous 28 days, so the number of deaths that have been recorded under that measurement remains 2,491.

National Records of Scotland has just published its more comprehensive weekly report, which includes deaths of people who were confirmed through a test as having Covid—as our daily figures do—and deaths in which Covid is a presumed factor. The latest NRS report covers the

period to Sunday 9 August. It records the total number of registered deaths that have either a confirmed or a presumed link to Covid as 4,213. Of those, five were registered in the seven days up to Sunday, which is a decrease of two from the previous week and is the lowest weekly figure since the outbreak began.

That said, every single loss of life is a source of grief and heartbreak, so my condolences again go to everybody who has lost a loved one.

However, the NRS figures reinforce the point that, as of now, Covid has been driven to very low levels in Scotland. That is what has allowed us to take significant steps out of lockdown over July and August and, of course, it is the reason why schools are able to open this week. Many children will today be having their first day back after five months. I wish them well, and I want to thank all teachers and school staff for all the work that they have done, and to thank parents for their efforts in supporting their children in these unusual times.

Schools are going back because we have been successful in reducing Covid rates in the community, but there is no room for complacency. Today's figures show that we are still seeing new cases, and the on-going cluster in Aberdeen shows that the virus can spread rapidly when it gets the opportunity to do so. From the latest available figures, a total of 272 cases have been identified in the Grampian health board area since 26 July. As of now, 177 of those are thought to be associated with the cluster that has been linked to Aberdeen pubs, and 940 contacts have now been identified from those 177 cases. In general, in the past few days, we have seen a slight fall in the number of new cases in Grampian and in cases directly associated with the cluster, but despite that slight reduction, the number of cases there is still far higher than that in any other part of the country, and is considerably higher than it was in Grampian before the outbreak started.

Based on an assessment from the incident management team and advice from the chief medical officer, the Scottish Government's conclusion is that it is not yet possible to lift any of the restrictions that were put in place last week for Aberdeen. Aberdeen City Council has been fully involved in the discussions, as has Police Scotland, which reports good compliance with the restrictions. Therefore, people who live in Aberdeen should not go into someone else's house, and hospitality businesses such as pubs, restaurants and cafes must remain closed for now. People who live in Aberdeen should not travel more than 5 miles, unless they have to. They can travel for work and education, but should not travel for leisure or other non-essential purposes. Similarly, we are advising people from outside

Aberdeen not to travel into the city unless they have to.

I know that people in Aberdeen, who of course today are coping with the impacts of severe weather as well as Covid, will be disappointed by that decision, but I want to thank them for complying so well with the rules that we put in place last week. We continue to watch closely for any signs that the outbreak has spread to Aberdeenshire in any significant way, but at present we are not placing any additional restrictions on people who live in the shire.

I stress that nobody wants the restrictions to be in place for longer than is necessary. They will be reviewed again in one week's time, and as soon as we can relax any of them, we will do so. However, at the moment, the number of new cases that we are seeing is still too high for that to be a safe or sensible course of action.

The final thing that I want to highlight in relation to the Aberdeen outbreak is that the significant majority of contacts that are identified are being traced within a day, and all contacts are being traced within three days. That is a real credit to the work of our test-and-protect teams, including the people from outside Grampian who have been helping with the work in Aberdeen. I am grateful to all of them.

To conclude, I note that the situation in Aberdeen reminds us how quickly the virus can take off and how much effort is then required to bring outbreaks under control. It therefore also reminds us that we must, for the country as a whole to make further progress out of lockdown, continue to suppress the virus. Government has a critical role—indeed, it has the central role—to play in achieving that, but we are, ultimately, all dependent on each other. The choices that all of us make as individuals on physical distancing, face masks and washing our hands will decide whether we move forward or backward in our fight against Covid.

I will, therefore, close by emphasising again the importance of FACTS—the five key things that all of us must do.

Face coverings should be worn in enclosed spaces.

Avoid crowded places.

Clean hands and hard surfaces regularly.

Two-metre distancing remains the rule.

Self-isolate and book a test if you have symptoms.

Those are the golden rules that can help us to stop the virus spreading. I ask everyone across Scotland to continue to comply fully with them.

The Presiding Officer: Before we turn to questions, I remind members that most supplementary questions have been on Covid and therefore I will continue to take all supplementary questions, constituency and otherwise, after question 7. However, members who wish to ask a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button as soon as possible.

School Exam Results

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): I add the thoughts of my party to those that have already been expressed regarding the incident in Stonehaven today. It is clear that the incident is serious, and it will have affected a number of families across Scotland. We think of them at this time and of the emergency workers who are in attendance.

The past week has been a terrible time for Scotland's school pupils and a new low for this Government's handling of our education system. Yesterday, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills sought to draw a line under events, but questions still remain. For example, this morning, we spoke with Abby from Prestwick, who had a conditional offer to go to the University of Edinburgh. Her father said that they were initially delighted by Mr Swinney's U-turn, but they have since discovered that, based on last week's modified results, the offer from Edinburgh has been withdrawn. Yesterday, Mr Swinney said that more university places would be created in order to stop university students being

"crowded out of a place that they would otherwise have been awarded."—[*Official Report*, 11 August 2020; c 32.]

However, that is not a guarantee of a place on Abby's chosen course. Therefore, will the First Minister write today to every Scottish university to make it clear that they must now honour every conditional offer that they made to students on their projected grades?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Members understand that in no year can the Government guarantee a place at university for every young person. However, we are absolutely determined to make sure that young people are not disadvantaged this year. Obviously, I am not able to talk in detail about individual cases, but any member who wants to raise individual cases should do so, and we will seek to respond as fully as we can.

The education secretary has already been in discussions with universities. We are determined that not only will those who have the grades and have had offers of places get those places but that, given yesterday's decision—which has been welcomed by pupils and parents across the country—young people will not be crowded out of

places. Discussions are on-going to ensure that additional places will be available at our universities. That is a welcome move. Given the massive disadvantages that young people—not just those who were to sit exams but all young people across the country—have suffered in the past five months as a result of Covid, that is a positive signal to them of the determination of the Government and the whole country to ensure that, in the future, they have the opportunities that they richly deserve.

Ruth Davidson: Frankly, the idea that, on 12 August, which is more than a week after results were issued, pupils are still not clear about what is happening with university places is ridiculous. One way to build back trust is to be more transparent.

When the last Scottish Qualifications Authority fiasco happened in 2000, Nicola Sturgeon was in opposition. She insisted then that the then education secretary

"give the Parliament a categorical assurance that he will make available ... all papers, correspondence and notes of meetings and of phone calls within his department and between his department and the SQA since the start of this year".—[*Official Report*, 6 September 2000; c 27.]

The same thing needs to happen now. We know that this Government does not have the best record of making documents available, but will the First Minister give that guarantee today, and will she start by confirming that the education secretary formally backed the SQA's deeply flawed exam model?

The First Minister: On the issue of university places, in any year, the process of university admissions and clearing goes on for a period of time. This year, we will ensure that more places are available for young people. That is a good and positive thing that should be welcomed across the country.

With regard to the responsibilities and role of the SQA and the Government, we will make available to Parliament whatever Parliament wants. However, perhaps understandably, given experiences with Governments elsewhere, the Opposition is maybe struggling to grasp a key element of the situation. The Government is not trying to pass responsibility to the SQA; the Government is taking responsibility itself.

Ruth Davidson referred to previous incidents with the SQA, which I remember well. However, one thing that is different now is that we are living through a global pandemic. We were not able to have scheduled exams this year; therefore, we had to put in place an alternative process. We asked the SQA to put in place a process that maintained comparable standards with previous years. The SQA did that but, given the impact on young people and that we did not want them to

feel that their future has been determined by an algorithm rather than by their performance, we have made the judgment to come to a different conclusion. The Government has taken responsibility for that. We have acted with the best of intentions. However, when we judge that we have got it wrong, we are big enough to say that we got it wrong, to apologise to young people, and to put it right. That is what people across the country want to see.

The situation will affect every Government in the United Kingdom—we will no doubt see that tomorrow, when the A-level results for England and Wales are published. However, we will also see whether Governments elsewhere have the willingness to admit that they might have got it wrong and put it right comprehensively in the way that this Government has done.

Ruth Davidson: I am sure that the First Minister did not mean to imply this, but she just stood up and basically said that transparency is important when she asks for it and we are not in a global pandemic, but the Government gets a mulligan when we are in a global pandemic.

Yesterday, we welcomed the announcement of a review of the entire debacle, but if trust and transparency are to be restored in the system, one key measure is the SQA showing its workings. In countries around the world, exam scripts are returned to schools so that teachers can see exactly how students were graded and how those grades were modified. That simple measure would end the secrecy that erodes confidence in the way that our exam system is managed, and it would be a valuable tool in helping teachers to close the attainment gap in future exams. Will the First Minister commit to that today?

The First Minister: I know that Ruth Davidson is just back on the front bench, but the SQA published its methodology last week, and it is there for people to see, scrutinise and draw conclusions on. The chief executive of the SQA appeared before the Parliament's Education and Skills Committee this morning. For reasons that I hope Ruth Davidson will understand, I have not had the opportunity to follow that evidence—I have been dealing with other things. However, the SQA's chief executive has answered questions from members across the chamber. If there is other information that members want, the SQA and/or the Government will provide that.

Fundamentally, we have had to deal with an unprecedented situation. We have done that with the best of intentions, but we have recognised honestly that we made the wrong judgment and that perhaps we thought too much about standardisation in the system rather than individual experience in a unique year. Instead of doing what I suspect some others might do and

simply dig our heels in, we have acknowledged that that was not the right thing to do, apologised to young people and put it right, and we are going to make more university places available.

I think that that should all be welcome. The Parliament is perfectly entitled to scrutinise all of that. I, for one, I am not scared of scrutiny, whether that be from the Parliament or the electorate. In fact, I relish and welcome it.

Ruth Davidson: So the First Minister will not write to universities, she will not release correspondence today, and she will not commit to returning exam scripts to schools in future.

Next week marks five years since Nicola Sturgeon announced that education would be her number one priority. In those five years, she has pulled Scotland out of international tests, her flagship education bill has been scrapped, the named person scheme has been struck down by the courts, poor students have been punished by a persistent attainment gap, hundreds of teacher vacancies have been left unfilled, and we have just seen the biggest exam fiasco in the history of devolution. John Swinney has been the common denominator through all of that.

The First Minister's loyalty to a colleague may be commendable, but her real loyalty should be to the parents and pupils of Scotland. They deserve new leadership in education, and John Swinney cannot deliver that. Why will the First Minister not see that?

The First Minister: I am not sure that loyalty to colleagues is a strong suit for Ruth Davidson.

Ruth Davidson says that I will not write to universities. The reason for that is that John Swinney has already spoken to the universities. She says that we will not publish the SQA's workings. The reason why I will not instruct it to do that today is that it did that last week. There are more teachers in our schools today than there were when I became First Minister, and we have just funded local authorities to employ more teachers in our schools.

Forgive me, but my mind is not particularly on political matters this morning. However, if Ruth Davidson wants to have that kind of exchange, she really should think about the position from which she seeks to do that. In just a few months, I will submit myself and my Government to the verdict of the Scottish people in an election. That is the ultimate accountability for our record and our leadership. As we do that, Ruth Davidson will be pulling on her ermine and going to the unelected House of Lords. I gently suggest to her that, when it comes to scrutinising and holding politicians to account, she really is not coming at that from a position of strength. It is not me who is running away from democratic accountability.

Ruth Davidson: For four months, we have had the First Minister standing up and telling the people of Scotland that she does not do party politics. Nine minutes it took her to get there. The difference is this—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Let us have some order, please.

Ruth Davidson: The former leaders of the Labour Party, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Conservative Party might want to go and serve in another Parliament, yes. She thinks that that is a bad thing, but there is not a word of condemnation for the former leader of her party, who would rather shill for Putin's *Pravda*.

The First Minister: All it has taken nine minutes to do today is expose Ruth Davidson's raw nerve. I do not criticise anybody for wanting to serve in any Parliament; I just have an old-fashioned preference—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Can we have some order, please?

The First Minister: I just have an old-fashioned preference that they get elected before they do so.

This Government has serious issues to deal with, and we deal with them each and every day. We are not infallible; we make mistakes and when we make them, we put them right. As First Minister, with my team of ministers, we are going to get on with the job of leading this country as best we can through the crisis that it faces. We welcome scrutiny of that, but we will not lose our focus on that central task, which is a more important one than any Government has faced in Scotland for quite some time. That is what I will be focusing on today, tomorrow and for the foreseeable future.

School Exam Results

2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):

I begin by saying that all our thoughts go to those involved in this morning's incident at Stonehaven and all our thanks and support go to the emergency service crews who are in attendance. Let us hope that lives are saved and not lost.

"I want Sam Galbraith out of office, not off the hook."

Those are your words, First Minister, from 24 August 2000, when the then education secretary faced a vote of no confidence from this Parliament after 9,000 pupils did not get their exam results on time. That is a fraction of the 75,000 pupils whose results were downgraded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority on your own education secretary's self-confessed instruction. Why then, First Minister, do you want John Swinney off the hook rather than out of office?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): People are going to have to make their own minds up about this, although I suspect that minds in this chamber are pretty fixed on it. Richard Leonard is giving the impression that he is more interested in the politics of this than in having the issue actually fixed for young people across the country. However, we are living right now in unprecedented and unique circumstances. We were faced with something that has not happened in Scotland in more than 100 years: the cancellation of our exam diet. There was no easy option open to ministers, just as there were no easy options open to the Labour Government in Wales or the Conservative Government in the United Kingdom. We had to come up with an alternative to exams to certificate our young people's achievements.

We asked the SQA to come up with an approach that maintained standards. We have reflected in the past few days that that was not the right approach. We have the humility, frankly, to say that we got it wrong and to apologise to young people and put it right. I think that, particularly in these times of crisis, that is what people want to see happen. I was struck, in something that I read in the media about the Deputy First Minister over the past week, by a comment from the father of a young person who had been affected by this. I actually suspect that what he said is how not everybody, but probably the majority of people across Scotland feel. He said:

"Show me a man that has never made a mistake and I will show you a man that's never worked. He is human and I take my hat off to him for saying he was wrong. Everyone makes mistakes and I hope everyone learns from this."

That is the approach that this Government is taking to these unprecedented times. It is up to the Opposition, as it would have been up to us in Opposition, to decide how they tackle these things. However, I think that all the evidence right now suggests that, in these difficult times, the public wants to see leadership that is prepared to admit when they get things wrong and to put them right. That is the approach that this Government is going to continue to take.

Richard Leonard: I will go to something else that the First Minister said, which is from August 2015:

"Let me be clear—I want to be judged on this. If you are not, as First Minister, prepared to put your neck on the line on the education of our young people then what are you prepared to. It really matters."

If it really matters, why did neither the First Minister nor her education secretary listen to the voices telling her that the SQA moderation system was not right? She was warned in April; she was warned in May; she was warned in June; and she was warned again in July that this system would

not work. In fact, in May, the Equality and Human Rights Commission warned that the

“SQA have been unable to demonstrate that they have considered any equality issues in their work in this area, or that they have met their legal duties”.

We now know that the results were pre-released to John Swinney five days before the pupils saw them. He could have fixed it then; he could have saved all those young people from all that anguish; he could have saved the First Minister from having to make a grovelling apology—but he did not. Why is his neck not on the line?

The First Minister: John Swinney announced yesterday that there will be an independent review to look at the lessons that should be learned, and I think that that is the right thing to do.

I made a judgment. We are in difficult circumstances and we did not get this right. I accept that, and it is important to be absolutely open about that. We did not get this right. We acted with the best of intentions. We judged that it was important to have a set of results this year that were comparable in standard with those in previous years. I think now that that was not the right judgment, which is why we have made the decision that John Swinney announced yesterday.

I accept that in the circumstances in which we are living, there has been no decision that I or any member of this Government has taken over the past five months that has been easy or where there has been an absolute right or wrong. We are living through the most horrendously difficult set of circumstances. That is why it is so important to recognise that where, despite the best of intentions, we get things wrong, we do not dig our heels in but we put things right. That is what we have done.

Again, I think that the evidence suggests that people prefer that approach to government to the ding-dong exchanges that I, in Opposition, have been as guilty of as anybody else—I am not criticising that. However, we are not living in normal times. Richard Leonard can quote me from four years ago or 20 years ago, but we are living through a global pandemic right now, where the choices that we face and the challenges that confront us are really difficult. We will continue to lead the country through this as best we can and we will not shy away from saying when we get things wrong and taking the action that we need to take to put things right. I think that people prefer that approach to the traditional approach to politics that we have in more normal times.

Richard Leonard: But the point is that month after month after month, the First Minister was forewarned that this problem would arise when the results were announced last week. “Judge me on education,” the First Minister said. Of the young

people who demonstrated, forced the Government climbdown, and refused to take this injustice lying down, the oldest have been at school for 13 years, so every single day of their education has been under the stewardship of the Scottish National Party. Where did it take them? To having to organise street demonstrations and online petitions just to get the Government to hear them and to give them the results that they had worked hard for.

Schools all over Scotland are making a fresh start today. Pupils, staff and teachers have our good wishes and our good will, but they need the resources to make the return to school work and they need an education secretary in whom they can have confidence. Will the First Minister give them that and sack John Swinney?

The First Minister: First, on the young people who made their case over the past few days so passionately, as Richard Leonard rightly says, for many of them, their entire school careers have taken place while my party has been in Government.

I reflect on the fact that the objectives of curriculum for excellence are to ensure that young people are confident individuals and are engaged, active and responsible citizens. I think that, in the way that they have conducted themselves, those young people are actually a credit to the Scottish education system, because, having listened to many of them over the past 24 hours, I know that they understand and recognise the difficult circumstances and welcome the action that the Government has taken and the fact that I and the Deputy First Minister have apologised to them for their experience over the past few days.

One of the few things that cannot be said to be my responsibility, I am delighted to say, is how the Opposition parties conduct themselves, but I think that, for all that the Government got this wrong—I keep saying that because I do not want anyone to think that I am shying away from that in any way, shape or form—we also put it right, and I think that it is the Opposition that is increasingly out of touch in not recognising that the public understand how difficult the situation that we face right now is. They want a Government and leadership that accepts that sometimes we will get things wrong and we will put them right and continue to lead the country forward in the best way that we possibly can.

Housing (Evictions)

3. **Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** Like all the other speakers, I want to express our deep concern for all those who are affected by the rail accident near Stonehaven and for the emergency services that are responding, as well as the public

health professionals who are working to contain the Aberdeen outbreak.

Children, young people and their families, as well as school staff, have been through a great deal this year and we wish them the very best as schools return, and many thousands of young people have an extra reason to celebrate as an unfair policy is overturned. As the Greens warned for months, far from building back better, the Scottish Qualifications Authority downgrades would have entrenched inequality in our society.

However, that is not the only area in which the Scottish Government's action has fallen short of its rhetoric of wanting Covid recovery to be a chance for a fairer, greener and more equal society. We have also been warning for a long time that this pandemic would also lead to a housing crisis but, although the First Minister said that no one should be evicted because of the pandemic, she rejected Green proposals that would have protected private tenants and instead worked with the Conservatives to give extra help to landlords. Is she aware that there have been 350 applications for eviction orders during this crisis—that is before we even count illegal or unchallenged evictions—and that hundreds more applications are still outstanding as the First-tier Tribunal resumes its work. How can that be acceptable?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As I know Patrick Harvie is aware, the emergency legislation that we passed in the Parliament in effect halted eviction action for up to six months. He talks about applications, but no people can be evicted. That emergency legislation is currently in place until 30 September and, yesterday, we confirmed that, subject to the agreement of Parliament, it will be extended to March 2021. That underlines the continuing commitment of the Government to do everything that we can to protect tenants and prevent people from becoming homeless as a result of the pandemic. We also want to ensure that we continue our record investments in affordable housing, so that we are building the housing that is needed for this and future generations.

I am always willing to listen to views on where we can and should go further on these matters, but the protection against eviction that I have spoken about is in place right now and, if this Parliament agrees, it will be extended.

Patrick Harvie: The emergency powers that were introduced at the start of this crisis tackled the immediate issue of rough sleeping and prevented evictions until September. However, it is clear now that that is not enough, given the outstanding applications that are already in place and the new applications that have been made. Even if the temporary measure does not end in just a few weeks, there are other evictions that

take place without those applications, informally or illegally.

It is clear that every forecast shows that the pandemic will cause long-term economic damage to our most vulnerable communities. Given the timescale of eviction proceedings, those who have already lost their jobs or incomes during the pandemic could still face eviction in the middle of winter, even under the Government's current plans.

The First Minister will be aware that Andy Wightman proposed a rent freeze and a ban on any evictions as a result of the debt that this crisis has created. If the First Minister still cannot bring herself to back those policies, will she consider other measures to prevent a tidal wave of evictions this winter, or will we again be left looking to fix a crisis after the harm has been done?

The First Minister: I am genuinely not sure whether I am missing something here, so I am happy to have further discussions on the matter with Patrick Harvie and his colleagues.

With regard to Andy Wightman's past proposals, I have stood here and explained some of the reasoning behind why we did not accept some of those proposals but instead took other steps that, in some respects, had the same, or a similar, intent.

The ban on evictions that the original Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 put in place is due to expire on 30 September, but the Government wants to extend it to March 2021. I cannot say that that is definitely happening, because it is up to Parliament to vote on it, but if my party and Patrick Harvie's party vote together, there should be no block to that.

In addition, we took action in the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No 2) Act 2020 that allowed us to create a private landlord pre-action protocol that is similar to what was already in place in the social sector. It sets out specific actions that private landlords must take before they even begin to pursue eviction action. If a landlord fails to engage with the pre-action protocol and applies for an eviction order, a tribunal could refuse that order on the basis that the landlord did not meet the protocol's requirements.

We continue to work with tenant and landlord stakeholder groups to ensure that those issues are properly explored. Our clear intention is to ensure that nobody is evicted as a result of the crisis that we are living through. That is why we have put in place those measures, and I remain happy to discuss them with members on all sides of the chamber. I know that Pauline McNeill has a question on similar territory later in this question session. We remain happy to work with members

across the chamber to see whether we can reasonably take any further steps or action.

Test and Protect (Schools)

4. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): My thoughts are with those who have been affected by the derailment in Stonehaven, and I am thankful for the efforts of the emergency services.

The return of pupils to school means that there will be a whole new phase of interaction between large groups of people. I want to ask the First Minister about plans to protect those who are working and studying in schools. The Scottish Government has put in place the test and protect scheme. However, last week, the city of Aberdeen went from isolated incidents to a full regional lockdown in a matter of hours. Can the First Minister tell me why test and protect was unable to contain the virus?

Schools should be among the last institutions to close in the event of an outbreak. Is test and protect ready to protect our schools?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I will come on to schools specifically in a second.

This is part of the learning journey that we are all on. Test and protect on its own will not stop coronavirus outbreaks; we are all principally responsible for doing that. We are the first line of defence—if the virus gets through us, test and protect is the second line of defence. It is important that we all understand that, and that we communicate it to our constituents.

Test and protect has worked very effectively in Aberdeen. Without it, rather than dealing with an outbreak—albeit a large and complex one—that is, I hope, on its way to being contained, we would by now already be dealing with widespread community transmission.

The number of contacts that have been traced, and the speed at which they have been traced and contacted, is a credit to the work of test and protect. I am not complacent about that—as First Minister, one of the questions in my mind is whether, if we have several outbreaks at the same time, we have sufficient resources to deal with that. We are looking all the time at how we strengthen and improve the resilience of those arrangements, but I want to stress how well the test and protect scheme has worked, and is working, in Aberdeen, and give due credit to everybody who is involved in it.

Part of the function of test and protect is to give us intelligence and information on where an outbreak has started and what the chains of transmission are. That is why we were able, so early in the outbreak, to say that it had in all likelihood originated in the night-time economy,

which is why we took the difficult decision to close down the hospitality sector.

We should all take some confidence and assurance—albeit that that might seem counterintuitive—from how test and protect has worked, although we should not be complacent about the challenges that lie ahead in that regard.

In schools, test and protect will be available to any member of staff or young person who is symptomatic. On top of that, there will be surveillance through data gathering, which will, in the autumn, be supplemented by surveillance testing in schools.

In addition, the Deputy First Minister will, in his statement to Parliament this afternoon—I will not go into all the detail, as he will cover it—announce a further expansion of the availability of testing in schools to give greater assurance to teachers and other staff who work in our schools.

My final point—Willie Rennie and the Presiding Officer will probably be getting frustrated at the length of this answer—is a difficult one for me to communicate. In all likelihood, we will see outbreaks of coronavirus in schools—in particular, perhaps, in secondary schools. The important thing is how we contain those and make sure that they are properly dealt with. I give the chamber an assurance that that is an issue of priority focus for the Government.

Willie Rennie: I am sure that the First Minister understands that that is why people are very nervous about what might happen following the reopening of schools.

People are equally nervous about the situation as regards universities. Two weeks ago, I asked the First Minister whether she would agree to all international students being tested on arrival in the country. The policy was supported by one of her scientific advisers, Devi Sridhar. We want those students to come here, but we want them to be safe, too. The First Minister said that she was considering the proposal, but I warned her that time was running out.

We are two weeks closer to students returning. Can the First Minister tell me what has been decided? Will all international students be tested?

The First Minister: I cannot give Willie Rennie the conclusion of those discussions, because the issue is still under consideration. I have an acute understanding of how quickly the virus can spread and, therefore, of how urgent such decisions are. However, I also understand that it is important to get them right so that they are sustainable and so that we can encourage and obtain buy-in on the part of those people we expect to comply with such measures.

With the university and college sector, we are considering the matter carefully, and we will set out more detail on it shortly. As I think that Willie Rennie knows, we listen very carefully to the advice of our advisory group. Devi Sridhar, whom he cited two weeks ago and again today, is a member of that group, and we are paying very close attention to the recommendations that the group makes.

Preventing Covid-19 Transmission (Bars)

5. Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what measures the Scottish Government can put in place to prevent bars being hot spots for the spread of Covid-19. (S5F-04266)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Three significant pieces of guidance for hospitality have already been published: sector guidance that covers essential measures such as physical distancing, cleaning and hygiene; guidance on the collection of customer contact details; and guidance on additional mitigating measures for a 1m physical distance exemption.

As we announced last week, we will move guidance on to a statutory footing. Later this week, we will enhance measures on safe practices and will introduce measures to make collection of visitor details mandatory. That recognises the need to ensure that the following of guidance is not seen as optional. It is a key tool in balancing the risk between allowing the hospitality sector to operate and keeping the risk of transmission as low as possible.

Gillian Martin: It is clear that the vast majority of eating and drinking establishments in Scotland have been complying with guidance since they were allowed to reopen, but as we have seen, it takes only a small number not having robust systems in place, or not managing systems effectively, for an outbreak to happen. Willie Rennie has blamed test and protect, but it is a compliance issue—as he would know, if his North East Scotland MSP colleague ever went to NHS Grampian briefings.

Is there scope for measures to ensure that there are sanctions for businesses that do not comply with regulations and guidance? What might those sanctions look like? How can customers' concerns be raised?

The First Minister: Gillian Martin has made really good points. In short, we will continue to consider the balance between guidance and regulation, and the balance between encouraging people to do the right thing voluntarily and imposing sanctions when they do not. Enforcement is a key part of our approach, but I continue to think that it is important to encourage

people to do the right thing for the right reasons. The police have powers of enforcement across a range of the measures in question; we will continue to keep under consideration whether they have to be strengthened.

Willie Rennie was right to scrutinise the resilience of test and protect, because the issues that we are talking about are extremely important, but Gillian Martin is fundamentally right when she says that, first and foremost, keeping the virus under control is an obligation on all of us. The way I think of it is that we are the first line of defence; it is by complying with all the various measures that we keep that defence strong. When the virus gets through our defence, test and protect jumps into action, but that is then firefighting. Compliance is about giving ourselves the best chance of not starting the fires in the first place.

I make the same plea every day to businesses and individuals across the country. I ask businesses to familiarise themselves with the guidance and the law and to make sure that they are complying with it, and I ask individuals to assume, in everything that they do, that the virus is right next to them and to make sure that they are complying with the FACTS advice, because those are the things that will give us the best possible chance of keeping the virus under control.

Culture and Leisure Trusts

6. Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports that more than a third of culture and leisure trusts in Scotland may not be viable beyond six months. (S5F-04273)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): This is a really challenging time for individuals and organisations in the culture and leisure sector. We will continue to do all that we can to support them.

Obviously, it is the responsibility of individual local authorities to allocate funding based on needs and priorities, but we are working closely with partners—including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Museums Galleries Scotland, and the Scottish Library and Information Council—to understand the specific circumstances that are faced in supporting culture and leisure trusts as they seek to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

We have already taken action to support local authorities during the pandemic, through both increased and front-loaded funding for councils. We have also made funding available in other ways to deliver financial support for the creative sector.

Graham Simpson: The chair of Community Leisure UK in Scotland, Robin Strang, issued a warning for the sector in a letter to COSLA's President, Alison Evison. In it, he said that 70 per cent of his organisation's members will not be viable within 12 months.

Such trusts in Scotland have more than 1,400 facilities, including 232 libraries, 197 leisure centres, 466 outdoor sports courts and pitches, 39 theatres, 49 parks and 213 community and town halls. Those are vital to the health and wellbeing—physical and mental—of the nation. We cannot afford to let them sink. However, there have already been hundreds of redundancies.

I am sure that the First Minister will agree that this should not be a blame game—it is not. Will she therefore agree to hold crisis talks with COSLA as a matter of urgency, and to come up with a rescue plan?

The First Minister: As I said in my original answer, we are already working closely with COSLA on that issue and a range of others, and we will continue to do so. I absolutely acknowledge the impact that Graham Simpson has outlined. I do not think that there will be a single one of us in the chamber who does not understand the issues and the impacts from our constituency experiences. This is an important issue.

Like so many other areas in which we are dealing not so much with the impact of the virus itself, but with the impact of the steps that we have had to take to contain it, I am afraid that there are no easy answers in this one. However, we are determined to work with partners—in this case, with COSLA and other representative bodies—to find the best way forward. We will do so as collaboratively, but also as urgently, as possible.

Housing (Evictions)

7. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports of an increased number of evictions predicted for this autumn. (S5F-04272)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I apologise to Pauline McNeill because I am about to repeat the substance of my earlier answers to Patrick Harvie. I reiterate that no landlord should evict a tenant because they have suffered financial hardship due to the coronavirus. Instead, they should be helping their tenants to access the financial support that they need.

One of the reasons why the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning wrote to all private sector tenants was to ensure that they are aware of their rights. We also want to help tenants to remain safe in their homes during the pandemic, so we took action, through emergency

legislation, to halt eviction actions for up to six months. As I said earlier, that emergency legislation is in place until 30 September. We want, which is subject to the agreement of Parliament, to extend it until March 2021, which I hope underlines the Government's commitment to doing all that we can to protect tenants and to prevent people from becoming homeless as a result of the pandemic.

Pauline McNeill: I have previously welcomed the increased allocation of money to the discretionary housing payment fund, but it does not touch the problem. In the private rented sector, almost 45 per cent of tenants have seen a drop in their income since March. As we have heard, there are fears of mass evictions—more so because, in the next month, there will be more job losses.

I put on the record that Scottish Labour wholeheartedly supports the First Minister's announcement today. She will be aware that 25 housing and homelessness organisations called for extension of the no-evictions policy, so the extension is welcome. However, having rejected the hardship fund and the fair rents bill that I proposed, how else does the First Minister intend to help renters during this unprecedented crisis? Although it has taken some action, the Government does not seem to have a big idea to help them to survive.

The First Minister: In my response to Patrick Harvie, I already ran through some of the actions that we are taking. We will continue to look at all the steps that we are taking and consider where we can do more, including through financial support. We increased funding for discretionary housing payments in order to help people in the rented sector—Pauline McNeill alluded to that—and we have more than doubled the Scottish welfare fund.

As we put together a programme for Government for the year ahead and look ahead to our budget process, making sure that we help people financially and in other ways with the impact of the crisis will be uppermost in our minds. Clearly, that includes people who are struggling to pay the rent and those who face homelessness. I know that there is genuine willingness right across the chamber to be constructive as we try to come up with the right approaches, which is why I look forward to continuing to have discussions with members including Pauline McNeill, and to being prepared to listen to any suggestions that come forward.

The Presiding Officer: We have a number of supplementary questions. The first is from Angela Constance, to be followed by Maurice Corry.

St John's Hospital Children's Ward (Reopening)

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): I have some great news today—NHS Lothian has announced that it is going to reopen the children's ward at St John's hospital on a 24/7 basis come October. I am grateful to the health secretary, national health service staff and everyone who has worked with local families.

Will the First Minister pay tribute to West Lothian parents for their tenacity in campaigning hard for this much-loved service, but also for doing so positively to build the strongest case for this much-needed service? Can we now look forward to stability and security for our children's ward?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am absolutely delighted to welcome NHS Lothian's decision to reinstate the paediatric in-patient service at St John's on a 24/7 basis from 19 October. It has undertaken considerable recruitment efforts to ensure that the service can safely be resumed on a 24/7 basis. I hope that everybody will agree that patient safety must always be the paramount concern, particularly when it is the health and care of children that is at stake.

I absolutely pay tribute to West Lothian parents who have campaigned to have the full service reinstated. They have, I think, been excellent in making the case on behalf of their children and their communities. The Government has always wanted to get to this position, but we and NHS Lothian had to ensure that it was done safely. This is a really positive day for St John's and for West Lothian.

Finally, I pay tribute as well to Angela Constance, who has assiduously stood up for her constituents on this really important issue.

Dyslexia Assessments

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Qualified dyslexia assessors have contacted me to tell me of the significant difficulties that many people are having in booking their appointments for assessments during the pandemic, which have in some cases worsened the mental wellbeing of people who are already vulnerable. With a severe backlog in face-to-face assessment bookings, which will not resume until phase 4, what detailed support can the First Minister offer to professional assessors who feel that they cannot do their jobs to the best of their ability?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank the member for raising what is a really important issue. I think that everybody appreciates the reasons why face-to-face assessments are not always possible at the moment, but we want to get

those services back to normal functioning as soon as possible.

I am very happy to take away the particular issue of dyslexia appointments and to write to the member in more detail, giving as far as I can some detail on the likely timing of the restoration of face-to-face assessments and the steps that we can take in the meantime to support people who do not have those opportunities. I will make sure that that is done as quickly as possible.

Party Houses (Covid Security)

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I have raised with the First Minister my constituents' concerns about a so-called party house in West Linton, where the proprietor, Michael Cameron, is apparently defying Covid security measures. For example, one weekend, 30 men from London at a stag do were too drunk for the police to safely disperse them. Does the First Minister agree that that attitude beggars belief and that it could cause a spike in the virus not only locally, but beyond?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I agree. That conduct is not responsible in the circumstances that we live in. The guidance is very clear that large numbers of people from different family groups should not gather in shared accommodation for leisure purposes such as stag and hen parties. The rules that govern circumstances in which people can spend time with friends and family apply both at home and away from home at any type of holiday accommodation.

We have seen in Aberdeen what can happen with gatherings that do not adhere to the guidance, particularly where alcohol is involved. We expect guests to comply with the guidelines and we absolutely expect accommodation providers to act responsibly when letting larger properties. The recovery of our tourism and hospitality sectors is at a very fragile stage, and I urge everyone to play a full and responsible part in supporting that recovery while, of course, keeping Covid suppressed.

Rest and Be Thankful (Closure)

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The First Minister will be aware that the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful is closed again as a result of a major land slip last week. I am sure that she will want to join me in thanking those who are working hard to reopen the road. However, all the political leaders in Argyll and Bute Council, Mike Russell, Donald Cameron and I have jointly written to the First Minister to press the case for more action to be taken, because the economic impact on the area is devastating. Will the First Minister agree to convene the A83 task force as a matter of urgency

to focus on finding a permanent solution, and finding it quickly?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Jackie Baillie for raising that extremely serious issue. I also thank all the travellers and services who are involved for their forbearance and their work.

We must find a solution. Michael Matheson raised the issue at Cabinet yesterday, and he is seeking to take forward that joined-up approach to determining the best way forward. I assure members that the issue is of the utmost priority to the Government. Clearly, there is a lot of work to be done on developing a solution, and we will keep Parliament updated.

Social Security Support (Return to School)

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): As the First Minister has said, it is very welcome news that our schools are going back today. However, as she has also said, there will be anxiety—which will have a number of sources—associated with that return. What social security support is the Scottish Government providing for families whose children are returning to school?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): That is an important issue. I am sure that this morning's return to school provoked a mix of emotions in young people and parents including excitement and relief, probably for parents, but also a degree of anxiety and nervousness. However, for some families across the country, the financial cost of the return to school is also a real consideration.

Many parents and carers will be eligible for the best start grant school-age payment, which is the most important form of support that we provide. It provides £250 to parents and carers who receive certain benefits or tax credits and have a child who is old enough to start primary school. Parents do not need to take up a school place to get the money. If someone is home schooling or they have deferred their child's start date, they can still apply for the best start grant.

Parents and carers may also be eligible for the school clothing grant and for free school meals. I would encourage everybody to go and find the details of that, which can be found on the Scottish Government website.

Aberdeen Lockdown (Guidance)

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind): The First Minister's announcement regarding the extension of the restrictions in Aberdeen is understandable but, nonetheless, it will come as a disappointment to many across my constituency.

At yesterday's topical questions, I asked the health secretary about a specific issue that has been raised with me by a number of constituents who rely on the support of grandparents to look after children where, for example, the grandparents stay in Aberdeenshire and the family stays in the city, or vice versa. Some of those constituents are teachers who are welcoming pupils back to school today, and they rely on that family support to care for their children.

What assurance can the First Minister give me that there will be clear guidance about whether those arrangements are possible, so that alternatives can be sourced, if necessary?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I know the difficulties that the restrictions are causing for people in Aberdeen. Once I have left the chamber, I will look specifically at that particular case to see whether we need to provide further guidance in order to give clarity. At the moment, the advice is that people should not be going into other people's houses unless they have already formed an extended household group or they have caring responsibilities. That is the guidance, but if there is a need to make any aspect of that clearer, I will undertake to ensure that that is done later on.

I very much hope that the restrictions in Aberdeen are not in place for too much longer. They will be reviewed again in seven days, and we will lift some or all of them as quickly as we can. However, it is important not only that we have them in place right now, but that people comply with them. We will try to support people in Aberdeen with guidance to make that easier to understand, as much as we can.

Aberdeen Lockdown (Hospitality Restrictions)

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): In order that the many establishments that abided by the rules in Aberdeen are not further disadvantaged by the few, will the Scottish Government ask the Treasury to extend the eat out to help out scheme to support hospitality when the city reopens, and will it consider reopening cafes that do not have an alcohol licence?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, we will make that case to the United Kingdom Government. That would be a reasonable case to make, and I hope that it will be prepared to listen.

The issue of cafes was discussed at the incident management team resilience officials meeting, which formulated the advice that came to ministers about continuing the restrictions. They looked at whether the restrictions could be lifted for some parts of hospitality, but the clear advice is that at this stage it would not be safe or sensible to do that. However, we will continue to review whether

the restrictions need to be in place at all and, if they do, whether they can be lifted from any part of hospitality. We want to ensure that they are not in place for longer than is necessary, and that while any restrictions have to be in place there is proportionality to them.

Raptor Persecution

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): In 1998, the late Donald Dewar rightly called the persecution of birds of prey in Scotland a “national disgrace”, and 22 years on it remains a national disgrace.

The grouse shooting season begins today, and this week we have learned of the disappearance of a golden eagle on a grouse moor, which followed closely the news of a poisoned sea eagle. Sadly, such shocking events are far from rare. Indeed, a senior RSPB Scotland conservation officer has said:

“You become a little numb to it. You’re almost ... waiting for the next one.”

Scotland should be a haven for wildlife: it should not be a haven for wildlife crime. When will the First Minister finally act to end raptor persecution in Scotland once and for all?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I understand how serious those issues are, and also how understandably and legitimately upset people are about the issues that Alison Johnstone outlined.

Wildlife crime is a priority for Police Scotland. The Government is reviewing the law and guidance around those issues in a range of ways. I will ask the environment secretary to write to Alison Johnstone with an update on the Government’s considerations on those issues as soon as possible.

Adult Day Care and Respite Services

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Two weeks ago, I asked the First Minister to give my constituents clarity about the timescales for reopening adult day care and respite services. The First Minister said that she would look into it and come back with detail very soon. I thank her for her reply. However, the response that I received yesterday said no more than what we already knew, and detailed guidance is still not available.

Can the First Minister please give some indication—especially for the families who think that they are always left behind—of what is happening with those much-needed services?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I thank Beatrice Wishart for raising that issue again. I am glad she referred to the letter. I was sure that I remembered signing off a reply to her in the last

couple of days. I have given as much information as I am able to give right at this moment. However, I undertake to write to her again as soon as we are able to give more clarity on dates and timescales.

I absolutely understand that feeling of perhaps not really being on the priority list, in particular for families in Beatrice Wishart’s constituency. I want to assure them that that is not the case. We are dealing with a whole range of complex issues about determining things that are safe—or as safe as possible—to do, and in what order and what way. We are trying to ensure that relevant guidance is developed with the right clinical input as quickly as possible.

I will ask the health secretary to look at that issue again in the light of the member’s question, and will endeavour to give as much additional information as I can, as quickly as possible.

NHS Dental Services

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): A survey that was published last week by the British Dental Association Scotland revealed that 52 per cent of largely or exclusively national health service practices and 86 per cent of mixed practices predicted a reduction in NHS work during the next year because of the Covid-19 pandemic’s impact on the provision on NHS dental services.

Given the precarious position that dental practices face, what additional financial support will be provided to ensure the viability of those practices? Without that, there is a real possibility that dentistry in Scotland will quickly move towards a two-tier system with reduced access for NHS patients.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): There is not, and there should not be seen to be, a two-tier system of oral healthcare. If dental practices are ready to do so, they can provide aerosol-generating procedures on patients with urgent dental problems from 17 August. We have 75 urgent dental care centres throughout Scotland, to which patients continue to be referred.

On funding, we recognise the pressures that Covid is bringing to bear on all aspects of our health service and all areas of our economy. We will continue to work with the dental profession and seek to provide whatever support that we can.

We are already making exceptional payments to the value of around £12 million per month to support national health service dental incomes, which shows the degree of financial help that is being provided to meet the challenge of these difficult times. We will continue to look at what more we can do on dental practices, as with all other areas.

Domestic Abuse (Clackmannanshire)

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): The First Minister will be as concerned as I am that Clackmannanshire Council—the smallest council in Scotland—has had the second highest rate of domestic abuse incidents in Scotland during lockdown. Clackmannanshire Women's Aid has said that the problem is so severe that it might not be able to cope in providing assistance to people as lockdown eases. What urgent action will the Scottish Government put in place to ensure that women, children and young people receive the support that they require?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As a result of Alexander Stewart's question, I will ask my officials to liaise with Scottish Women's Aid, particularly in Clackmannanshire, to see whether we can offer any support.

Around the United Kingdom and further afield, we and others acknowledged from the start of the pandemic that lockdown would create its own serious problems. The potential for domestic abuse was undoubtedly one of those problems. We have already made available additional resources to organisations working in that field so that the helpline could continue during the pandemic.

We take domestic abuse extremely seriously, as does Police Scotland. When the chief constable took part in one of the daily updates with me, he made it clear that, notwithstanding the difficulties and restrictions of the pandemic, anybody who feels at risk or under threat of domestic violence should contact the police, who will respond appropriately.

We will continue to do what we can to support the front-line organisations that are supporting women or anybody who is subject to the threat of domestic abuse.

Teachers (Shielding)

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western)

(LD): This morning, I took receipt of the first batch of responses from local authorities to freedom of information requests about teachers who have spent lockdown shielding and are expected to return to work this week. There are 151 such teachers in North Ayrshire and 134 in Glasgow. Those numbers paint a picture of thousands of teachers and thousands more pupils who are in the most vulnerable categories and who are expected to return to the school environment with Covid still at large. For teachers and pupils at the upper end of secondary schools, their anxiety must be all the more acute.

The First Minister told Willie Rennie that she expects outbreaks in schools to take place. What reassurance can she give to people in vulnerable

groups that they are safe to be in school, and what measures will she ask schools to employ to keep them safe?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Those are important issues and I seek to give assurance in a number of ways. First, the advice that we give people who are in the shielded category is not given lightly. We consider it carefully and it is informed by clinical and expert opinion, which will continue to be the case. Our advice that shielding could pause from the start of August was advice that we agonised over and that we will keep under review.

Before I go on to schools, I note that we have produced workplace guidance for people who are in the shielded category and their employers to ensure that the right considerations are taken into account to make workplaces safe.

In schools, the guidance has put in place a number of mitigating factors to ensure that schools are safe and that the right protections are there. Again, we will keep that under close review. The Deputy First Minister will cover more of this ground when he makes a statement to Parliament this afternoon, which will include extensions to the position around testing.

We will not hesitate to change the advice and guidance that we give people in the shielded category if we think that that is necessary. By keeping the virus under control, we all have a responsibility to help to ensure that that is not necessary. On an on-going basis, we are seeking to develop the range of information that we give people so that they are better able to assess their own risk in the particular area in which they live.

These issues will be under review literally daily.

Schools (Reopening)

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw)

(SNP): I am sure that all members in the chamber wish pupils who are returning to school this week the very best in what are unprecedented times.

Will the First Minister extend her thanks to the education recovery group for its co-operative work in developing the protocols that are in place to ensure that staff, pupils and teachers can have confidence that the best measures are in place to avoid Covid-19 outbreaks?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I record my thanks to everybody who has been working hard to help us through Covid and make sure that the right guidance is in place to help people to return safely to schools or other workplaces. The education recovery group has not had an easy task, but it has done a really good job.

As I said in my previous answer, all aspects of the guidance on schools will be kept under review,

as will any emerging evidence from Scotland, the United Kingdom or any other part of the world.

I take the opportunity to thank teachers, support staff, janitors, cleaners, caterers and everybody else who works in our schools, who have done a huge amount of work but who, as parents and family members themselves, will also be feeling a sense of anxiety right now, just as young people are. It is important to acknowledge that and give as much assurance as we can that we will continue to strive to make sure that the right protections are in place.

Train Derailment (Contact Information)

Bill Bowman (North East Scotland) (Con): I join Ruth Davidson, the First Minister and others who have expressed their shock and concern at the events that are unfolding in Aberdeenshire today.

The First Minister has said that many agencies will be involved, and many people will be very concerned that they have friends or loved ones who are involved. Is there a central point of contact that they can access to get information about those concerns?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): That is an important suggestion, and I undertake to act on it later on. I am sure that members will understand that I mean no disrespect to Parliament when I say that I am anxious to get out of the chamber so that I can be updated on the current situation and make sure that all the practical arrangements are being put into place.

As I said earlier, I spoke to Network Rail, the police and the fire service just before coming to the chamber. The details that were available then were minimal because it is an on-going incident and it has happened in a location that is difficult for emergency services to access. I know and appreciate that many families will be anxious if they believe that their relatives were on the train.

We will do everything that we can to make sure that the emergency services and families are supported, and that there is a clear point of contact. It may be that while we have been in the chamber, the emergency services have already put that in place. If not, we will make sure that there is a point of contact that anybody who has worries about their relatives or friends can access over the course of the day.

13:32

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Return to School

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Before we get on to business, I remind members of that thing called social distancing, because it appears that we have not been too good at it at some points today. I remind members not to slip into bad habits. I am not looking at anybody in particular; I just happened to land my eyes on Brian Whittle. It has nothing to do with you—you look guilty, though. [*Laughter.*]

The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney on ensuring a safe and welcoming return to school for children, young people and staff. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): The day our children start school for the first time is a moment that every parent remembers. However, I am aware that, in some parts of the country, although plans were in place to open schools today, roads have been closed due to severe flooding following last night's storms. A number of schools in Aberdeen city, Aberdeenshire, East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Fife, Highland and Perth and Kinross have sustained damage or have been made difficult to access, and others have been unable to open as planned. For those schools, it was definitely not the start of term that they were planning for, and the weather issues will be the subject of a resilience call this afternoon.

Elsewhere across the country, parents have proudly dressed their children in school uniform for the first time, taken photographs and led them off to school. I know that it is a day that I will never forget.

For older children, the start of the school year is equally a milestone. For many, it might be the first time for months that they have seen, met and spoken to their peers. I am sure that there will be much joy and laughter, along with the excitement of a new teacher, a new classroom and, perhaps, new classmates. Each year marks a step in their growth towards maturity and adulthood. Every year is special, and this year is even more so.

Lockdown's grip was signalled most powerfully by the closure of our schools. Nothing else quite captured the seriousness of the pandemic as much as the fact that we were forced to send children home from school. Schools that had stayed open through world wars and national crises closed their gates, such was the power of

the pandemic. That is why this week marks a milestone, not just in our children's lives, but in our nation's recovery from Covid. This week's reopening of our schools is a step towards growth and renewal.

I know that some people are anxious. That is not surprising, given that it is a momentous step that evokes mixed emotions. On top of all the worry that parents feel every year, everyone knows that the virus is still out there, so people rightly ask how we will keep our schools safe and how we will support our teachers, pupils and young people through the weeks and months ahead. Given all that our nation has gone through and the pain and sacrifice that people have endured, it is a question that we must face and must answer.

The Scottish Government made a choice some time ago. Schools are of such critical importance to the life and wellbeing of our children and of our nation that we could not keep them closed for a moment longer than necessary. We knew that every day they remained closed, although it kept staff and pupils safe from the virus, it imposed other harms on them, on our society and on our collective future. That could not be ignored, so the Government decided that schools must be a priority.

We decided that, as we eased lockdown, we would forgo opening other parts of society and we would give up the chance to do so many of the things that we all enjoy and used to take for granted in order that we could get children back to school. That meant that we had to say "Not yet" to the impassioned pleas of other sectors. It meant that we had to look them in the eye and tell them that they had to stay closed and could not return because there was a higher priority—the return to schooling of our children. This week, at last, that choice bears fruit, and our schools can reopen.

I want to take a moment to recognise that, even while our school buildings have been closed, our school communities have not been. Across the country, thousands of teachers have worked tirelessly to reach out to their pupils through online learning. It was difficult, it was stressful, and it was a shift that proved hard for many, but the dedication and commitment of so many was plain to see, and I should not pass by the opportunity to record my thanks to them for their efforts in these most trying of times.

As we have been planning for the return to school, we have seen that there are real concerns that we must address. Last week's survey by the Educational Institute of Scotland had responses from almost 30,000 teachers. That is the largest return that the EIS has ever had to a survey. It confirmed that 60 per cent of teachers supported the decision to reopen schools, but that a similar

figure had expressed anxiety and a lack of confidence that sufficient mitigations would be in place to make them feel safe.

This morning, I visited Monifieth high school in Angus, where I met pupils and staff at the start of the school day. The preparations that had been made were impressive and the commitment of staff to make them work was beyond question. However, there was an underlying anxiety and uncertainty about what lay ahead, because the arrangements in the school are going to be different. I understand that anxiety and uncertainty, and I give the assurance that I will work constantly to address such concerns. I say to all pupils, teachers and staff that the Government has been listening to the views of all those groups. We will continue to do so, and we will be guided by the latest scientific advice.

Today, I have published a note from the chief medical officer, which summarises the latest science in relation to Covid-19 and schools. The key points in that note are as follows.

The most important factor in reopening schools is the level of community prevalence of Covid-19. We have a very encouraging picture there. Although the situation in Aberdeen reminds us that we need to stay on our guard, the national trend is remarkable. We estimate that, on 31 July, there were around 25 new cases of Covid-19 in Scotland, compared with around 780 on 15 May. The estimated number of people in the whole of Scotland who were infectious on 31 July was around 275. That is in stark contrast to the estimated 10,000 cases on 15 May. Such is the scale of the reduction.

The evidence in relation to young people is equally positive. In Scotland, there have been no Covid-19-related deaths of people under the age of 15, and fewer than 1 per cent of such deaths have involved people aged under 45 years. As at 3 August, fewer than 1 per cent of cases of Covid-19 in Scotland had involved children aged under 15, and around 2 per cent involved children and young people aged under 20. There have been no cases linked to any community school hubs, which have been open throughout the pandemic.

There is strong consensus on a wide range of evidence on other aspects of Covid-19 and schools. For example, children who are infected with the virus tend to become less ill. Linked to that, children are less likely than adults to transmit Covid-19, whether to each other or to adults. That partly explains the international cases in which there have been community outbreaks involving schools, in that it appears most likely that transmission has happened in the community and not in the school.

That is not to say that we can drop our guard at any stage. The reopening of schools will involve mitigating measures such as enhanced hand hygiene, more frequent cleaning regimes and social distancing by and from adults. All those measures are based on clear scientific evidence that applies to children and young people as well as to adults.

There are a variety of views about face coverings. Some studies suggest that, given the low risk of transmission by children, the detrimental developmental impacts of extended use of such coverings may be greater than their potential protective benefit.

There is irrefutable evidence about the value of schools themselves. Not going to school results in considerable harm to children's educational advancement, wider development and mental wellbeing. Not being in school also means that children and young people are less likely to be in contact with people who could identify harm, and that the impact on those from disadvantaged backgrounds is likely to be disproportionate.

I assure Parliament that ministers will be monitoring developments and progress closely. Covid-19 has created a new pandemic, and we are following the science keenly as it emerges.

Reopening schools is clearly a new development. That is why I am pleased to announce that we are putting in place a programme of enhanced surveillance to allow us to monitor progress and react quickly to developments on the ground. From now—the start of term—that will include the full application in schools of the test and protect system, outbreak management, and rapid testing for all those with symptoms. Schools will be able to register so that staff with symptoms can be referred for priority access to testing as key workers, as well as being able to self-refer. There will be close on-going monitoring of the virus in schools and among school-aged children and staff—again from the start of term.

We are pulling together data from a range of sources so that we have a single, clear data set to allow us all to track progress over time. For example, we will ensure that the education recovery group is briefed regularly on parameters such as Covid rates in school-aged children and young people and teachers, and on school absences.

The data set will be enhanced over the autumn as we introduce other measures, which will include a new record linkage study to allow us to track and compare risks in different staff groups from next month; a new programme of serology testing, also from next month, to measure over time levels of antibodies in staff; and a programme of

polymerase chain reaction testing of pupils and staff from a sample of schools, which is designed to cast more light on transmission and prevalence for older pupils and staff in schools from October.

Taken together, those surveillance measures will allow us to report regularly against key parameters and make rapid adjustments in the light of evidence of developments on the ground, whether to tighten measures—nationally or locally—or to reintroduce currently restricted activities, such as assemblies or singing.

However, the surveillance programme is just one element of our plan. We recognise that the staff in our schools and nurseries are worried about the children and, understandably, their own risks. Bluntly, this is a new and frightening virus. It is entirely reasonable for our staff to be concerned about their health and to want to understand what we are doing to keep them safe. More than that, I know that they are often horrified at the idea that anything that they do as an adult might risk the health of the young people in their care.

So today I can announce that we are extending the testing programme. Teachers, nursery and school staff who are concerned that they may have been exposed to infection can now be tested for Covid-19 on demand, even if they show no symptoms. The step has been taken to provide additional reassurance to teachers and other staff as children and young people return to the classroom and to nursery. It is vital that those measures offer credible reassurance to all who have expressed anxiety about the reopening of schools.

That work is set in the context of the moral and educational imperative of delivering education to every one of our children and young people. That drive must lie at the heart of all that we do.

I want to restate our vision and ambition for education in Scotland. Our collective aim is to achieve excellence and equity for all children. Our education recovery mission must be to further improve Scottish education and accelerate progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

However, we must recognise that, even as we rededicate ourselves to that task, our schools are not fully returning to normal. There will be changes, restrictions and constraints. The virus is still with us, so we will provide support. As previously announced, we are making a total additional investment of £135 million to ensure that our children, young people and staff can be welcomed safely back into schools. That includes £80 million to bring additional teachers and staff into Scotland's classrooms in the new school year to promote education recovery, renewal and a more resilient education system.

The funding is sufficient for local authorities to recruit approximately 1,400 additional qualified teachers, with the final numbers determined by the precise mix of staff recruited and the needs of children and young people. We expect that those additional teachers will provide a range of additional support to help to reframe the recovery work, including supporting schools to alter class sizes and composition where possible, as set out in the guidance.

We are in no doubt that there have been negative impacts of a prolonged period out of school during lockdown. Now is the time to inject energy, pace and a renewed focus on all children achieving their potential. All staff have a vital role in that and, as the new term begins, additional staff can offer support to groups of learners who need more intense support and cover classes for teachers who are self-isolating. They will also be vital in responding to any further local outbreaks of the virus, which could necessitate the implementation of contingency plans for blended learning for a period. In addition, we have been working with the General Teaching Council for Scotland to ensure that retired teachers and registered teachers who are not currently teaching can quickly get back into the profession wherever that proves necessary.

The return to school signals a milestone in the country's recovery from the pandemic. That is important. It is also important that we continue to focus on the mental health and wellbeing of our children, our young people and our staff working in schools.

I have previously indicated that, as people return to school, wellbeing should be a central consideration. It is essential that that remains the case. We know that education authorities and schools have in place whole-school and targeted approaches to support children and young people as they return. That will include counselling support provided through schools, which will be available from this year across Scotland.

In preparation for the return to school, Education Scotland has published new guidance on the resources that are available to support children and young people's learning about their wellbeing, and to support their wellbeing. We are also working through the education recovery group to develop new resources that are designed to support the wellbeing of school staff.

All those measures will enable children and young people to reconnect to their schools, their friends and their learning, and to benefit once again from the care and support that schools provide.

The virus has imposed many restrictions. It has closed our schools, locked down our society and

taken many lives, but we are determined, and we have made a choice: our children are our priority and we will give them back their friends, their classmates and their daily routine.

I remind Parliament that school has always been about more than learning—it is about joy, friendship, community and growth. The virus is still with us, but I make this pledge to the pupils, parents and teachers of Scotland: we will keep our children safe; we will keep staff safe; we will keep our schools safe; and we will get our children back to school.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I intend to allow about 40 minutes for questions on the cabinet secretary's statement. That sounds like a lot, but 21 members want to ask questions, so the usual caveats apply.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I, too, pay tribute to those who have worked relentlessly to keep schools open during the lockdown and to get them reopened, reacting quickly to policy shifts with patience and a lot of enthusiasm. That tribute is for all school staff, teachers, council workers, transport drivers, and for parents, who have become de facto teachers over the past few months. We wish them all the best this week.

Having spoken to many parents and teachers this week, I know that questions remain, which I will go straight into. The first question is about school safety. We know from a survey that the majority of teachers do not feel safe today. Social media is awash with teachers and parents' concerns about the sheer volume of people in one place and the inability to properly social distance. What can be done to reassure those who raise concerns about whether schools are safe places?

My second question is about personal protective equipment. Anyone who wants protection must get it. We know that the cost of making schools safe already far outweighs the financial support that councils have been given. If they ask for more resource, funding or equipment to make schools safe, will the cabinet secretary reassure them that they will get what they need?

Thirdly, we know that localised clusters will occur. What assurances can we give to parents that schools will be the last to close and the first to reopen, that we will deal with outbreaks proportionately, through fast testing and tracing, and that schools will reopen quickly and safely? The primary concern of the Government must be that not a single day of our children's vital education will be unavoidably lost.

John Swinney: The first of Jamie Greene's three questions is on school safety. That is a fundamental question. The issue of physical distancing has been considered at length by the scientific advisory group that advises the

education recovery group and by the ERG itself. The guidance is clear about the position on physical distancing and where it is appropriate for that to be maintained. In response to the guidance, schools have been trying to minimise the opportunities for gatherings of individuals in congested spaces.

I saw at first hand the steps that have been taken in Monifieth high school, and I have also seen the measures that have been put in place in other settings. Ensuring that staff confidence is built and that the guidance is implemented, followed and deployed proportionately in all school settings is an on-going challenge.

On the second question, any PPE that is required for the delivery of educational or support services within a school should be provided. There should be no question about that. On the question of funding, the Government has already made available to local authorities £20 million to meet those costs, and we have indicated that a further £30 million is available, should it be required to meet the costs of reopening schools.

I am glad that Mr Greene acknowledged the possibility of localised closures happening in future. In my statement, I went through, in considerable detail, the measures that we have put in place to monitor and assess the prevalence of coronavirus as part of our wider efforts to suppress community transmission. There will be extensive monitoring, which will be supplemented to look at the position emerging among schools and young people. Obviously, if there is a necessity for us to take the proportionate action of the closure of a facility, that action will be taken. The Government and local authority partners will be determined to reopen facilities only when it is safe to do so and appropriate measures have been undertaken. That will be done as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are two members who appear to want to ask questions, but who have not pressed their request-to-speak buttons. If you do not press them, I will not call you.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): This is a welcome day, as schools return. I want to pay tribute to teachers, school staff and council officials who have worked so hard to make it happen. Of course, it was made even more challenging when weeks of planning for blended learning and social distancing were overturned at the last minute, but they did it and we can celebrate schools reopening today.

Above all, let me wish pupils the best of luck. They have had a hard time, and returning will be tough in many ways, too. I offer a special word for those who are starting school for the first time ever

today. Indulge me, Presiding Officer, if I mention Leo and Soren—my own grandsons, who are in day 1 of primary 1 today. *[Applause.]* Pictures are available.

Mr Swinney referred to the EIS survey that showed that most teachers support the return, and that is true. However, it also showed—and he acknowledged this—that only one in five is comfortable with the mitigations that are in place. More testing will certainly help, but what further mitigations will be explored? Since smaller class sizes is clearly a mitigation that could help, how many extra teachers does Mr Swinney believe are actually in place?

John Swinney: I wish Mr Gray's grandchildren well as they start school, and I am sure that it has been a very exciting day. I hope that they got some sleep last night, which is more than can be said for the Swinney household, due to the presence of thunder and lightning in Perthshire for most of the night.

Mr Gray asked a substantive question about the attitudes of teachers, and I have openly acknowledged that there is anxiety and nervousness. I can say that we have had extensive dialogue with teaching professional associations and other staff trade unions to formulate the guidance, and I appreciate their constructive contribution to the process. We have listened carefully to some of the issues, and I hope that what I have said today about testing strengthens the confidence that members of staff feel.

However, I would add that there must be a commitment to engage in further dialogue with the professional associations as the days go on and as we begin to see the issues that emerge from the process of opening schools. There is a meeting of the education recovery group on Friday to assess how the first few days have taken their course. The education recovery group will meet regularly to continue that review and reflection, and I remain open to any further changes in the guidance that would be of assistance.

I have heard public commentary from the EIS general secretary about face coverings, and my mind is by no means closed on that question, in relation to the guidance that we have put out already.

The recruitment of teachers is an issue for local authorities. The Government has made the resources available to local authorities. We do not yet have an update on the recruitment that has been undertaken, but as soon as that is available, I will share it with Parliament as appropriate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I hope that we can now move on a little more swiftly with questions and answers.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance sight of his statement. I have two brief questions. The enhanced surveillance testing programme is welcome, but why is it not ready now, and why will it take until October before it is fully operational?

Further to that, the provision of further testing for any teacher who wants it is welcome. Will it be for teachers to request or will it be regularly and proactively offered, particularly for teachers in areas such as Aberdeen that are experiencing a local outbreak?

John Swinney: On Ross Greer's first question, the enhanced surveillance programme is taking time for us to build up. Our experience throughout the pandemic is that we have needed to build capacity. However, I assure Mr Greer that in advance of that happening, there is a range of other surveillance measures and mechanisms in place for which we can use existing testing capacity, and we can use other data sets to create a strong picture of any issues that require to be resolved.

On the second question, testing will be available where teachers request it. This is an important point: teachers have to come forward for that. I have set out a position whereby any teacher with concerns can use that route to secure a test, and a test will be delivered to them.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): Following Iain Gray's question about extra staff, I want to know how long it will be before all the extra staff are on the ground. People need security, so what job security will they have? Will the situation mean that every newly qualified teacher will have a job?

John Swinney: Those detailed recruitment issues are for local government. The Scottish Government does not employ teachers; we allocate resources. We have reached an agreement with local authorities about the recruitment of staff and I am confident that local authorities will utilise those resources to the full.

In relation to the timescale, local authorities will wish to press ahead with recruitment at the earliest opportunity to ensure that they have the maximum opportunity to benefit from the contribution that the new staff can make to their efforts.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have been a bit easy on multiple questions from members but, unfortunately, that means that the cabinet secretary has to take longer to answer. That eats into time, so I ask members to please keep it to just one question.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I want to ask the cabinet secretary about

wellbeing, which he mentioned in his opening statement.

These are unprecedented times, before which there was already recognition that counselling is needed in schools. What progress has been made in ensuring that counsellors are available in our schools? What parts can the wider community and third sector organisations play in supporting wellbeing in our schools?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There were a couple of questions in there. Perhaps we will get to having just one question, at some point.

John Swinney: A number of schools have existing relationships with organisations that support the wellbeing of their staff. At Monifieth high school this morning, I heard about recruitment decisions that the school has made to invest in assisting, improving and strengthening the mental wellbeing of young people in the school.

The wider roll-out of the programme of mental health counsellors will be completed by October, which will fulfil the Government's commitment to putting that capacity in place around the country.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am sure that we all hope that blended learning, even restricted to localised clusters, will not be necessary. However, in the event that it is necessary, it is important that the digital poverty issues that I have repeatedly raised be addressed.

On 23 July, the cabinet secretary told me that laptops would be with students by "the start of term". Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the Scottish Government has distributed all 25,000 of the promised laptops to the pupils who need them, or to their schools?

John Swinney: I have tried to make it clear to Jamie Halcro Johnston that the Government cannot distribute laptops to individual pupils: that is for local authorities and schools to undertake. Twenty thousand Chromebooks will have been shipped from the suppliers to local authorities by this Friday, and the remaining 5,000 will be shipped to local authorities by the end of next week, 21 August. It will be for local authorities to distribute them to pupils at that time.

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary confirm that, despite the specifics of the advice to schools, the overall guiding principles for pupils, teachers and parents are those that are set out in the FACTS guidance?

John Swinney: It is important that the guidance be put in place and that it is followed assiduously at local level to ensure safe reopening of schools. We have to make sure that staff, pupils and parents are assured of the safety of the school

environment. That has been at the heart of the work to formulate the guidance and to ensure that it can be put in place.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I welcome the additional mitigation measures for teachers and other school staff.

I have been contacted by a parent who is concerned about face coverings. She has two children, aged 14 and 17, who are required to wear face coverings on public transport and in shops, churches, museums and libraries, but not in school, where they are in daily contact with many people. Will the cabinet secretary review the guidance, particularly for older children, and consider a requirement to wear face masks?

John Swinney: We have had specialist advice from the expert advisory group on that issue, and the position that is set out in the guidance reflects that advice. That said, as I said to Iain Gray, my mind is far from closed on the question. I appreciate the specific contrast that Jackie Baillie referred to in her question, between the requirements outwith schools and the position in schools. My mind is open on the question.

As I highlighted in my statement, use of face coverings in schools might well inhibit young people's ability to have a strong educational experience, but that has to be counterbalanced by the clinical advice that we receive. However, my mind is far from closed on the question, and I think that the education recovery group will return to it in its subsequent discussions.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary's announcement today regarding testing if required or requested.

In the chamber, exactly seven weeks ago on 24 June, I asked the cabinet secretary to plan with councils to ensure that our kids and teachers are safe, in going back to school this week. Does he believe that everything has been done to minimise risk and ensure that it is safe to return to school, and does he agree that parents want their children back at school?

John Swinney: I think that parents in general want their children back at school, because they understand and can see the significant benefits to their children and young people of being at school. However, there will be parents who have anxieties and worries about the process. It is therefore critical that the measures that are included in the guidance are properly applied in all school settings, so that parents can be assured.

I know from the range of material that I have seen from around the education community in Scotland that there has been significant investment of time and energy in advising parents

about the arrangements that will be put in place, and that must be maintained by schools for a sustained period.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Last night, I hosted a Zoom call with local parent councils. Although they welcome the reopening of schools, their question is this: if circumstances arise in which schools have to close again, on what basis will such a decision be made? In particular, who will make that decision, what will the criteria be, and will there be a difference between school outbreaks and community outbreaks?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I thought that we were getting single questions, but there we go.

John Swinney: If a school has two positive cases in a 14-day period, that will be defined as an outbreak. In the event of there being any positive cases in a school, the school should contact the local health protection team. There will then be a discussion, and the action that is taken might vary depending on the circumstances and composition of the outbreak.

I assure Daniel Johnson—I would welcome his passing this on to the parent councils with which he had the discussion—that very focused attention will be paid to any outbreaks that occur in proximity to a school.

As I said in my statement, the most effective way that we can protect schools is to minimise community transmission, which is at the heart of the test-and-protect arrangements that we have put in place. There will be a very focused discussion about that. Schools will take advice from local health protection teams on what appropriate action should be taken. That action must be taken in a timeous fashion in order to protect access to education for children and young people.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I ask this question as a father of a kid who went into primary 2 today. I thank his school and North Lanarkshire Council for all that they have done to make him and us feel safe, which was very evident at the gates.

Before I ask my question, I would like to take this opportunity, as a parent and not as an MSP, to thank the cabinet secretary. Both he and the First Minister have given everything in putting our young people first and working tirelessly over the summer, in the midst of a global pandemic, so that we could see the scenes such as I saw today at my son's school, for example—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr MacGregor, I understand, but please ask a question.

Fulton MacGregor: Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer. I wanted to put my thanks on the record, given the week that this has been.

My question is about face coverings and school transport, and is similar to where Jackie Baillie was going with her question. I have had a number of queries from parents who are concerned that face coverings are not needed on school transport, in particular. Will the cabinet secretary talk a wee bit about the thinking behind that, and provide reassurance to my constituents who are wanting to—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. There was, sort of, a question about school transport in there, somewhere.

John Swinney: The clinical advisory group's advice to us was, in essence, to extend the definition of the school estate beyond the physical buildings of a school to include dedicated school transport—I make that distinction on “dedicated” school transport. On face coverings, the balance of the evidence that the clinical advisory group looked at indicated that it is inadvisable to apply mandatory wearing of face coverings in schools, which would then extend to dedicated school transport.

Of course, Mr MacGregor's question highlighted some of the debate around that, in respect of school pupils who are travelling on general public transport being required to wear face coverings, in accordance with the regulations that are applied in society more generally. That is in order to acknowledge that general public transport is not part of the school estate.

However, I reiterate to Mr MacGregor what I said to Jackie Baillie, which is that the Government will continue to listen carefully to representations that are made on the issue, and to take more scientific and clinical advice.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not think that we will get everybody in, at this rate. I will be very disappointed if that happens.

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary will be aware that increased concerns have emerged in recent weeks about older secondary pupils. Existing guidance recognises some differences by age cohort, but will the cabinet secretary say whether monitoring will extend to that issue and whether any further guidance has been given?

John Swinney: The monitoring will most definitely extend to that issue. I hope that what I said in my statement gave members of Parliament reassurance that data that addresses exactly that question will be gathered and reviewed regularly by the education recovery group. If, out of the analysis of that data, there is a requirement to

review any of the guidance, I give Parliament the assurance that that will be undertaken.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Parents of the P1 intake in Edinburgh were written to on Wednesday by the city council, which advised them that the traditional soft start for P1s would be abandoned, that children would have to attend for a full day on their first day and that, in relation to parents dropping them off, there would be a limit of one adult per child in the playground. Does the cabinet secretary recognise that those children have suffered a great deal under lockdown, that they have not been in their formal peer-group setting for five months and that a soft-start transition is more important now than it has ever been?

John Swinney: I acknowledge that, but it is important to note that, although we have put in place a framework of regulations for the return of formal schooling, it is up to individual local authorities to determine their own positions in their local environments. The issue is clearly one for the City of Edinburgh Council, and I am sure that it can explain to Mr Cole-Hamilton why it arrived at that decision.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): For schools to open successfully, it is crucial to have the confidence of pupils, parents and staff that it is safe for them to do so. Does the cabinet secretary agree with Professor Russell Viner, president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, who stated that

“there is very little evidence that Covid-19 is transmitted in schools”

following a study of 20,000 pupils and teachers in 100 schools by Public Health England? Does he agree that that evidence should help to reassure all concerned?

John Swinney: Mr Gibson highlights one particular piece of evidence. A lot of evidence is beginning to emerge about that question. We have looked at a range of international examples to guide the thinking that has gone into determining how we can reopen schools safely. We have undertaken that task and we will continue to monitor the emerging international evidence. I think that the study that Mr Gibson cites helps in creating that reassurance.

I also advise Parliament that those studies are reflected on by the chief medical officer and by the advisory group, and they form the continuing flow of advice that comes to the education recovery group, which takes the decisions about guidance.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I declare an interest in that my eldest starts her job as head of department at a secondary school today and I had the pleasure this morning of

walking my youngest in to start secondary 1—how on earth did that happen?

In his statement, the cabinet secretary mentioned the other harms that the imposing of lockdown has had on pupils. We recognise that there is a balancing act to be done here. However, we also know about the impact of other medical conditions, such as obesity and diabetes, on the response to Covid. Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is imperative to reintroduce physical education into the curriculum, however we might need to adapt those classes, for the benefit of pupils' physical and mental health? How is the Scottish Government assessing that issue?

John Swinney: I agree with the point that Mr Whittle makes and with his understanding of the balance of harms with which we are wrestling. The key point in his question is his understanding that there may need to be an adaptation in how physical education is delivered, rather than our just taking the view that what was done before must be reapplied. There will be a need to undertake some redesign and redeployment, and I am certain that physical education staff will be committed to doing exactly that, because they will want to make sure that young people have that experience in schools.

On that basis, I am sure that we can make progress, which I know will reflect Mr Whittle's policy interests, in making sure that young people have an experience of physical education to support their mental and physical wellbeing.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): According to the EIS, 40 per cent of teachers still feel unsafe in attending work this week. What specific support can the cabinet secretary offer to teachers, who may just need some general mental health support for the day-to-day worries that he has talked about? Has he thought about how every school, or a cluster of schools, could be offered that type of mental health support?

John Swinney: That is a very important point. In the approaches that individual schools are taking, and certainly in the discussions that I have had with a number of schools about the preparations that they are making, the reassurance and wellbeing of staff have been absolutely critical to what they are trying to do. The best reassurance that I can give Pauline McNeill at this stage is probably that that is recognised fundamentally in the education system. It has to be addressed through reassurance and support, and that may become more intense for particular members of staff.

One piece of encouragement that I would give in this respect is that, as I said, we have looked closely at the international evidence, and international experience tends to suggest that, as

the weeks go by, confidence grows in the way in which schools are taken forward. However, it is critical—and is contained in the foundations of that—that mitigation measures are followed at all times. That builds confidence among members of staff. The suggestion about a clustering arrangement is a valuable one.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind): In common with other members' children, my son started S1 today and my daughter will start P6 later this week. I thank the cabinet secretary for helping me to rule out teaching as a future career option over recent months.

Parents in Aberdeen are obviously concerned about their children going back to school while local restrictions remain in place. I have heard the general reassurances that have been provided, but what specific reassurances can the cabinet secretary provide today that I can relay to my constituents, some of whom are concerned about their children returning to school while Aberdeen remains under local measures?

John Swinney: I recognise the acute significance of the point that Mr McDonald makes about schools in the city of Aberdeen. My officials are in very active discussion with Aberdeen City Council in relation to all those questions, and I know that it is focused on ensuring that all necessary measures are being taken in all schools so that we can be confident about the arrangements.

What I have set out today regarding surveillance measures will be available in the city of Aberdeen, and there is clear leadership in the city just now from the incident management team regarding the current outbreak. It is looking in ever more forensic detail at all the cases and the contacts that are being pursued. The test-and-protect arrangements that are in place in Aberdeen today are closely focused on the possibility of transmission. The team is doing everything in its power to stop that, and that will extend into schools.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Given the importance of putting both children's safety and their ability to learn at the heart of the return to schools, can the cabinet secretary confirm that the work that has been done to provide for the reopening of schools has been undertaken with the principle of getting it right for every child at the forefront?

John Swinney: Yes, that is the case. One of the key elements of the guidance is to acknowledge that, for some young people, access to education will have to be provided in a different fashion to meet the needs of the individual child. That point is accepted at the heart of the guidance.

I know that individual schools have carefully considered how—particularly after the prolonged lockdown—they can ensure that young people are supported so that schools can make their return to education as appropriate for those individuals as it possibly can be.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): We have already heard the Deputy First Minister discussing the wearing of face masks. I have been contacted by a number of parents here in Edinburgh whose children are in mainstream schools with additional support. They have been told that the additional support teachers must wear a face mask if they are in contact with the child for more than 15 minutes. That is causing a lot of distress, and children may be refusing to go to school because of that fear. If face masks do not normally have to be worn by pupils, why should they be worn when dealing with children with additional needs?

John Swinney: The key point, in answering Mr Balfour's question, is the issue of physical distancing. The guidance says that, in a classroom setting where physical distancing can be delivered, there is no requirement for face coverings. That is where 2m physical distancing can be supported. In the circumstances that Mr Balfour raises, closer proximity may be required in order to support the young person, and that is where the guidance essentially reflects the requirement to wear face coverings. It is an acknowledgement of the ability to protect members of staff.

I appreciate—and Mr Balfour's question highlights—that that may be off-putting to a child or young person. That is one of the reasons why our guidance and advice indicate that it would not be advisable in all circumstances to have mandatory face coverings in schools. Mr Balfour's question highlights the dilemma, and it provides an explanation as to why that requirement is put in place for children with additional support needs in certain circumstances.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): What reassurance can the cabinet secretary provide for teachers and school staff who are anxious about socialising with family and friends who fall into the vulnerable categories after they have interacted not only with hundreds of young people in their school but with their teaching colleagues?

John Swinney: First, on interaction with teaching colleagues, members of staff should be observing physical distancing at all times. That is one of the implicit parts of the guidance.

Secondly, the general guidance that the Government has issued to those who have been shielding is that, although shielding has been paused, people in that category need to take

additional care about their interactions and contacts. I encourage Mr MacDonald to advise his constituents about the need to follow that general guidance, in order to address the concerns that he has raised with me.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): The Deputy First Minister referred to the nervousness that has been expressed by many teachers. Are there up-to-date statistics on the number of teachers who have decided to retire early this year? Several teachers have told me that that is what they are doing, because they are worried about safety requirements and are concerned about the vagueness of the guidance on issues such as social distancing. Is he concerned about that?

John Swinney: I do not have data on that point, although the position will become clear as we go through the school year; obviously, the survey of teaching staff will be undertaken in September and we will see the results in December. Local authorities and the General Teaching Council for Scotland will be able to give us further data on retirement decisions.

I have accepted that there is a level of anxiety, but I reassure Sarah Boyack that the Government, our partners in the education recovery group, our local authority partners and other stakeholders are focused on trying to build confidence over time and on ensuring that teachers feel safe and confident to practise in our schools.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions on the statement. We managed to fit everybody in.

There will be a short pause before we move to the next item of business. The next debate follows straight on, so all members who are participating should be in the chamber or just outside it.

Economic Recovery Implementation Plan

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-22396, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on an implementation plan for economic recovery.

15:23

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): I want to begin on a note of hope and optimism. This morning, as I left home, I saw three young children from my street, who were excited as they set off for school. All three were starting primary 1 this morning. That serves as a reminder of what our focus should be: building a future and recovery for our young people.

The advisory group on economic recovery report stated that Scotland's recovery must be education led, and I am clear that education, skills and employment opportunities that support our young people must be our focus. The actions that we take now will shape the future opportunities of all Scotland's children.

On top of the devastating health impacts, the Covid crisis has already caused serious damage to the economy here in Scotland and across the globe. The labour market statistics that were published yesterday and today's United Kingdom gross domestic product figures demonstrate clearly the challenge that individuals, communities and businesses will face for some time.

Reflecting the urgency of the crisis, we quickly commissioned reports from a sub-group of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board and from the independent advisory group on economic recovery to draw together recommendations for a green economic recovery built on wellbeing, jobs and a digital economy.

The advisory group reported swiftly, with 25 wide-ranging recommendations, and we set out immediately to develop a full response, which we published last week. We have accepted all the recommendations and set out not just how we would take them forward but where we can do more, with additional actions on procurement, small and medium-sized enterprise support, digital support and equalities to help Scotland on its path to recovery. We responded immediately, with actions to protect and support good-quality and high-skilled jobs, and our work will continue. Further actions for recovery will be published in the forthcoming programme for government, infrastructure investment plan and climate change plan update.

Clearly, the Government will have a key role in responding to the crisis, but I know that we cannot do it alone. We need a national endeavour and to work with partners from across the economy and society. To deliver on the recommendations for recovery, we need everyone to play their part. I reiterate my offer to work constructively with MSPs as part of the national recovery work.

The reports were clear that we have an opportunity to do things differently—to rebuild our economy with wellbeing and fair work at its heart. That is something that I believe in passionately. At the core of the Scottish Government's responses to the reports is a firm commitment to do all that we can, first, to protect jobs and the productive capacity of Scotland's economy. Secondly, there is a commitment to ensure that workplaces can reopen safely for workers and for customers and that, where there is a need for people to reskill or upskill to do their job differently or take advantage of new opportunities, they can do so. Thirdly, there is a commitment to create new good-quality jobs for the future as part of a necessary and desirable move towards a sustainable, wellbeing and digital economy that is built around fair work and a just transition to net zero.

The advisory group on economic recovery rightly highlighted the long-term impacts on young people as one of the greatest risks of the Covid crisis. The young people who will make up our future workforce are among those who have been hit hardest by the pandemic. We must support our young people and I want to send a clear message to them today. Last month, we announced an additional £100 million employment and skills support fund to tackle the employment challenges that we face as a result of the pandemic. Yesterday, I announced that £10 million of that funding will be for a range of measures to recruit and retain apprentices, including the Scottish Government's adopt an apprentice programme, which supports apprentices who may face redundancy as a result of Covid-19.

The advisory group also recommended the creation of a job guarantee for Scotland's young people. I can announce today that the Scottish Government will be committing £60 million of the £100 million employability fund to support Scotland's youth guarantee, which will be targeted at those most in need of support. That will support young people in a range of ways to make the transition into work, and I know that that has the support of parties across the chamber.

I asked Sandy Begbie, who helped to design the Edinburgh guarantee, to urgently draw together an implementation plan of interventions to keep young people in work; to encourage employers to recruit more young people; and to ensure that our

colleges and education system prepare young people for future work opportunities.

We want employers to have a clear leadership role in delivering the youth guarantee. I encourage employers in all sectors to come forward and support that crucial intervention in order to prevent Covid from leaving a lasting impact on the employment opportunities of our young people and so that they can play their full part in our economic recovery.

Our actions must support the creation of jobs now, but we also have to put in place the long-term foundations for a future of good sustainable jobs that contribute to wellbeing and grasp the opportunities of a green recovery. The £230 million economic recovery stimulus package that was announced in June was the start of that. The stimulus package will create new jobs by providing a pipeline of work for businesses, covering construction, low-carbon initiatives, digitalisation and business support.

Our net zero ambitions are at the heart of that stimulus, with £66 million to support the transition to renewable energy sources, research in future transport, including hydrogen bus investment, and a range of renewables and decarbonisation projects across the country. Additionally, the Scottish Government's heat transition deal will support investment in low-carbon heat infrastructure projects, including in heat networks, heat pumps and hydrogen for heat to aid the net zero transition, reduce emissions from homes and buildings and create new green jobs across the sector.

We are supporting innovative new companies. Scottish Enterprise has reported 199 applications—mainly from companies in the technology, engineering and life sciences sectors—to the £38 million early stage growth challenge fund that we launched in July.

Our package for support to business has, so far, totalled more than £2.3 billion. The small business and retail, hospitality and leisure grant schemes have provided a lifeline for many companies. The £185 million additional support fund and the £17 million for the seafood and fisheries sector have provided targeted assistance where other schemes did not. Collectively, those grants have helped to protect jobs, prevent business closures and lay the foundations for our economy to safely restart and recover.

Protecting jobs goes beyond financial support. We will build on the successful partnerships that delivered sector-specific guidance at the height of the crisis by bringing together business, industry leadership and trade unions to deliver appropriate sectoral plans for recovery. Those plans will chart the route out of the Covid crisis by outlining

immediate, short, medium and long-term priorities, with a focus on delivering a wellbeing economy, and will develop approaches to deal with other external issues that face the economy, such as the end of the European Union transition period. The chamber must and will return to discuss the economic reality of Brexit for businesses and jobs.

Beyond the measures that we can take directly, we will also continue to press the UK Government to recognise the specific nature of Scotland's economy and to put in place appropriate measures to support the hardest-hit sectors beyond the end of October, when the job retention scheme is phased out. There needs to be a sector-specific jobs protection and retention scheme for workers in the sectors that cannot safely reopen by that date.

For many, the nature of work has changed and, last week, I announced that we will double the size of the flexible workforce development fund to £20 million to help employers, particularly SMEs, to upskill their existing workforce with training delivered by colleges. We will also support jobs through development of a Covid-19 transition training fund: a flexible skills programme to support people facing redundancy in the most affected areas, sectors and regions to retrain, for example, for the green and digital jobs that will be part of the economic recovery.

Procurement and planning also have a significant role in supporting jobs. Last year, Scottish public sector procurement spending supported around 100,000 jobs; we will aim to get more value from our procurement spend by targeting economic recovery in local areas and securing jobs. We will explore options to alleviate planning constraints, build capacity and deal more quickly with complex applications, in order to unlock investment and provide jobs.

In his amendment to the motion, Maurice Golden asks us to continue to work productively with the UK Government; of course, we will do so, but we will also press the UK Government on the need for support measures that reflect the specific nature of Scotland's economy. Business and workers want action to protect and deliver jobs; our response seeks to deliver that, and we will keep Parliament informed of that progress.

I am happy that the amendments from Richard Leonard and Willie Rennie recognise the importance of quality childcare. For 15 years, I have been campaigning for childcare to be recognised as a crucial part of the economy. I am glad that others agree and I will listen to what they have to say.

There is much in Andy Wightman's amendment that I agree with, but it does not help the tone of

the debate or the desire to reach consensus if contributors on any side resort to name calling.

Recent events have driven home the fact that the Covid crisis has not gone away. Our economic recovery has to proceed in a safe and sustainable way that balances the safety of Scotland's people with their economic prospects and livelihoods.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

As she will know, the Scottish Government has allocated £500 million to the Scottish National Investment Bank. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that the vast majority of that money will be used to help existing firms to survive Covid?

Fiona Hyslop: The Scottish National Investment Bank has a well-respected and talented chief executive, Eilidh Mactaggart. If Mr Lockhart has not had the opportunity to meet her, I will encourage her to meet him and explain the progress of the bank's work. It will be using its patient capital to support businesses. As he reflects, many of those will be existing businesses, to make sure that they can capitalise on the opportunities for a green recovery but also save jobs. However, the bank will also look to new industries; for example, in the north-east, where we have the transition from oil and gas companies, there is the balance around supply chains and potentially new companies. He is right that the growth in jobs and the pipeline for jobs in Scotland will come from inward investment and new companies starting out, but there is great potential in our existing companies, particularly moving into the new energy transition and green recovery area.

The only way to build a sustainable recovery will be by working collaboratively across parties and with industry, unions and other partners building trust and confidence and taking decisions collectively.

We are bringing forward the immediate actions that we need to take to support Scotland's economy and protect jobs, and in the coming weeks and months we will publish more detail in our programme for government, our infrastructure investment plan and our climate change plan update to match the scale and ambition of what a wellbeing economy and green recovery mean for Scotland.

The Covid-19 crisis has fundamentally changed how we think about many aspects of our economy and our respective roles in it. There is no question but that we must now do things differently. Crucially, we have an opportunity now to work collectively in a national mission to rebuild our economy with wellbeing and fair work at its heart.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the serious damage to the economy already caused by COVID-19 in Scotland and across the globe; recognises that the country will continue to face economic damage affecting individuals, communities and businesses for some time to come; resolves to work collectively in a national mission to build a resilient, inclusive and green recovery, which will build on the natural, economic, social and individual strengths of Scotland to deliver a wellbeing economy; notes the publication of the reports, *Economic Recovery Implementation Plan: The Scottish Government's response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery* and *Addressing the labour market emergency: The Scottish Government's response to the Report by the Enterprise & Skills Board sub-group on measures to mitigate the labour market impacts from COVID-19*, and calls for cross-party consensus in taking forward the actions required to deliver on both the recommendations of those groups and the additional actions proposed by the Scottish Government on procurement, sector recovery, SME support and digital support to ensure that Scotland continues to develop its path to recovery, and acknowledges that further actions for recovery will be set out in its forthcoming Programme for Government, Infrastructure Investment Plan and the updated Climate Change Plan.

15:36

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): The Scottish Conservatives welcome the findings of the advisory group on economic recovery, with the caveat that detailed policies must be drawn up as quickly as possible to get the recovery underway. The Government's response also contains much to welcome: talk of a green recovery, addressing rising unemployment and focusing on the wellbeing of our citizens. However, the detail on how to accomplish any of that is still missing—and I say that because we need urgent action to prevent this crisis from becoming a catastrophe.

I appreciate that the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture understands that there is a need to act. During last month's debate she said that the crisis had

"accelerated thinking"

and

"instilled a desire for change".—[*Official Report*, 23 June 2020; c 36.]

That is why it is so frustrating not to see urgency reflected in the Government's response. It should be, because jobs are being lost right now. Unemployment has risen to 4.5 per cent, which is higher than the overall UK rate, and it is almost certain to rise again. Across the west of Scotland, we have already seen jobs go at Glasgow airport, Rolls-Royce and many other businesses. Similar losses are happening across Scotland and serious effort is needed now to mitigate those losses.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Would the member accept that some of that effort, for example extending the furlough scheme, would

be action that needs to be taken on the part of the UK Government, and that aviation and other sectors need the furlough scheme to be extended?

Maurice Golden: I fully accept that we need sector-specific action and that both the UK and Scottish Governments have a role to play in the wellbeing of Scotland's economy. I am delighted that the UK Government has, for example, provided a Covid-19 corporate finance facility in excess of £2 billion to help airlines and aerospace companies, as part of a suite of measures.

Nevertheless, we must secure more than 500 Scottish jobs that are linked to the UK's internal market. However, the SNP's plan only mentions strengthening Scotland's brand value in international markets and not in the rest of the UK, which makes up 60 per cent of Scotland's trade. With so many jobs—

Fiona Hyslop: I know that the UK Government wants to have a political and constitutional argument about the internal market, but I have said in my discussions with Minister Zahawi and Secretary of State Alok Sharma that the danger of their proposal is that it would slow decision making and provide an opportunity for bureaucratic red tape, as it would allow other people to make decisions that are already made in Scotland.

From a business point of view, does the member see the merit in keeping things simple and using the mechanisms that we already have, rather than having bureaucratic legislation when we do not need it? If we do not need to legislate, we should not—that is a tenet of business philosophy.

Maurice Golden: I quite agree that we want to have minimum red tape and bureaucracy and work collaboratively. Unfortunately, the cabinet secretary's colleague who is negotiating as part of the UK internal market does not share that approach and, unfortunately, that is where the politics is coming from, to the detriment of the people of Scotland.

Job losses will affect young people most of all, so I welcome the £50 million announced to tackle youth unemployment, but we need a breakdown of that. For example, how much will go to colleges and universities, to prioritising apprenticeships or to young people in rural areas, who face their own set of challenges? We also need clarity on the proposed transition training fund to help those at risk of redundancy. Exactly what sectors will it focus on and will workers who are not in those sectors be eligible for help?

It is worth highlighting that the fund will support the net zero emissions effort, which is the right approach if we want a green recovery. Efforts should be made to seek opportunities with

relevant businesses and sectors on that. For example, low-carbon bus manufacturer Alexander Dennis Ltd and the oil and gas sector present opportunities to help hard-hit areas create green jobs and apprenticeships and retain high-value skill sets. The green recovery would also help to increase resilience for future economic shocks by protecting natural capital, which underpins industries such as agriculture, food and drink, tourism and hospitality. The latter has seen an almost 90 per cent downturn, which is a clear indication of the need for better protection. That is recognised in the Government response but, again, we need to see the practical short and long-term policy steps, which is a common thread across every section of the plan.

If we take active travel, for example, we have seen temporary adaptations, with councils competing for funding. What we really need is fair funding for permanent adaptations that cut emissions, improve wellbeing and ensure better access for residents and visitors to local businesses and services. Local economies could be further helped through procurement reform. A commitment to make it easier for small businesses to win contracts is a good step, but the Government could go further with a target for procuring from microbusinesses, which would help to unlock an additional 63p of value for every £1 spent with local suppliers.

Further opportunities exist through improving our digital landscape. In that regard, there was a welcome commitment to work with telecoms operators to identify barriers to equipment deployment. We also welcome the commitment to boost Scotland's data hosting sector, which lags behind that of Wales, but the Government must now set out the industry engagements, timescales and policies needed to make it happen. More important is our need to ensure that the public have both the access and the required skills to use digital services. The Government response said too little on that, so we need to see plans for a sustained campaign covering a wider demographic base, otherwise we risk a digital divide between those who can and those who cannot access new, faster and cheaper services.

The same risk is present in the proposals to boost business engagement by involving business leaders in policy development and increasing representation on public boards. We need to hear more about the leaders and sectors involved, and how small businesses will participate. Private enterprise accounts for almost 80 per cent of jobs, so it is vital that we have as broad a range involved as possible, otherwise we risk having another divide between those with the ear of Government and those without. We also need transparency on potential Government intervention. Building management expertise is

sensible, but who decides how and when the Scottish Government takes ownership stakes in private businesses? We are told that the Scottish National Investment Bank will open this year, but when will that be? Will it be ready to invest?

For any of those measures to succeed, the public must have trust in them. We have seen that the British Government's furlough scheme is straightforward and trusted and is widely successful as a result. Almost 900,000 Scottish workers—a third of our entire workforce—are protected by that UK Government scheme. The focus must be on saving as many jobs as possible. That is the challenge that the Scottish Government faces and that we face, because at the heart of this crisis are real people whose livelihoods are at risk.

I move amendment S5M-22396.1, to insert at end:

“; calls on the Scottish Government to work constructively with the UK Government to ensure the continued success in Scotland of the Chancellor's unprecedented support measures, which have protected at least 891,500 Scottish jobs, and asks the Scottish Government to recognise and respond to requests from key stakeholders for a detailed policy memorandum outlining the timescales and detailed methodology for the implementation of the proposals in the Economic Recovery Implementation Plan and for Ministers to provide the Parliament with that information at the earliest opportunity.”

15:44

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to set out the Scottish Labour Party's response to the Scottish Government's response to its advisory group on economic recovery.

It is true that signs of life have returned to our high streets, but Aberdeen is in lockdown once again and, here in Edinburgh, the city is a shadow of its usual August self, so let us make no mistake—Scotland is already in economic crisis. This is an important debate, because working people across Scotland are struggling with rising debts and rising anxiety, not knowing whether they will ever have a job to go back to. On top of that, it follows a decade in which working women and men, who depend on their weekly wage, have seen their living standards slide along with their take-home pay and their quality of life.

For those working people, the collapse in the jobs market that we are experiencing is nothing short of catastrophic, so I suggest at the very outset to the cabinet secretary, on the day when the UK economy is officially defined as being in recession, that what is required to avoid a prolonged slump is a radical approach, including a radical use of the powers of this Parliament. That means that we need public investment in

infrastructure and education. In a week when we have seen the doubling of the unemployment claimant count and when we know that the UK job retention scheme is being wound down and will be phased out completely in a matter of weeks, people are rightfully fearful about their future, so it is our job to provide hope in place of that fear.

John Mason: I agree with some of what the member says. Does he agree that we in the UK could do with something like what Germany has done—it has provided a fiscal stimulus package of some €80 billion—but that that would be well outwith the range of the Scottish Parliament?

Richard Leonard: Most economists agree that the only way to forge a pathway through this, at a time of low international interest rates, is to raise debt in order to invest. That has been the call that the Labour Party has made, not only in Scotland but across the UK.

We are clear that we need a stimulus package; we also need a strategy for industry, a plan for the economy, a plan for jobs and a green new deal, with investment in energy, public transport and forms of construction being prioritised.

We also need targeted interventions to support and revive our manufacturing economy and our arts sector, because the arts not only produce a high economic return, but are the lifeblood of a civilised society. People are looking to us—they are looking to this Parliament—with a renewed sense of urgency, which is why our amendment makes a plea for that greater sense of urgency in the Government's approach.

We support an urgent review of the fiscal framework. This Parliament needs a better deal to provide the investment that is required. We need to stand up against deindustrialisation and the offshoring of jobs and we need to use all the levers at our disposal to ensure that renewable energy projects and low carbon technologies deliver the maximum number of jobs for Scotland.

We welcome the jobs guarantee for young people. Scotland urgently needs jobs for good, not the low-paid, part-time, short-term employment that is offered by the UK Government's kickstart scheme. If we are serious about building an economy that is fit to weather the storm ahead, we cannot replicate such a scheme in Scotland.

The Scottish jobs guarantee scheme must offer opportunities not just to young people but to women of all ages who have lost their jobs during this crisis. Investment in flexible childcare is also needed. As our amendment points out, our priority must be to support families across Scotland that are facing financial hardship and who need direct and immediate support now, so we back the calls from across civic Scotland for the Scottish

Government to introduce a Scottish child payment equivalent as soon as possible.

Let us reflect as well that when the Scottish Human Rights Commission calls for an independent inquiry into whether the right to life has been breached in our care homes, we must say, “Never again.” Never again should our care system be left so unprepared and never again should our care workers be so undervalued. We believe that care, including childcare, must be a critical part of our future social economy, so we must invest in it now as part of this economic recovery plan.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Richard Leonard: I am in my final minute, I am afraid.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can allow a little extra time.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member acknowledge that £11 million has been released to nurseries to ensure that we have the flexible childcare that we need now, although he is reflecting on a future prospectus?

Richard Leonard: I thank the cabinet secretary for that, but many of us are disappointed that the Government took the decision to suspend the implementation of the 1,140 hours scheme, for example. That should have been a matter of priority, socially and economically, and in terms of achieving greater equality outcomes.

It will take courage to follow the path that we advocate. It will take a belief in the importance of democracy in the economy, and that means involving business and trade unions more in economic planning, not just in the construction sector but in every part of the economy.

I have a final word of warning. Of course we support moves to attract inward investment, but if ever there was a time to use the reach of the new Scottish National Investment Bank, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the new South of Scotland Enterprise agency to support indigenous, employee-owned and co-operative businesses, it is now. We cannot just talk about a better Scotland—it is our duty to build it.

I move amendment S5M-22396.2, to insert at end:

“; recognises that Scotland needs to make an urgent response to the economic impact of COVID-19, and urges the Scottish Government to bring forward the Scottish Child Payment, invest in flexible childcare and bring forward within the next month a quality job guarantee scheme that provides a living wage and focuses on a green and just recovery, which not only invests in those requiring work but also invests in everyone’s future.”

15:51

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): We have had a number of debates on the economy in recent months, but perhaps this is one of the most important.

The economic crisis brought on by the Covid pandemic is unlike any in our lifetime. It has immediate and longer-term consequences, not all of which are fully in focus yet. As many commentators have noted, it is not only an opportunity to rethink how an economy works; doing so is a vital necessity. That is why this debate is so important, because we now have the report from the advisory group on economic recovery that the Scottish Government commissioned and the Scottish Government’s response.

The motion in Fiona Hyslop’s name is unobjectionable in itself and we will support it, but the fundamental flaw in the approach taken to economic recovery is exemplified by the motion’s reference to delivering “a wellbeing economy”. That is also reflected in the title of the advisory group’s report. However, neither in that report or in the Government’s response is there any clear articulation of what a wellbeing economy looks like and that is why we need to have this debate, not just today but in the months ahead.

The advisory group’s report is not a plan for transformational change in our economy. Indeed, it contains nothing that would be out of the ordinary in normal economic times. The Government’s implementation plan opens by saying that the report

“validates our overall strategic approach”.

In other words, we are already doing what the report suggests we ought to be doing. That is not consistent with what Fiona Hyslop indicated to Parliament when she said that we need

“a revolution in economic thinking that stimulates and values co-operative sharing of risk and reward”.—[*Official Report*, 26 May 2020; c 32.]

I thought that that was very well put, but we are far from achieving that. Such a revolution in economic thinking would include tackling growing wealth inequalities, rentier capitalism, the excess returns to capital over labour, ownership and governance of the economy, and housing insecurities. None of that is mentioned in the advisory group’s report or the Government’s response. Much of the implementation plan merely restates existing funding, announces reviews, promises to speed up existing work and tinkers at the edges. There is little that is genuinely new that matches the scale of the crisis.

That contrasts markedly with other reports on green recovery. For example, last month’s report

from the climate emergency response group contains plans that are more practical and more radical, such as zero emissions cities by 2030 via vehicle regulation, retrofit buildings, rural jobs creation and so on.

The debate that we need to have is about what a wellbeing economy looks like and how we get there. Fortunately, we have some expert advice to hand from the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, which is an alliance of more than 100 groups across the world.

A wellbeing economy is designed for a different purpose from that of the current economic paradigm. It is designed explicitly to serve people, communities and the planet, and its non-negotiable principles are dignity for all, a restored natural world, institutions that serve the common good, fairness, equality and radical democracy.

The obvious lessons for the current crisis would include, for example, an overriding commitment to ensuring that people have security in their own home, given the precarious and insecure lives that so many families currently face in the private rented sector. There is nothing on such questions in the Higgins report or in the Government response, and nothing on how to reduce the cost of living, through measures such as rent controls, for the Covid generation of young people who are already struggling with high debt, high rents and energy and transport costs.

Underlying our concerns are long-standing questions about the role of economic growth and how it is measured. In an ill-advised interview with *The Times* newspaper last week, Benny Higgins made some outlandish claims, which included describing Friends of the Earth Scotland and certain parts of the green movement as

“ideological zealots who would throw economic growth and jobs under a bus”.

To characterise the movement in that way when it is at the forefront globally of charting a new economic paradigm is not only lazy, but profoundly ignorant. I am sure that Fiona Hyslop would agree, given her injunction in her opening speech to avoid name calling—in which, incidentally, our amendment does not engage.

In the same interview, Mr Higgins went on to claim that:

“A wellbeing economy needs growth to pay for itself.”

Again, that is utter nonsense. Growth as it is currently being pursued and measured is not necessary. The world has sufficient capacity, wealth and assets to enable everyone to enjoy a basic and secure livelihood, but people do not do so because the ownership, control and distribution of that wealth is unequal.

Mr Higgins went on to say that companies such as BP are

“well capable of responding to environmental change and delivering wellbeing”,

even though such companies have been the main drivers and deniers of climate change, which has eroded the wellbeing of millions of people across the planet.

In our view, it is time for the Government to part company with Mr Higgins. He has undertaken some good work around the Scottish National Investment Bank, but his recent comments do not bfit a Government adviser. I am thinking not only of the comments that I have just rehearsed, but of his unhelpful—and, to be frank, sexist—remarks in a *Holyrood* magazine interview in which he compared the First Minister’s style unfavourably with that of her predecessor.

There have been many strong critiques of the advisory group, including from the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Engender, Friends of the Earth Scotland and the just and green recovery for Scotland campaign. This debate is far from over. Greens are fundamentally opposed to the assumptions that underpin the economic prospectus in front of us today. Our amendment explicitly rejects the advice of ideological zealots who put GDP growth ahead of addressing inequality and the climate emergency, and makes a specific call to scale up home energy efficiency programmes.

I move amendment S5M-22396.5, to leave out from “, and calls for” to end and insert:

“; welcomes the job guarantee scheme, which has been needed since before the COVID-19 pandemic; recognises the need for the COVID-19 recovery to focus on building a fairer, greener and more equal wellbeing economy; believes however that these goals require clearer definitions and political will, which have not been shown by the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery; considers that those who put GDP growth ahead of addressing inequality or the climate emergency are ideological zealots whose advice should be rejected; notes the enormous potential to create green jobs and cut emissions by supporting the energy efficiency sector, and calls on the Scottish Government to immediately commit specific resources beyond the 2020-21 budget to scale-up existing home energy efficiency programmes, as promised by the First Minister.”

15:57

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I am sure that the devastating images of the flooding across Fife and the east coast of Scotland overnight will be on the economy secretary’s mind today. Some businesses were already teetering on the edge of survival and this might push them over the edge, so I hope that she will be receptive to any appeals from companies that are dealing with the devastating impact of the floods. Many

communities in my constituency have been directly affected by the colossal amount of water that came down from our skies overnight.

We have seen today the visual representation of the recession; the plunge in GDP is quite astonishing. There is a new scale for the graph these days because the recession is so deep. That should be a warning to us all that the impacts of the current situation are far-reaching and devastating. One in 10 people could be unemployed by the end of the year, and that situation could last for something of the order of three years. The impact on young people will be even more substantial, causing the scarring that everyone is talking about. In many cases, supply chains are stuttering and broken, and we will need to spend quite a lot of time getting them back up and running again.

At the same time, we need to try to shape something new. Some businesses will not survive, some sectors will diminish and new sectors will come along. Our strategy must be to ensure that we shape the transition from one type of economy to the next, while ensuring that we protect individuals from the worst of the recession.

We must not try to pay off the massive economic and financial investment that we have made in recent months in a short period of time, as that would crush any economic recovery. We need to make sure that we invest wisely so that we get a sustainable, fair and just economic recovery. We need to invest in the skills and talents of our people through education and good health, mental as well as physical, because our people are the best talents that we have. We must make sure that we bring about economic recovery fairly and justly so that people get a good wage for a good job and can have a decent house for their family and their future.

In addition, we must make sure that the economic recovery is environmentally sustainable and that we do not pillage the environment for the sake of a few cheap jobs. It must be sustainable and fair, and it must invest in the skills and the talents of our people. That is what Liberal Democrats are seeking.

The problems that we had with the economy were deep rooted before the pandemic came along. Scotland's notoriously poor low productivity levels were improving, but only marginally. Significant change will be required in that respect as we move out of the recession.

It is madness to go ahead with Brexit at this time. That will compound the problems that we have with the pandemic and the existing deep-rooted problems in our economy. Breaking ties with our closest economic partners at this time is madness. We ought to be combining forces so

that we have negotiating power, so that we have good standards across Europe and so that we can trade freely from Auchtermuchty to wherever it is in Europe that we want to trade. Those should be our priorities.

It would be equally unwise to proceed with an independence agenda, for exactly the same reasons. I hope that the Scottish National Party reflects on that, because the last thing that we need is even more turmoil.

I want to praise the Scottish Government, councils and the enterprise agencies for their response to the pandemic. The schemes that were set up in a very short space of time were impressive. Many people got lots of support just when they needed it, which allowed them to keep their companies and their livelihoods.

However, many are still being left behind. I praise my colleague Jamie Stone for leading the campaign at Westminster for the excluded—those who have been left behind and forgotten. I am talking about the many freelancers and self-employed people who have received no support from any of the Government schemes, whether of the Scottish Government or the Government at Westminster. We still need to do something for them, because we cannot afford to leave them behind.

Being left behind is something that we wanted to be addressed by the universal basic income. Such a comprehensive financial support scheme would have underpinned other support mechanisms at a time of great need. I was disappointed that although Benny Higgins's report is a serious piece of work, it lacked ambition in many areas, especially on a universal basic income. I was disappointed, too, that the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture did not really fight for a UBI. She did not mention it today. I know that talks on the issue have been held with the Westminster Government, but I get the sense that the Scottish Government is a bit half hearted about it. Now would have been a great time to try out a UBI but, sadly, the opportunity has been missed.

On early learning and childcare, it is a great disappointment to me that the Government seems to have taken the pressure off local authorities to deliver the improvement in provision early. I know that it could be delivered in less than a year, but the sense is that the pressure is off, just at a time when people need extra investment to be made in early learning and childcare. We know that that is the best investment that we can make for children's futures, but it also helps to get people back to work.

On the centralisation of the enterprise agencies, now would be a great time to get back to the great

power of the Highlands and Islands Development Board, because we need regional power, as is stated in Benny Higgins's report. That is why I urge the Government to get back to investing in the enterprise agencies, to make sure that they can bring about real change in their communities.

I move amendment S5M-22396.3, to insert at end:

“, and believes that cross-party consensus will be easier to build if Scottish ministers reverse their decision to halt entitlement to expanded nursery schooling for a whole academic year, take clearer steps to reverse the decade of centralisation of enterprise agency work and provide the formal estimation of the amounts paid by the UK Government directly to people in Scotland under furlough, unemployment benefits and other COVID-19-related payments, as agreed by the Parliament on 23 June 2020, in order to give a better assessment of the resources both required and available to support people.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I ask for speeches of five minutes, please.

16:04

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The times in which we live present probably the greatest challenge that all of us here will face in our lifetimes. The coronavirus has swept across the world like a tsunami; it has caused the loss of almost a million lives so far, and it threatens to wreck economies across the world.

What we do now must put in place the basis for our country to recover from the virus's threat to both our nation's health and its economic wellbeing. In a sense, we have to build new starting blocks and think differently about economic recovery in order to protect and support the businesses and public services that we have and to create the possibilities for recovery that our young people are depending on us to get right. Of course, we cannot do so alone: if we are to get through this we must reach out to our partners across the world.

Speaking from America to yesterday's meeting of the Parliament's Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, Professor David Blanchflower said that economic unrest in that country is growing and that the prospect of a generation of young people being cast aside to unemployment is too high a price to pay. He said:

“We should throw everything that we have”

at the issue

“including the kitchen sink and maybe the kitchen as well.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee*, 11 August 2020; c 33.]

He described the situation almost as though it were an economic war, in which we must take all possible measures if we are to win.

Here in Scotland, such work is already under way. Publication of the recommendations of the advisory group on economic recovery in June, followed by the enterprise and skills strategic board's priorities for immediate action, have given us four clear areas to work on.

First, we must help businesses to retain what they have. Principally, the £2.3 billion-worth of direct support for businesses in Scotland has been crucial in helping to save many from going out of business. A range of mechanisms has been put in place to help them to find additional support.

Secondly, we must support people facing redundancy as a direct result of the pandemic. A package of work is being undertaken to ramp up support from initiatives such as partnership action for continuing employment. That will be needed especially if, as is expected, the UK Government withdraws its job retention scheme. We are going to need substantial resource to help people who will be affected by that.

Thirdly, our focus should be on training, upskilling and helping people to make the transition into new employment. Skills Development Scotland is working on schemes to extend the apprenticeship and graduate apprenticeship programmes, and the Scottish Funding Council is working with our universities to provide short reskilling courses. A number of digital initiatives are also in place. For example, BT is working with the Scottish Government to offer digital upskilling for many of our SMEs.

Lastly, following the strategic board's four key recommendations, work is being done to help our most vulnerable people into jobs. Funding worth £50 million will help around 20,000 young people in that way, as well as extending the fair start initiative for another two years. This year, investment worth £33 million is being made in employability services—including no one left behind—that will help people of all ages to overcome barriers to employment.

Presiding Officer, as you know, I have been advocating for digital and software skills to be given higher priority in our economy. Perhaps the pandemic is pushing us faster in that direction. BT's helpful members' briefing for the debate shows us that nearly half of all small businesses have moved online. More than a third are planning less face-to-face contact in their work and more than a third now see digital skills and tools as a key focus.

The digital revolution is the fourth industrial revolution to have taken place. With the right infrastructure, connectivity and skills, Scotland can

be a real leader in the sector—much as we are in renewables. It is therefore crucial that the Government's artificial intelligence strategy embraces all that and fully exploits the potential of 5G as quickly as possible.

In previous debates I have mentioned that the value of the digital single market in Europe alone is around €400 billion per year. Setting aside the UK's silly decision to walk away from that, we need to position Scotland so that we can contribute to and benefit from that market.

What more can Governments do, and what more can we do? Governments probably need to borrow more money to see us through the crisis—to protect not only our present but our future economy. Scotland needs the same borrowing powers as any other normal country. Perhaps we could bring forward already agreed programmes of work in areas such as construction and regional growth deals, bearing in mind that that money is already committed. We could also speed up our planning processes to encourage faster development. We need more people with digital skills and the creation of more digital spaces to encourage new companies to emerge and to innovate.

Above all, though, we need to be willing to change how we do things and not be afraid to try out new ideas. As members, we need to work together to get through the crisis and to ensure that Scotland's future economy can be one that thrives and provides opportunity for everyone.

16:09

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): My colleague Maurice Golden said in his opening remarks that there is cross-party consensus on the objectives that are set out in the Scottish Government's response to Covid. We agree that we need to achieve a green recovery, address rising unemployment—especially for younger people who are entering the workplace—and focus on a wellbeing economy.

However, there is a fundamental flaw in the Scottish Government's response. The Government has again failed to articulate any road map or detailed policy guidance on how we can achieve those positive destinations. At yesterday's Economy and Skills Committee meeting, both the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses gave evidence that the plans lack the necessary detail and finance that are required to make a real impact. Benny Higgins said yesterday that the Scottish Government needs to act with urgency, but when we look at the policy proposals, no time scales are set out by the Scottish Government on when its plans will be implemented.

Without that detail, finance and urgency, this policy response represents a significant wasted opportunity.

Fiona Hyslop: Dean Lockhart heard in my opening remarks about the rapid response that we have had in a number of areas. We have invested £500 million in our economic stimulus and the immediate measures to deliver the recommendations. Many of the time scales are in the annex, which shows what we have already done since lockdown and what we are doing now. Our programme for government will set out the rest. That detail is fully available and we will make sure that the Conservatives are given the detail that they are asking for.

Dean Lockhart: Now that we are six months into the Covid crisis, I look forward to getting an update from the cabinet secretary with regard to those time scales.

What the policy review should have been about is refocusing policy to recognise and respond to the new economic trends that are emerging from Covid-19. The revolution in online trading and business is an opportunity to build a vibrant digital economy in Scotland, which Willie Coffey referred to, by helping thousands of Scottish businesses to move online. That is why the Scottish Conservatives have called for the establishment of a e-commerce task force to help firms, large and small, across Scotland to move their businesses online. It would involve digital teams from universities, colleges, the private sector and digital graduates who may not otherwise be able to find employment at this time.

The need for Scotland to rapidly increase the level of online trade and e-commerce was apparent even before the crisis. According to Nora Senior, the chair of the enterprise and skills strategic board, only 9 per cent of Scottish firms embed digital in their operations, compared with 43 per cent in competitor countries.

There is also an opportunity for the Scottish Government to respond to the new supply chains that are emerging in the Covid aftermath. The value of the UK's onshoring market before the pandemic was estimated to be around £20 billion a year, but that market will grow rapidly in the months and years ahead. The Scottish Government needs to tell us urgently how it will respond to the opportunities that will be created by the new onshore supply chains.

There are 32 Scottish trade offices around the world, but there is only one for the rest of the UK, which is remarkable because the rest of the UK accounts for 60 per cent of our trade. If we were to increase trade between Scotland and the rest of the UK by 5 per cent, it would bring about an extra £2.5 billion in GDP and create thousands of new

jobs. One of the Government's priorities should be to create and establish a series of Scotland and rest of UK trade offices in key regions across the UK to boost that internal market—we call on the Scottish Government to action that.

There is also an opportunity to explore new export markets for Scotland's excellent produce and services. The Scottish Government could do it by creating a new virtual network of global Scots to sit alongside the actual global Scots network.

Fiona Hyslop *rose*—

Dean Lockhart: I appreciate that the cabinet secretary is about to say that that is work in progress and that she has been working with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce to help with their virtual road shows and networks, but I must continue.

All the policy measures that I have just suggested are in the existing powers and budget of the Scottish Government, but none of those new economic trends have been addressed in the Scottish Government's policy response, which is all the more inadequate when we look at what the UK Government has achieved in the same period, saving 900,000 jobs across Scotland and delivering more than £15 billion of emergency funding to Scotland.

As part of its response to Covid, the Scottish Government has asked for more borrowing powers and more money from Westminster, but we consider that to be merely a constitutional distraction. The Scottish Government should instead tell us urgently how it will use its existing budget, including the £500 million allocated to the Scottish National Investment Bank, to help firms survive and save jobs.

I say genuinely to the cabinet secretary that, when calling for more money from Westminster, the Scottish Government should reflect on having lost £500 million in the past year alone through investment write-downs, cost overruns on two ferries and on various other public sector projects. That £500 million could have gone a long way to save firms and jobs across Scotland during the crisis.

I support the amendment in Maurice Golden's name.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Members will notice that I have allowed a wee bit of time for interventions. There is still a wee bit of time available for those, but please do not take advantage. You could all learn from the display of Dean Lockhart's psychic powers that we saw earlier.

16:15

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I have said quite a few times in recent months that we are experiencing a triple economic assault in the north-east of Scotland: Covid and lockdown; a low oil price; and a looming Brexit.

The first of those threats is unavoidable. Covid is not anyone's fault, and the Scottish Government has done what it can with the powers and resources that it has to mitigate the effects for many businesses.

The second threat is, to be frank, partially self-inflicted. We have been here a few times before—the north-east economy's decades-old reliance on oil and gas makes us extremely vulnerable to geopolitical and market shocks. We need to speed away from that reliance, justly transitioning to low-emission technologies and fuels and ensuring that sustainable jobs are the future for my constituency.

The third assault—Brexit—is not of the making of the people of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire either; they overwhelmingly voted against it. Members will have seen last month's study by the University of Warwick, which says that the cost of Brexit is already the equivalent of £9,000 per person in the north-east.

Thankfully, there are routes out of all those threats to our economy. The Brexit catastrophe has a constitutional escape hatch, which we need only unlock—but that is for another day. The Covid situation has further exposed the flaws of the fiscal and borrowing power-sharing arrangements between the UK and Scottish Governments, and a strong case can be made for the Scottish Government to have the same powers that are available to other European nations—John Mason mentioned Germany in that regard—which are borrowing money to fund their economic recovery.

I turn to the just transition element, which I consider to be the most important solution to the particular economic issues that the north-east faces. The north-east can be the nexus of the green recovery. We already have a workforce with transferable skills, which makes it ideally placed to lead the transition from fossil fuels to low-carbon fuels and technologies.

New and emerging technologies are being worked on in the area, particularly in our two universities, the National Decommissioning Centre in Newburgh and our Oil & Gas Technology Centre, which I have long argued should be renamed the future energy centre, because of its work in supporting all types of energy innovation.

I recently met our colleagues at Opportunity North East, Scottish Renewables and the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce,

which are all speaking with one clear voice on what needs to happen. Their messages to elected representatives and asks of the Scottish Government are that skills funding and training avenues that can enhance the existing skills of the oil and gas workforce in relation to renewables and low-carbon technologies must be a priority for the area. They are also clear that investment in the skills to prepare young people to be the workforce of not just the immediate green recovery but the sustainable Scotland of the future should be our number 1 priority.

We need substantial investment in and a focus on providing careers that would not be susceptible to global economic shocks of a fluctuating market. That will lead us to a low-emissions Scotland. The organisations will be pleased with what the cabinet secretary said today about the youth guarantee.

The cabinet secretary has outlined the substantial stimulus investment that she has already made, with particular support given to the north-east in the past couple of months, which is welcome. However, we as a nation need the borrowing tools to invest more where it is needed strategically for the long term. We are, as always, pushing a stone up a hill, with so many levers on energy being reserved. The UK Environment Bill is only just under way and well overdue.

The UK must take immediate action on degasification of the grid, and have emissions targets that at least match our own, if we are to succeed.

In Scotland, and the north-east in particular, we have a small window of opportunity—which is closing rapidly—to be world leaders and develop and export emerging technologies and low-emission fuel products to other countries. I point again to Germany, which sees Scotland as a potential supplier of the hydrogen that it is changing its systems to take as it transitions.

Reskilling and ensuring a change in tack in the career paths of young people will take many forms; there is no single solution. However, in conjunction with the educators, innovators and employers in my area, we can focus the transition of training into ensuring that the north-east stays the energy capital of Europe, but a sustainable one with our climate change goals at the centre.

In the last couple of seconds before I sit down I will make my final point, which is that we should lock in the remote working flexibility of the pandemic. I have long argued that flexible and agile working means less commuting, fewer emissions and less stress, and more trust in the workforce. We cannot go back to the pre-pandemic inflexibility that has played a real part in maintaining the stubborn gender pay gap in this country.

16:21

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): The news today that the UK economy is officially in recession is no surprise to any of us. Huge numbers of people have lost their jobs and many more are at risk. Women in particular have lost their jobs, and it is vital that as we come out of the pandemic we build back better. That is why Scottish Labour has this summer been campaigning for a quality jobs guarantee with a living wage, and for action to get young people the skills and opportunities that they need to make the most of their talents.

We need to see more leadership from both the Scottish and UK Governments, so that financial support and investment in our economy delivers multiple benefits, with equality and fairness at the heart of all the investment that is made with our money.

I believe that the Scottish Government needs to act, in particular, on the recommendations that were made by the STUC to target investment in strategic economic assets and deliver fair work conditionality in grants and contracts. That would benefit many people across Scotland. It is good that our bus industry has been given support from the Government. However, we could still see stronger accountability at local level, influenced by our local authorities.

Although the advisory group on economic recovery framed its report around the wellbeing economy and proposed that action on climate change be woven throughout the Government's actions, I agree with Andy Wightman that it did not give clear leadership in its own recommendations. However, many other organisations have come up with really practical, sensible solutions.

The climate emergency response group highlighted eight specific areas in which investment would create jobs and tackle the climate emergency at the same time. I cannot go through them all in the time available, but I want to highlight a couple. The cabinet secretary mentioned the expansion in renewables and community heat projects that we need to see. That could create thousands of jobs in Scotland, but we need to deliver the manufacturing jobs so that those progressive movements can take place, and that is not currently happening. The Scottish Government needs to use its leadership to deliver the extra manufacturing jobs that would come if we saw the community heat and renewables expansion that we need.

Another example is investing in retrofitting homes across the country to eliminate fuel poverty and lower carbon emissions: a win-win. It is estimated that that could create 6,000 long-term jobs. However, we need the certainty, political

commitment and contracts to deliver it right across our communities. I am glad that low-carbon skills have been mentioned. However, we need a much more coherent approach.

A couple of people have mentioned retail, and Richard Leonard mentioned the fact that Edinburgh is quiet this summer. There is an issue about the loss of retail and hospitality jobs; they have either gone or are potentially very vulnerable. Our councils need to be financially supported so that they can take the lead locally to regenerate our town centres, work with local businesses and build back better. I believe in using community wealth-building principles and ensuring that we support women and young people; who are both vulnerable to the loss of jobs in those sectors.

I agree with Gillian Martin that we have seen some positives over the past few months, including more flexible home working and increased digitisation. However, many businesses are struggling to get back on track, particularly in the arts sector, so retaining existing jobs must be our priority.

Yesterday, I raised the viability of leisure centres around Scotland; the issue came up at First Minister's question time today, too. There are 4,500 potentially vulnerable jobs in the sector because of the lack of viability and sustainability of many of our leisure companies. I am told that young people are in the demographic that is most likely to be made redundant first, so we need support now to prevent that happening.

Today provides a good opportunity for us to focus on what we can agree on, and there is clear agreement around the chamber that we need a wellbeing economy. The issue is how that is delivered, what practical measures are required and how we ensure that every pound that is spent, whether by the UK or Scottish Government, delivers multiple benefits. The climate crisis has not gone away and good career-centred jobs for young people will not just appear, so we need action and leadership.

The Labour amendment calls on the Scottish Government to

“bring forward the Scottish Child Payment”

and “invest in flexible childcare”. That will be absolutely crucial in ensuring that our recovery does not see women losing out further; they need to be able to get back into the labour market and not be pushed out. There is huge inequality and we must challenge it. Investment in childcare frees women to work and presents an opportunity to create good-quality jobs. Our support for young people growing up in Scotland enables parents to get back to work once their kids are at school.

I am struck by the level of agreement in the chamber about investment in low-carbon jobs and training and long-term investment that delivers good-quality jobs that enable people to afford to live. That support is not just in the chamber but out in our communities.

We need a transition, so I hope that the Scottish Government commits to not just listen but act. A lot of key actions need to be taken, and building back better means that the Scottish Government is in pole position. I hope that the cabinet secretary is listening to us, that the programme for government acts on those key principles and that we see the results that our constituents desperately need.

16:27

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in the debate and to hear from the cabinet secretary her recognition of the need for a wide-reaching and comprehensive action plan to tackle the economic crisis that we face as a result of the global coronavirus pandemic.

On the generality of the response, I commend the clear determination of the Scottish Government to focus on a jobs-based recovery, and to pursue an “All hands on deck” approach, with Scottish Government agencies working alongside employers, trade unions and the third sector. It is quite clear that the scale of the Covid-19 economic challenge requires recognition by us all that we cannot proceed with approach that is business as usual.

Of the specific proposals that have been put forward, I will focus on youth employment, which is a subject that is dear to my heart. I commend the increased financial commitment of £60 million for youth employment, which we have heard about today from the Scottish Government. I understand that it will support some 20,000 young people in employment, through the job guarantee scheme and other measures.

I am aware of the work of Sandy Begbie in looking at the detail of the scheme's implementation, and I know that he is working alongside employers, local authorities and third sector and youth work organisations. I also know that local Developing the Young Workforce groups, including the group in Fife, have been asked to feed in their ideas and suggestions.

Given that the Scottish Government has accepted all 25 recommendations of the economic advisory group, it is clear that the youth job guarantee scheme must involve sustainable jobs, with opportunities for training, apprenticeships and the possibility of progression in the job, and must not be just a box-ticking exercise. That will be a key measurement of the success of the scheme. I

ask Mr Hepburn whether he will, in his closing remarks, confirm that the Government's commitment to that approach is in place, which is my understanding. If we do not get that right, we risk leaving behind a whole generation, which I am sure would be as unacceptable to the Scottish Government as it would be to me.

I take the opportunity to welcome the additional £10 million that is to be invested in measures to recruit and retain apprentices, which we have heard about this afternoon.

That key focus on youth employment, together with the determination to work more closely with business, to maximise the economic impact of public procurement and to invest in digital capabilities, will be essential to ensuring business recovery and to ensuring that we transition to a resilient and sustainable wellbeing economy.

As welcome as the action plan is—with more detail to be fleshed out in the weeks to come, as is mentioned in the programme for government—there are two key elephants in the room, both of which stand at the door of the UK Government. First, the Benny Higgins report called for acceleration of the review of the fiscal framework that governs financial relationships between the Scottish and UK Governments. It is vital that that happens because, at present, the UK Government continues to refuse to rise to the economic challenges of the scale of those of Covid-19. Therefore, the effects of whatever action we take here will be hampered.

We have seen that calls for the UK Government to extend the furlough scheme into 2021 are being ignored. There have been calls for the UK Government to come up with a fiscal stimulus package that is commensurate with the level of need—for example, to the level of stimulus in Germany, where 4 per cent of GDP has been put forward. The UK has a fiscal stimulus package of £20 billion; in Germany, £80 billion is on offer.

If the UK Government will not act, it risks a veritable tsunami of job losses, and a return to Thatcherite 80s levels of unemployment. Many of the communities in my Cowdenbeath constituency still bear the scars of those years, which is entirely unacceptable. If the UK Government will not act, the necessary powers must be devolved to the Scottish Parliament so that we can act.

The second elephant in the room is Brexit. The UK is now in the deepest recession of any of the G7 countries, with a 20 per cent drop in GDP, and the Brexit shambles is looming at our door. It must be put on hold. Even in the best of economic times, it would represent madness, but in the worst of times, during a global pandemic, it is ideologically driven self-harm on a massive scale.

It is clear that there is no union dividend for Scotland; rather, there is a growing union deficit. That is increasingly being recognised, as is evident from an opinion poll that was published today that shows, yet again, that a majority are in favour of Scottish independence. It's coming yet.

16:32

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Prosperity and wellbeing for all who live in Scotland, whatever their age and wherever they live—remote, rural or inner city—and the health of our planet, must be our collective quest.

What does that mean? As Richard Leonard's amendment highlights, we must

"bring forward ... within the next month a quality job guarantee scheme that provides a living wage and focuses on a green and just recovery",

which, the amendment stresses,

"not only invests in those requiring work but also invests in everyone's future."

There must be multiple benefits for our communities in terms of good job opportunities and for our health and wellbeing, while tackling the climate emergency.

Across the chamber and far beyond, we are showing that we are not afraid to learn lessons from how so much has changed during lockdown, while we have faced the dreadful challenges of Covid. From the STUC to the just and green recovery for Scotland group, to name just two from among many, there are robust calls for new actions.

I welcome the range of Scottish Government stimulus and support. As the cabinet secretary said, we have a precious chance to do things differently. We can do that by creating projects to insulate our urban and rural homes; by tackling the scourge of fuel poverty and addressing climate change in a oner, thereby creating new jobs; and by taking action to plug the gaps in a national ecological network or Scottish nature network. We could do it by creating a framework to make investments in nature; by delivering on climate, biodiversity and wellbeing, thereby creating jobs that would often be in very rural areas; by fairer use of road space through building safe active travel routes and using low-emissions buses to be run by municipally owned companies; and by creating healthier living places with cleaner air and less congestion, which would also bring more new jobs.

Much of that needs the guidance of the robust just transition commission, and for it to continue to make recommendations, building on its work so far across all sectors. I stress the word "all". Its final report is due in March 2021. Scottish Labour

continues to call for the JTC to be there for the long term to underpin a fair way forward to net zero. I hope that the Scottish Government will act on that quickly, to give reassurance.

The JTC must contribute to policies, many of which are economic, in our updated climate change plan. For the economy really to have people and the future of the planet at its heart, there must also be targeted support for particular people-centred models, two of which I will briefly highlight today.

The first is community wealth building, which is the strategy that is being developed by North Ayrshire Council. Its leader, Joe Cullinane, explains that the aim is

“to shape a new collaborative, inclusive, sustainable and democratic local economy”

and says that

“This new partnership between the local public sector, the community, locally owned businesses and trade unions will ensure we take back control of our economic landscape.”

Joe Cullinane has also said that

“Across the five pillars of ... Procurement, Workforce, Land and Assets”

—which I stress—

“Financial Power and Plural Ownership—we have ... an intentional approach”

to build a new economy.

Secondly, I will highlight the co-operative model. I am clear, as a member of the Scottish Co-operative Party parliamentary group, that across all sectors—from farming to housing to finance and more—member ownership, in which people matter, should be more common, and merits active support by us all. In my region, the New Lanark world heritage site is an iconic historic example of the co-operation that the model embodies. I welcome initial Scottish Government support for it, and we should all help to ensure its sustainable future for the nation.

Conditionality—in this respect and in all financial support—must be robust. The Scottish national investment bank is a good model of that.

On skills, it is important to say that every report has emphasised how essential it is that we get strategic development of skills right for the future, thereby creating a skilled workforce that must be paid well.

We must also look to alternatives to GDP that measure prosperity for all in a meaningful way.

We should, of course, all work together. We might reflect on Labour values of solidarity and fairness across Scotland, the UK and globally. The Prime Minister was photographed in a hard hat again yesterday. For all the UK Government

support that is coming for Covid, he is often a builder of barriers. His Government is dismantling the Department for International Development in East Kilbride, which brings consequential instability for the people who work there, including people in my Clydesdale constituency.

Enshrined in our Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 is a commitment to assess the impact of our actions on the global south. That is, of course, acknowledgement of the stark reality that we have a responsibility, as a developed nation, to recognise that those who did least to create the dangers of climate change are now suffering most from its effects. That goes beyond climate change action and the importance of the climate justice fund.

As we face the challenges of coming out of Covid here at home in Scotland, we must never forget to take our international responsibilities with the utmost seriousness, in relation to making fair economic decisions, as we support everyone here in Scotland.

16:38

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I thank the Presiding Officer for the opportunity to take part in today's debate. I welcome the Government's response to the advisory group on economic recovery and I will touch on some of the points that are raised in that response.

In the section on public finances and economic recovery, the point is made that

“UK public sector net debt rose to £1.98 trillion, or 99.6% of GDP, in June 2020”

and that the OBR forecasts that the UK's fiscal deficit will reach

“between 15% and 23% of GDP in 2020-21 ... the highest peacetime level in 300 years”.

Those are serious figures, and the Government's response also states that

“the OBR has warned that in the longer term”

the UK will need

“to return the public finances to a sustainable path.”

I very much agree with that.

The UK has acted reasonably well during the pandemic in areas such as the furlough scheme and business support. However, it seems that we are failing in comparison with countries such as Germany by not carrying out enough of a fiscal stimulus, which for us would involve £80 billion.

I move on to some more specific recommendations and responses. I will not mention all 25 recommendations, and I

congratulate the Government on having produced 26 responses.

Recommendation 1 is about the review of the fiscal framework. I very much agree that immediate improvements could be made, including agreeing temporary borrowing flexibilities, as other countries have done for their devolved Governments. I also very much welcome the commitment for the Parliament, not just the two Governments, to be involved in the full review.

Recommendations 2 and 17 both mention the Scottish National Investment Bank. Infrastructure investment has to be one of the ways out of this Covid upheaval, and I welcome the commitment to publish the infrastructure investment plan next month. Housing is mentioned in that regard, as is absolutely right. By focusing on infrastructure, we can spend money and create jobs, while building housing and other assets that will last long into the future.

Recommendation 4 refers to ownership stakes. That is quite an intriguing area as, in recent years, public stakes in private businesses have been the exception rather than the rule. However, it seems to be quite normal in other countries and I see no reason why it should not also become more normal here. Perhaps public ownership within industries would be one of the ways of building a better relationship between industry and Government.

By any stretch of the imagination, many businesses have had a very generous deal in recent months, from both the UK and the Scottish Governments. Businesses that used to complain bitterly about Government interference and taxes were suddenly only too keen to accept Government interference by way of furlough schemes and grants. I hope that businesses will have a better understanding of why both local and national Government need to raise taxes, introduce proper living wages and take other equality measures.

Recommendation 9 talks about conditionality in business support. That links with the previous recommendation that I mentioned. In the past, there has been a feeling that both Scottish Enterprise and HIE could be too keen to get investment in at almost any cost; issues such as a good staff gender mix and limited disparity in pay have not always had the focus that they deserved. There have been improvements, but there is further to go, and now is a good time to restate our commitment to those principles.

Recommendations 9 and 13 both refer to some kinds of tax cut. Mentioned are rates relief, a targeted reduction in business rates, and a reduction in VAT. I accept that those can certainly have their places, especially if they are temporary

and targeted, but we have to remember that a tax cut in one area means a cut to public services in another. Given all that our national health service and care sector have been through lately, I would not want to see their budgets being reduced in order to fund tax cuts for businesses.

Recommendation 15 is about adult social care, which I think Richard Leonard mentioned. That is a huge issue, which has been brought to the fore by the pandemic. I suspect that we will in the future return to it in more depth.

My own mother is in a care home that—somewhat to my surprise, I have to say—has not had the virus so far, and, happily, she is still with us. I hope to see her on Sunday, for the first time since March. In general, care home staff are not well paid and, whether those homes are in the public, private or third sector, we need to look at better pay. Better pay means higher costs or fees, and higher costs and fees mean higher taxes. I do not see how we can avoid that.

Recommendation 22 mentions apprentices. We have an increasing variety of apprenticeships, and I firmly believe that that can be the best route for many of our young—and some of our older—people. In the past week, we have been very focused on academic results in our schools, but we should re-emphasise that bright futures are available even without a range of highers at grade A.

Recommendation 26 is about equalities and human rights. I welcome the inclusion of that commitment. We have to deal with some of the huge inequalities in our society. There is no point in growing the economy if all the rewards go to the rich few. Whether we grow the economy or not, we have to see a fairer sharing out of our income and wealth, as we start this new stage in our journey.

16:44

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I alert members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

The coronavirus pandemic is something that no living person has ever experienced before but, sadly, the experience of this debate is all too familiar. First, the cabinet secretary's promise to respond to the advisory group's report by the end of July was broken. Then, it was slipped out under the cover of John Swinney's education disaster and the lockdown that was imposed on Aberdeen, which was caused principally by the failure of the Scottish Government's supposedly world-beating tracing programme. The irony of Fiona Hyslop highlighting the investment in that programme—in bold, in paragraph 3 of the response document—as some sort of Scottish Government achievement

will not be lost on those of us living in the north-east.

Like many other people across Scotland, many of my constituents in Aberdeenshire West have been working from home for more than five months. One oft-repeated issue is the need for better broadband across Scotland, particularly in rural areas. The reaching 100 per cent—R100—programme was promised to be delivered by 2021, yet we now face another delay, with the north-east contract still not awarded and the programme not due to be completed until 2023. It is simply not good enough for the SNP to blame that on the pandemic, as those targets have been in place for many years. This may be the week when SNP ministers should resign, but it was Fergus Ewing himself who said that he would do so if the R100 was not delivered by 2021.

The Government identifies this issue itself. On page 18 of its response, it notes that

“every public pound invested in broadband in Scotland delivers nearly £12 to the Scottish economy”.

The briefing from BT—[*Interruption.*] No, I will not give way—sorry.

The briefing from BT makes the call that

“efforts to ensure that the population is equipped with the necessary skills for the future must be an immediate priority”.

Why, in the Government’s response, are we not seeing an acceleration in such investment?

The FSB has pointed out that

“action to address both patchy broadband infrastructure and the dearth of digital skills have been on the agenda for many years ... what we need to see is some detail about how policymakers will actually achieve these outcomes.”

Instead, we get another digital planning strategy—this one to be published in November—to add to the ever-growing list of plans, consultations and reviews that are the substitute for action, delivery and outcomes under this talking shop of a Government.

On a related topic, I was also surprised to see a complete absence of home-working or home-office support in the cabinet secretary’s response. Many constituents across Scotland will be disappointed to be ignored, while the Government continues to ask them to work from home and it becomes the new normal.

Working from home is not a novel idea—it has been building up over many years—and developers have previously designed areas for home working into new houses. However, the effectiveness of such home-working spaces has never been tested until now. I would ask the Scottish Government to look into that and to make recommendations for improvements.

I go back to the Government’s response. Despite managing to list every existing policy and pound spent by the Scottish Government, it found space for only a single word of welcome—and no mention at all in any detail—for the near 1 million Scottish jobs that have been saved and the £15 billion that has been spent by the UK Government. Similarly, the complete absence of recognition and of plans to expand our contribution to the UK single market should be worrying for everyone.

If there is a way in which the SNP has shown that it does not understand business, its 70-page response is it. Douglas Fraser of the BBC describes it as

“turgid ... combining defensive past commitments with often vague future plans.”

He adds:

“Some recommendations are accepted, but on terms that risk them becoming bogged down in a task force, further reviews or a scoping exercise.”

The pandemic has widened the gap between rural and urban areas and has brought frustration to many constituents and businesses alike, but those problems have existed for many years, and it is disappointing to see the SNP Government continuing to miss opportunities to invest heavily in our rural communities. I can only express frustration that we are here once again talking about issues that existed well before coronavirus.

The Confederation of British Industry has said:

“real urgency is needed to spur a recovery that turns around Scotland’s economic fortunes.

Focussing on immediate priorities will provide some reassurance for business”.

Sadly, we know all too well what the SNP’s priority will be in the coming months.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Lewis Macdonald): I call Stewart Stevenson, who is contributing remotely and will be the last speaker in the open debate.

16:49

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I will address a couple of points made by Tory members before I come to the meat of what I want to say. Scotland is the part of the UK that has seen by far the biggest uplift in delivery of superfast broadband. The UK Government’s universal service obligation provides a third of the speed that the Scottish Government is working towards.

If I may say so, Dean Lockhart showed exceptional bravery in his contribution to the debate. He suggested that we had lost £500 million. We will have that debate another time. However, I have just checked and, so far, the high

speed 2 project, which is controlled by the UK Government, is £30 billion over budget. Per capita, that would be £2.5 billion from Scotland, which is five times more than £500 million.

I turn to the substance of the issue that is before us today. I think that we can all agree that the pandemic has brought to many members of our population very real fear about the situation in which they find themselves, through no fault of their own and through no fault of any Government. It is important that we give them hope for the future, and the work that the Scottish Government has been doing is precisely what we can look to for that hope. The big projects of the past 50 or 60 years have been based on hope and set out by the ambition of leaders. That is what we see before us today. John F Kennedy taking his nation to the moon is an example.

However, many of the things that we can use today are not particularly new. I started using teleconferencing during a joint project with Australia nearly 30 years ago. Willie Coffey talked about the importance of software. Software is vital, but it is not as transient as we often think it is. I know for a fact that a piece of software that I used 45 years ago is in use today and is maintained by my successors.

I very much welcome the fact that in her opening remarks, the cabinet secretary referred to hydrogen. In the north-east of Scotland in particular, with the hydrogen buses in Aberdeen, we have already taken some early steps to show the viability of hydrogen as a fuel for heavy transport of one sort or another—heavy goods vehicles, buses and so on. The bus service operators grant does not focus specifically on supporting the use of hydrogen to power buses, and I think that we might care to revisit that.

In the north-east, we have huge amounts of renewable energy. A lot of it comes from onshore wind turbines, and there is space for some more. There are offshore wind turbines; the Hywind project is one example. Of course, there is also the Moray East project. The cables for that project run across my constituency and into my colleague Gillian Martin's constituency, and they carry the raw material for producing the hydrogen that we can use.

I make a wee comment about the renewable transport fuel obligation. Hydrogen vehicles cannot access that subsidy, so we might also want to look at that.

Is there an economic opportunity that comes from hydrogen? Yes, there is, because it is in an early stage of development. We have the opportunity and the engineering skills in the north-east from working offshore and producing fuel from the North Sea—initially, it was through oil and

gas, and now it is through wind turbines. That is part of what is needed. In my constituency, we have the Acorn project at St Fergus, which takes gas from the North Sea and uses the energy in a zero carbon footprint way to produce hydrogen, which can then be fed into the gas grid. Twenty per cent of what we put in the gas grid can be hydrogen, with the existing equipment that is using that hydrogen at the other end.

There is more that we can do, and I hope that we do it. I hope that we take the opportunity to use some of the significant amount of money that is being spent on retraining people to train more people in the skills that we need in exploiting hydrogen. Just as we have had success in the past from oil and gas, we can build our future on hydrogen. It presents a huge opportunity for Scotland and, in particular, for the area that I represent.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the closing speeches.

16:54

Willie Rennie: While we have been debating, the sad news has come through that there have been three deaths following the derailment at Stonehaven. I am sure that the thoughts of everybody in the chamber will be with the families and friends of those who are affected, including those who are injured.

I want to commend the writings of an artist from Auchtermuchty called Jim Sutherland, who is a musician and composer. He rightly highlights the tremendous economic potential of individual artists, freelancers and self-employed people who are the bedrock of the cultural sector in Scotland. He highlights the fact that the trickle-down approach of funding support for them is just not good enough. It is worth considering how we support individuals as well as companies in the coming months, because there will be periods when extra support is required, and the current schemes are simply not adequate.

Fiona Hyslop: I reassure the member that only this week, as part of my culture responsibilities, I have been discussing with my officials and Creative Scotland funding mechanisms by which we can support individual freelancers, because, as the member said, they are the bedrock of our arts, culture and events sectors.

Willie Rennie: Jim Sutherland will be absolutely delighted if that comes to be. I will report that straight back to him in Auchtermuchty, and I am sure that he will be very pleased.

That point speaks to a wider issue about how the furlough scheme is extended and how we ensure that the transition to new types of jobs is

supported efficiently and effectively. Of course we should extend the furlough scheme—that is essential as the lockdown continues in different phases in different parts of the country. We will have small regional and sometimes larger regional outbreaks, so of course we need to extend the furlough scheme as well as other support mechanisms.

We also need to ensure that we allow businesses the space to transition to new types of markets. Sometimes, just protecting what we have is not good enough. We need a smarter, bespoke and targeted furlough scheme to ensure that businesses get support when they need it and that they are supported to transition to new types of markets and work when that is appropriate. A blunderbuss furlough scheme will not be good enough. We need to have a smarter and flexible system.

That speaks to the point that Richard Leonard made in talking about the Aberdeen lockdown. Many businesses in Aberdeen will be struggling just now, and they need extra support. Of course, the furlough scheme is there for those who can apply for it, but it is not available to everyone. We therefore need to ensure that there is flexibility at the local level to support businesses.

There is also the environmental issue. Stewart Stevenson talked eloquently about the potential for hydrogen. I agree with him, but we should not support individual technologies; we should try to be technology blind and support as many technologies that have opportunities as possible. That is why I am in favour of the carbon capture scheme getting the necessary support and in favour of support for offshore wind.

I hope that, one day, we will be able to say in this chamber that we have transferred the massive investment in offshore wind into jobs onshore, which Richard Leonard also talked about. So far, we have failed to do that. [*Interruption.*] I hear grumblings that it is a Government somewhere else that is responsible for that, but the promises on the issue were made here. We need to work much harder to bring industry together with Government to ensure that we make changes, rather than grumble about somebody else not doing their job. Let us make that happen, because it is really important.

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): It is simply wrong of Willie Rennie to describe what I said as grumbling. It is a fact that the UK Government controls energy policy and is responsible for the contract for difference mechanism, which has driven down prices and so driven down prices in the supply chain, which has made it more difficult for Scottish contractors to win the work.

Willie Rennie: That is not what we were promised when the support was provided to BiFab. The BiFab support was there, and the promise was made to save the jobs, to make sure that we could exploit the potential. Of course, there will be hurdles in the way but, for goodness' sake, the promises were made, so let us make them happen. Where are the discussions with the UK Government to make that transition happen?

I also want to talk about the constructive engagement that I have had with the Scottish Government. The cabinet secretary will recognise that there have been good discussions about the way ahead between her and all the Opposition spokespeople. In particular, Sandy Begbie has been in touch about the young people's jobs scheme; I wish him well on navigating the myriad of different employment and support schemes that are around, because it is not easy. There will be challenges to make sure that we can tie them all up together. Let us not compete against one another with those various schemes; let us make them work together seamlessly to give that support. If companies need support to pay a proper living wage, let us find a way to do that, because it is important that those are good quality jobs, to make sure that we make that progress.

John Mason talked about capital investment—in particular, about housing—and I agree with him. I agree with Gillian Martin about the big challenges of oil and gas, Brexit and Covid. We need to get a grip of those massive challenges and not add other challenges to them. At the end of the day, we need to get on top of the virus, because if we do so, we can get consumer and business confidence back and we can grow the economy in a sustainable and fair way.

17:01

Andy Wightman: Like Willie Rennie, my thoughts and those of my parliamentary colleagues are with those who have lost loved ones in the train derailment, those who are injured and the British Transport Police and emergency services for their traumatic work.

At the end of this afternoon, there remains a lot that we have not talked about, so we need to continue to debate these important topics. The direction of travel that we—not just the Scottish but the UK Government—set out on now will determine the fortunes and life chances of so many people across Scotland. We do so at a time when real wages remain below 2008 levels, inequalities that were there before the crisis have been exacerbated and the pain felt over the past six months has been disproportionately experienced by those on lower incomes, who remain in risky work, such as women, the young and the black and minority ethnic community. It

has fallen disproportionately on those who earn an income by their labour, as opposed to those who are in receipt of unearned income and economic rent from the ownership of capital, whether that be shares, gilts or land and property from which rent must—by law—continue to be derived on pain of eviction and court orders.

Those who earn their incomes from labour have done worse than those who collect economic rent. That is an exacerbation of inequalities that were already there. For example, between 2014 and 2018, companies' returns to shareholders grew by 56 per cent. At the same time, net incomes have fallen by 3 per cent and median wages have risen by only 8.8 per cent. If wages had matched shareholder returns, the average worker today would be around £10,000 better off per year.

As Willie Coffey mentioned, yesterday, in an evidence session of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, we were joined by Professor David Blanchflower for a discussion on the impact of Covid on young people. He is a world-renowned economist, who has access to all the global evidence, and he said that all the evidence pointed to a deep scarring on the life prospects of the young across the planet. As he wrote in *The Guardian* in May,

"Past research has shown that those who enter the labour market during a downturn carry the costs of doing so into middle age. These come in the form of lower wages and higher risk of unemployment."

What the young need is a new deal on jobs, housing, education and wellbeing. Professor Blanchflower argued that we need to throw not just the kitchen sink but the whole kitchen at achieving that. He also made the profoundly important point that national plans—whether they be from the Scottish or the UK Government—come with inherent weaknesses, in that they can miss important local circumstances. His view was clear that delivery of recovery schemes should be the responsibility primarily of local government and not central Government. A job guarantee is fine, but the young know best how to deliver job guarantees and they should be involved in that. The schemes need to be flexible and locally delivered.

Fiona Hyslop: I can reassure Mr Wightman that the direction in which Sandy Begbie is taking the work is absolutely in that vein. If the Green Party has not had the opportunity to speak to him, I would encourage it to do so. Only yesterday, Sandy Begbie and I spoke to Barnardo's and Young Scot about the shape of the job guarantee scheme and their expectations of it, because young people should be at the heart of developing the scheme.

Andy Wightman: I thank the cabinet secretary for that useful point and I will be monitoring matters closely going forward.

However, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the debate has been missing anything to do with the ownership and governance of the economy, finance, new mutual, crowd-sourced models, co-ops, local economies, supply chains and fiscal policy, and there has been nothing on basic income, shorter working weeks or land reform—and it goes on. Those are all structural economic reforms that would make the economy more equal, sustainable and resilient.

I will respond to several contributions in the debate. Gillian Martin stood up for the north-east, as she usually does, and I hope that her faith in low-carbon transitions is realised. I agree with her comments on flexible working and I think that she was the only member who raised that in a substantive way. That was another issue that the advisory group's report did not address, along with wider discussions on basic income or shorter working weeks.

Annabelle Ewing spoke about the job guarantee scheme. I have already mentioned how important it is that that scheme be flexible, and I welcome the cabinet secretary's indications on that front.

John Mason was right to highlight the future of the fiscal framework, which I do not think is fit for purpose. As important as the fiscal framework between London and Edinburgh is the neglected matter of a fiscal framework for local government.

Willie Rennie made an important point about overpromising, particularly on the economy and renewables.

Beyond that, I am not sure that the debate took us much further forward. From the Government's response, there is plenty of work for civil servants in the plans, strategies, initiatives, reviews and programmes that were mentioned but little on the big transformational ideas that so many people are calling for.

The economy is not solely about the interests of business; it is about workers, infrastructure, care, housing and the environment. The kinds of priorities that the Government needs to adopt are the priorities and initiatives that are being discussed widely in think tanks and academia, business, industry and trade unions around the UK and across the world. Ultimately, in a pandemic, the safety and financial security of our citizens must be the priority—not returning to business as usual, which puts economic growth before both those things.

There is plenty that the Government can do and there is much indeed in its response that will be useful. Ministers should look again at the Scottish

green new deal. The Labour Party's consistent argument for an industrial strategy has a lot of merit. As I said in response to Willie Rennie's comments, the Government needs to stop overpromising and be realistic about what can, and needs to be, achieved in the medium and long term if we are going to have the economic revolution that the cabinet secretary called for a couple of months ago.

17:08

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I put on record and send our condolences to those who have lost loved ones during the derailment at Stonehaven. Our thoughts are with them and with the emergency services that are working there.

Covid-19 has damaged our health and economy and we have heard that from across the chamber in this debate. However, if we stand back and wring our hands, that will simply make matters worse. The Scottish Government needs to act now. Although there is nothing to disagree with in its motion, it lacks a sense of urgency. The Scottish Labour Party's amendment seeks to establish that sense of urgency in the debate. We should be looking at the implementation of those policies now, rather than waiting for announcements to be made in the programme for government.

I hope that policies are ready to be put in place at that time, because we cannot delay any further. We have to recognise that young people and women are facing the greatest impact, and that both our Governments need to act, and act soon. However, we are in the Scottish Parliament and we need to focus on the levers that we have here.

We in the Scottish Labour Party have continually called for a quality job guarantee scheme, which appears to have unanimous support. I welcome the Scottish Government's adoption of that policy, but we need to see it in action because we cannot afford a delay. The effects of unemployment are devastating; it forces families into poverty and its health impact is greater than that of smoking. The impact on society is that it scars communities for a generation. We need to ensure that the quality job guarantee scheme pays a living wage, not a poverty wage.

Other members, including Claudia Beamish, have talked about a just transition and green jobs, which is an important part of a job guarantee scheme. In one of my early jobs, I worked on schemes that provided opportunities for the unemployed, and I remember that a community project provided great environmental work for a living wage. We need to look at how we can emulate that example.

Sarah Boyack and Claudia Beamish talked about retrofit, which we need to do, among other things. Willie Rennie echoed Richard Leonard by talking about how we capture the renewables jobs. We must invest in renewables, but we must also capture those jobs for our communities. I heard today from Unite the union that CS Wind in Machrihanish is no longer bidding for work in the renewables sector. If that is the case, the Government needs to act by clawing back the public support that was given to that company and stopping it having a dead hand over that community.

Paul Wheelhouse: The member might be aware that Highlands and Islands Enterprise is in the process of taking court action against CS Wind to retain funding, so the issue is potentially sub judice.

Rhoda Grant: I welcome that intervention. Hopefully, that yard can be put to work quickly.

We also need to concentrate on young people and women. Members have talked in the debate about skills and learning, but our colleges and universities are struggling and need support to train our workforce for the future.

Procurement is another issue that came up in the debate and it is one that is close to my heart. We need to use fair work practices in procurement, insist on local contracts and ensure that small and micro businesses and co-operatives are included. Claudia Beamish talked about the community wealth scheme in North Ayrshire, which is a fantastic example that we should be rolling out throughout our communities.

We need to support women as well and move to having the promised free childcare. I understand why some of the investment money for that scheme was held back and invested in key worker childcare. In the short space of time available, that was maybe the right thing to do as a quick fix. However, deferring the start of the scheme will cause more damage to women, who are being forced out of work: 50 per cent more women than men are out of work. We need to ensure that the childcare is available that will allow them to go back to work; otherwise we will roll back the gender equality agenda for more than a generation, as women will be worse off than our mothers were.

We need to act quickly and before it is too late or the situation will be much harder to put right. We need to build back better and create an equal and caring society. I appeal to the Scottish Government to use every lever that it has to rebuild our economy and do that without delay.

17:13

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I express on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives our sincere condolences to those who have lost loved ones in the railway incident at Stonehaven and acknowledge the efforts of the emergency services in that tragic event.

The Covid-19 crisis has so far proven to be one of the most significant challenges, if not the most significant challenge, in the peacetime era. I have been heartened by the efforts of the UK Government in the rapid work that it conducted to ensure that hundreds of thousands of Scottish jobs were protected and thousands of businesses were supported. I reiterate that I welcome the Scottish Government's efforts in that endeavour.

Just last week, figures published by the British Business Bank showed that it has provided UK Government-backed loans and support worth more than £2.3 billion to more than 65,000 firms in Scotland since the outbreak. In the Highlands and Islands region that I represent, businesses received a total of £238 million-worth of loans.

That has undoubtedly kept many businesses afloat when they would otherwise have been left to sink, and it has protected thousands of local jobs. In addition, almost 900,000 jobs in Scotland have been secured through either the furlough scheme or the self-employed support scheme. In the Highlands and Islands, approximately 68,000 jobs have been protected.

Many businesses in the hospitality, retail and tourism sectors will be benefiting from the additional footfall generated by Treasury schemes. Those are all positive developments for the here and now, but we must also recognise that the road to recovery will not be an easy one.

Today, we learned that the UK economy is officially in the largest recession on record. That is not unexpected, given everything that has happened, but official confirmation of that is undoubtedly a salutary moment. Just yesterday, the Fraser of Allander institute gave its quarterly update on the latest labour market data and its commentary was stark:

"Scottish unemployment rose by 11,000 to a rate of 4.5%",

which is an increase of 0.4 percentage points on three months ago. The number of hours worked

"hit a record low with the largest quarterly decrease in actual weekly hours since records began in 1971 ... Employment among those over 65 decreased at a record quarterly rate, after growing rapidly since the global financial crisis. The number of people in self-employment has fallen at a record quarterly rate as well."

These are deeply worrying trends, and could likely be worse at the next quarter, given that the update

does not take into account changes in July and August. That has been recognised by both the Scottish Government and the UK Government. Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Scotland acknowledged that and said that the UK Government would guarantee

"an additional £6.5 billion this year to spend on public services and support businesses in Scotland."

Given all that, it is clearly imperative not only that we plan ahead for our economic recovery, but that those plans are detailed and can be subjected to regular scrutiny.

Fiona Hyslop: The member talked in his opening remarks about the number of loans that have been given to companies, which are welcome. Obviously, the UK Government has the powers to lend in that way. However, the practical issue is what will happen next year when firms start to repay those loans and how we can ensure collectively that there is growth and confidence for investment at a time when many companies are carrying debt. I have discussed that issue with the UK Government but it is an area that we need to get into; different solutions may come into that, but we must focus on it. It is not just in October when the furlough scheme ends, but next year with tax deferrals and so on that we will have to address serious issues to get growth back on the agenda when companies are dealing with extended debt.

Donald Cameron: I do not deny any of that. I would add that I think that that debate requires action from the Scottish Government and the UK Government; it also involves a dialogue with the banks and the various other lenders that have been lending money to firms, businesses and individuals during this time. I agree entirely that there is an important debate to be had and we should be having that debate sooner rather than later.

Conservative members have cautiously welcomed the report from the advisory group on economic recovery and the work that was done by Benny Higgins and his team, but we remain concerned at the lack of detail and that certain measures that are proposed in the plan do not go far enough.

I have noted before the various environmental measures in the plan, such as the green investment plan, which are welcome. However, many of those measures are long-term ambitions, such as the £2 billion fund that is earmarked for the next session of Parliament, the green investment portfolio, which has a three-year timetable, or the proposed digital planning strategy, which the SNP Government aims to publish in November and which has a five-year timetable for delivery.

Although many of those proposals are welcome, they are not the short-term boosts that the economy needs during this crisis. The creation of yet further strategies and task forces, as Alexander Burnett said, should not negate the fact that we need to take concrete, pragmatic action. For example, the Higgins report calls for the SNP to work with local authorities to cut red tape and to accelerate infrastructure projects; instead, we have heard that the Government will carry out only a comprehensive review of national planning policies.

I reiterate what Morris Golden so powerfully said: we need real action and plans for the near future. Having spoken to constituency work across various sectors of the economy, I am all too aware of the need for that.

In my final minute, I will touch briefly on remarks that have been made by other members. I was struck by how the economic effects of the crisis are so varied and impacting in so many areas—it is a cliché, but Covid has affected everyone. This debate has illustrated how true that is in Scotland, whether it was Andy Wightman talking about young people or the need for the local fiscal framework to be reviewed, or Gillian Martin talking about oil and gas, or Rhoda Grant talking about jobs and the job guarantee scheme. I was also struck by Willie Rennie's comments about not forgetting individuals. We often talk about businesses, firms, companies and enterprises, but it is important to remember individual people who are in business on their own.

It is clear that we need a detailed policy memorandum that will give businesses and stakeholders the confidence going forward that support will be in place to help the economy. We argue that it is time for the Scottish Government to take action swiftly and urgently, and I urge members to support our amendment.

17:21

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): As other members have done, I offer my condolences, thoughts and sympathies to those who have been affected by the tragedy at Stonehaven. The Scottish Government stands ready to support them in any way we can.

Today's debate has been productive and constructive. There are, of course, some differences of opinion, as is ever the case, but we have seen a real commonality of purpose, and a clear sense that we have to come together to support people coming through the difficult economic circumstances that Richard Leonard was quite right to say are upon us at the moment,

and which we know will be with us for the time ahead.

The recent months have, of course, above all, been a public health crisis. The Scottish Government's primary approach has been to respond to it as such, and that remains the case. The imperative is to continue to suppress transmission of Covid-19 and to save lives.

Throughout, we have also been alert to the economic impact. We have reacted to support small businesses and the newly self-employed. We have focused support on tourism and hospitality and the culture sector. Approximately £2.3 billion of support has gone to business, and if Dean Lockhart wants a timescale for delivery of that, it has happened, it has been done, it is in place already, just as is the £500 million of economic stimulus that the cabinet secretary referred to earlier.

Throughout the crisis, we have also regularly engaged with business organisations and trade unions. We have worked with industry and unions to put in place a raft of guidelines to help various sectors return to activity when it has been safe to do so. We have established the tourism recovery task force and the aerospace response group.

We also have a clear focus on moving forward to support people through the period of economic recovery ahead, and that is the theme of today's debate.

We have strong foundations from which to move forward. Much of the infrastructure is in place. Skills Development Scotland supports first-class careers advice and our PACE service has a variety of provision, not least of which are the apprenticeships. They remain an important part of providing opportunities in the times ahead. John Mason was quite right to highlight the opportunities that they provide. The cabinet secretary has already reminded us of the adopt-an-apprentice scheme, which we have enhanced with additional funding.

Our tertiary education sector is delivering outstanding educational opportunities that are geared towards economic and societal need. The flexible work development fund is vested with the college sector, driving closer working between colleges and employers in their respective areas. We have doubled the value of that fund this academic year.

We have our employability programmes established and in place. Our fair start Scotland programme has supported many thousands of people since its inception, making a difference to their lives. We have extended it for a further two years, amending the terms of the contracts that are currently in place.

I agree with Willie Rennie's point that the employability system is sometimes complex. We will continue to take forward our no one left behind agenda to ensure that the system is straightforward and coherent for people to traverse.

In recent weeks, we have asked both the advisory group on economic recovery and the enterprise and skills strategic board sub-group to take forward some work for us, and I thank those who have taken part in that activity. The reports from both those groups have set out clearly the scale of the challenge ahead of us, but their recommendations are clear, and none of those have been discounted.

Even before publishing our response to the reports, we have acted on key recommendations. That includes our £100 million investment in employment and skills support, which includes the £60 million of funding to support young people that the cabinet secretary mentioned. We will also maximise our PACE offer for those who are facing redundancy, which—as Willie Coffey said—is critical at this time. We will bring forward plans for a transition training fund to help those who are working in sectors at risk.

I will say a little about each of those areas in turn. To show our commitment to supporting young people through this time, we are committing £60 million from our own £100 million employability skills package to support Scotland's youth guarantee. We are committed to supporting young people through difficult times, and we have built, and will continue to build, on our strong track record through our developing the young workforce programme.

The appointment of Sandy Begbie is a very good move, as he has a personal and professional commitment to the agenda of ensuring that young people, especially those who might not otherwise have the opportunity, are able to get ahead in the labour market. I know that he will be very keen to engage with the other parties to hear what they think about the type of work that needs to be taken forward through the Scottish youth guarantee and what that might look like. Willie Rennie mentioned that he spoke to Sandy Begbie, and I know that Mr Begbie will be happy to speak to other parties too.

In that regard, we will support the amendment lodged by Richard Leonard, which recognises the importance of ensuring that Scotland's young people do not bear the brunt of the economic challenges that Covid-19 has created. We have recognised that through the creation of the youth guarantee. Indeed, we are going further than the job guarantee that the Labour amendment puts forward, and considering the full range of opportunities that we need to put in place to support all young people.

I confirm to Annabelle Ewing that her ambitions are the same as ours: we will make sure that we build on the DYW agenda, which will be front and centre, and we will include all opportunities through education, training, apprenticeships and employment. To be clear, that support will have the fair work and living wage agenda at its core.

With regard to the transition training fund, the pandemic has resulted in changes to the labour market that will mean that many people may need to move to other sectors to stay in work. We will learn from our experience of putting in place a transition training fund for the oil and gas sector, and create a new transition training fund that will work on a cross-sector basis.

In response to the points that a number of members made very powerfully, that fund must be—as must all our investment—very much geared to the challenge of ensuring that people come through with a skill set that will allow them to get ahead in the labour market and meet the needs of our economy and society as we move forward.

On PACE, work is already under way. I am leading a short-life working group of partner organisations to look rapidly at how we can maximise the service to ensure that it meets the rising levels of demand.

We will support the amendment in the name of Maurice Golden, primarily on the basis that we want to respond to its call

“to work constructively with the UK Government”,

which is precisely what we have sought to do. Throughout the entire process, we have engaged and maintained regular contact with our UK counterparts on measures to try to mitigate the effects of the crisis.

I am keen for the UK Government to continue the success of the support measures that are mentioned in Maurice Golden's amendment, and I am keen for it to consider our call for consideration to be given to extending the job retention scheme, because we know that there is significant concern about the cliff edge of the ending of furloughing.

I am keen, too, for the UK Government to work constructively with us. For example, I hope that it will respond positively to my invitation for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to be involved in the aerospace response group that I chair. That invitation has been made but has not, thus far, been accepted. It remains open, and I hope that it will be accepted.

I want to conclude by responding to Andy Wightman, who was unclear about what we mean by a “wellbeing economy”. I will put what we mean by it in simple terms. I think that he and others will agree with those terms, which were laid out by the

First Minister last year when she addressed the Wellbeing Economy Governments policy labs here in Scotland. A wellbeing economy is one that recognises that GDP cannot be the only measure of economic success and that quality of life for our people is paramount; it is one that attaches as much importance to addressing inequality as it does to increasing competitiveness; and it is one that puts itself to the test on whether it is creating a fairer, healthier and happier nation. In responding to the challenges ahead of us, that is the destination that we seek, and I hope that it is one that, collectively, we all seek. Our response to economic recovery, on the back of both the reports that we have debated today, will be very much geared towards getting us there.

Business Motion

17:32

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-22408, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme. I invite Graeme Dey to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 18 August 2020

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Internal Market

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Wednesday 19 August 2020

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Preliminary Stage Debate: Solicitors in the Supreme Courts of Scotland (Amendment) Bill

followed by Ministerial Statement: Health

followed by Ministerial Statement: Scotland's Redress Scheme for Survivors of Historical Child Abuse in Care

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

Thursday 20 August 2020

12.20 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

12.20 pm First Minister's Questions

2.45 pm Portfolio Questions: Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity

3.05 pm Portfolio Questions: Justice and the Law Officers

3.25 pm Portfolio Questions: Constitution, Europe and External Affairs

3.45 pm Ministerial Statement: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan – Second Year Progress Report

4.15 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 25 August 2020

2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions
followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Children (Scotland) Bill
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Wednesday 26 August 2020

12.20 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 12.20 pm First Minister's Questions
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Stage 3 Proceedings: Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Thursday 27 August 2020

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions (Virtual): Economy, Fair Work and Culture
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions (Virtual): Education and Skills
 3.00 pm Portfolio Questions (Virtual): Health and Sport

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 17 August 2020, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

Decision Time

17:32

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): We move to decision time. I say to members in the chamber and those who are joining us remotely that, if there is a division this evening, that will offer us the first opportunity to use the new remote voting system. If that is the case, I will suspend proceedings for 15 minutes for a technical break to make sure that the new voting system is ready.

The obverse of that is that, if there are no divisions—that is, if everyone agrees to all the amendments and the motion—no use will be made of the new voting app.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-22396.1, in the name of Maurice Golden, which seeks to amend motion S5M-22396, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on an implementation plan for economic recovery, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

I suspend proceedings for a 15-minute technical break to make sure that members here and members who are joining us remotely, of whom there are many, are ready to use the voting app.

17:33

Meeting suspended.

17:58

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that the question is, that amendment S5M-22396.1, in the name of Maurice Golden, which seeks to amend motion S5M-22396, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on an implementation plan for economic recovery, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Members should cast their votes using the remote voting app now. I remind members that this is a two-minute vote. If any member has any difficulties, please catch my eye if you are in the chamber, or send me a message in the BlueJeans chat if you are voting remotely in your constituency.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caitness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Abstentions

McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 115, Against 6, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-22396.2, in the name of Richard Leonard, which seeks to amend motion S5M-22396, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on an implementation plan for economic recovery, as amended, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-22396.5, in the name of Andy Wightman, which seeks to amend motion

S5M-22396, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on an implementation plan for economic recovery, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. This will be a two-minute division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)

Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 29, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-22396.3, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S5M-22396, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on an implementation plan for economic recovery, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Again, this will be a two-minute division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)

Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 56, Against 59, Abstentions 6.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-22396, in the name of Fiona Hyslop on an implementation plan for economic recovery, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the serious damage to the economy already caused by COVID-19 in Scotland and across the globe; recognises that the country will continue to face economic damage affecting individuals, communities and businesses for some time to come; resolves to work collectively in a national mission to build a resilient, inclusive and green recovery, which will build on the natural, economic, social and individual strengths of Scotland to deliver a wellbeing economy; notes the publication of the reports, *Economic Recovery Implementation Plan: The Scottish Government's response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery* and *Addressing the labour market emergency: The Scottish Government's response to the Report by the Enterprise & Skills Board sub-group on measures to mitigate the labour market impacts from COVID-19*, and calls for cross-party consensus in taking forward the actions required to deliver on both the recommendations of those groups and the additional actions proposed by the Scottish Government on procurement, sector recovery, SME support and digital support to ensure that Scotland continues to develop its path to recovery, and acknowledges that further actions for recovery will be set out in its forthcoming Programme for Government, Infrastructure Investment Plan and the updated Climate Change Plan; calls on the Scottish Government to work constructively with the UK Government to ensure the continued success in Scotland of the Chancellor's unprecedented support measures, which have protected at least 891,500 Scottish jobs, and asks the Scottish Government to recognise and respond to requests from key stakeholders for a detailed policy memorandum outlining the timescales and detailed methodology for the implementation of the proposals in the Economic Recovery Implementation Plan and for Ministers to provide the Parliament with that information at the earliest opportunity; recognises that Scotland needs to make an urgent response to the economic impact of COVID-19, and urges the Scottish Government to bring forward the Scottish Child Payment, invest in flexible childcare and bring forward within the next month a quality job guarantee scheme that provides a living wage and focuses on a green and just recovery, which not only invests in those requiring work but also invests in everyone's future.

The Presiding Officer: I thank members for their patience. As we become more familiar with the remote voting system, it will speed up. Nonetheless, that was very successful, so I thank you very much.

Meeting closed at 18:09.

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.

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