



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Thursday 17 September 2020

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.parliament.scot or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Thursday 17 September 2020

CONTENTS

	Col.
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	1
Michelle Stewart (Victims' Rights)	2
Health Protection Scotland (Covid Guidance)	6
Covid-19 Testing Programme	9
Care Homes (Visits)	11
Leisure Trusts (Financial Position)	13
Covid-19 Tests (Young Adults)	14
Family Contact	
(Older and Disabled Care Home Residents)	16
Covid-19 (School Staff Support)	18
Malicious Prosecution	18
United Kingdom Internal Market Bill	19
Business Interruption Insurance Claims	
(High Court Judgment)	19
Test and Protect (Scams)	20
Dental Services	
(National Health Service Patients)	21
Dundee (Regeneration)	22
Pay Offer (Burton's Workers)	22
Food Banks (Increased Use)	23
Natural Environment	23
Childminding (Support)	24
Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	25
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Waiting Times)	25
Brexit	26
A83 Rest and Be Thankful Pass (Landslide)	27
SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY CORPORATE BODY QUESTION TIME	28
Members' Allowances	28
Members' Local Offices	
(Covid-19-related Costs)	29
Voting System	31
Staff Cost Provision (Review)	35
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	37
ECONOMY, FAIR WORK AND CULTURE	37
Covid-19 Assistance for Cultural Organisations (North East Scotland)	37
Regional Economic Development (Ayrshire)	39
Apprenticeships (Highlands and Islands)	40
Consequential (Allocation to Arts, Culture and Heritage Sectors)	41
Covid-19 Restrictions (Business Support)	43
Home Working (Public Sector)	46
Investment (Stimulation)	47
Covid-19 (Funding for Grass-roots Music Venues in Glasgow)	48

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT	50
<i>Motion moved—[Jamie Hepburn].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Maurice Golden].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Jackie Baillie].</i>	
The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn).....	50
Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con)	54
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	58
Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green).....	61
Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD)	63
Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)	65
Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con).....	67
Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)	69
Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab).....	70
George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)	72
Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP).....	73
Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)	75
Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)	76
Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)	78
Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	80
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	82
Jamie Hepburn	84
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION	88
<i>Motion moved—[Graeme Dey].</i>	
DECISION TIME	89

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 17 September 2020

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

First Minister's Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon, colleagues. We begin this afternoon's business with First Minister's question time, but before we turn to questions the First Minister will give the chamber a brief statement on the Covid figures.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I will give a short update on the daily Covid statistics and related matters.

The total number of positive cases reported yesterday was 290. That represents 4 per cent of people newly tested, and the total number of cases is therefore now 23,573. The full regional breakdown will be published later, as usual, but I can confirm that 112 of those cases are in Greater Glasgow and Clyde, 52 are in Lanarkshire and 47 are in Lothian. The remaining 79 cases are across nine other health board areas.

Fifty-two people are in hospital, which is an increase of one from yesterday. I remind members that we changed the definition of a "Covid hospital in-patient" earlier this week to make it more accurate. Five people are in intensive care, which is one fewer than the number yesterday.

In the past 24 hours, no deaths were registered of patients who tested positive for Covid, and the total number of deaths under that measurement remains 2,501. Yet again, my condolences and, I am sure, those of everybody across the chamber go to everyone who has lost a loved one.

I can also report that the Scottish Government will shortly publish our latest estimate of the R number, which is the number of people who, on average, will be infected by one infectious person. The estimate confirms our view that the R number is currently above 1 in Scotland and is possibly as high as 1.4. We hope that the new rules that came into effect on Monday will help to reduce transmission and we will of course monitor that very carefully. We are also considering carefully—on an on-going basis, obviously—whether any further restrictions may be necessary for all or part of the country.

I remind people that the case figures that we report daily are for test results reported in the past 24 hours. Ideally, the daily figures will, by and large, reflect test swabs taken in the preceding 48 hours, but right now more of those daily cases are

from swabs taken over the preceding few days. That is because of the backlog in the United Kingdom-wide laboratory network, which I have spoken about this week. To be clear, our trend analysis of the virus is not affected by that, because that analysis looks at cases by date of sample, not just reporting date. However, delays in test results being reported can delay contact tracing in some cases, which is why we are taking the issue so seriously.

I can report to the chamber that there has been an improvement in the past couple of days, which is positive, but there are still some outstanding results from the past week, so we will continue to follow that up vigorously. We are also in regular and constructive contact with the UK Government and, of course, we are committed to working with it to help address that issue.

Finally, I note that in the week since it was launched, more than 1,000,000 people have now downloaded the Protect Scotland app, and I thank everyone who has done so. One million is a big enough number for us to know already that the app can make a difference—in fact, I can report that more than 100 people have already been advised to isolate as a result of using it, so I encourage everyone who has not yet done so to download it. It is a simple but important way that we can all help to fight Covid.

The other way in which we can all do that is by sticking to the rules and guidance, so I will end by summarising those again. If you live in Glasgow, East or West Dunbartonshire, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire or North or South Lanarkshire, please do not visit other households anywhere in Scotland at all right now. In the rest of the country, please do not meet with more than six people from a maximum of two households. Those limits on gatherings apply indoors and outdoors, and indoors they apply to pubs and restaurants as well as houses. Finally, let us all remember FACTS: face coverings; avoid crowded places; clean hands and hard surfaces; keep 2m away from people in other households; and self-isolate and book a test if you experience any of the symptoms of Covid.

I thank everyone across the country for their continued efforts to help us beat the virus back.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, First Minister. We now turn to questions. I will take all the supplementary questions after question 7. Members should press their request-to-speak button now if they wish to ask a supplementary question.

Michelle Stewart (Victims' Rights)

1. **Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con):** Two years ago this week, I raised with the First

Minister the case of Michelle Stewart, who, in 2008, at the age of 17, was stabbed to death by John Wilson. Ever since, Michelle's family members have been campaigning to strengthen the rights of victims. Two years ago, they were promised concrete action by the First Minister and her Government. This morning, we spoke again to Michelle's family, who told us:

"Humza Yousaf seems to think he had done a lot. There's certainly been a lot of talking but there's been very little action. It's now been two years since we met him about this when he promised to take action. It is time he delivered on that."

I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice is meeting Michelle's family members again next week. Two years on, will they finally get the action that they need?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): A number of steps have been taken. Ruth Davidson and other members across the chamber know what those steps have been, and Parliament has been involved in some of them.

We want to continue to listen to the victims of crime and to reflect on other steps that can be taken. We must always seek to ensure not just that the voice of victims of crime is heard, but that their experiences help to inform further reforms of the justice system. Everybody recognises that the rights of the accused are important in any justice system, but we must also make sure that we have a system that reflects the needs and experiences of the victims of crime. The Government has not shied away from, and will not shy away from making changes where they are required.

In order to remind people, I am happy to circulate later today—not just to Ruth Davidson, but to the rest of Parliament—a summary of the changes that have been made. If, after further discussions, the Government intends to take more actions, we will update Parliament accordingly.

Ruth Davidson: Thank you. The fact is that that action was promised two years ago. The reality, despite the First Minister's claims, is that little has been done to address the concerns of Michelle Stewart's family or those of the victims of so many crimes.

However, we can look at changes that have been introduced. They include, for example, the victim notification scheme, which is intended to give victims information on the people who offended against them. That includes important information, such as whether the offender is eligible for temporary release, whether they abscond from prison, whether they return to prison for any reason connected to the victim's case and—crucially—when the offender is due back out on the street after release.

This week, we discovered that fewer than one in four Scottish victims of crime is signed up to that notification scheme. Victim Support Scotland says that that is down to the current system being overly complicated "to understand and administer". Will the First Minister give a commitment today to overhaul that notification scheme, so that Scottish victims of crime can finally get the information that they deserve?

The First Minister: I will consider with the justice secretary whether further changes to that scheme are required. We want to make any such scheme as accessible as possible to people who would benefit from using it. We also want to make the bureaucracy around the scheme as simple as possible, and to remove as much of it as we can.

However, it is important to stress that all victims of crime who are eligible for the victim notification scheme are able to make an informed decision about whether they wish to sign up to it. The fact of the matter is that, although many do—we must make sure that the system works for them—not all victims want to be informed of a prisoner's release, because some victims find that to be retraumatising. It is important and right that victims are able to decide voluntarily whether to opt in to the scheme before they receive any information.

Through the victims task force and regular meetings with victims organisations, we strive to provide trauma-informed services; they include the victim notification scheme. Of course, we will continue to work with organisations that represent victims to consider whether further improvements to that scheme can and should be made.

Ruth Davidson: The organisations that represent victims have been pretty clear. Kate Wallace, who is the chief executive of Victim Support Scotland, has said:

"The current system is complicated to understand and administer. Often people are asked about joining at an unsuitable time when they are most traumatised. And this is often not revisited".

Let us look at another thing on which victims were promised action, but which has failed to live up to expectations—the victim surcharge fund. The surcharge was introduced as an extra financial penalty on all criminals who were sentenced to pay a court fine. The money that is raised is supposed to go into a separate fund that is intended to support victims, but one third of the money that is meant to have been paid in has simply not been collected. Why are so many criminals being allowed to skip paying their dues while the victims continue to suffer?

The First Minister: The victim surcharge was introduced in November 2019. Anyone who commits a crime that results in a court fine is now charged an additional penalty—the victim

surcharge. The money is banked in the victim surcharge fund and will be used to provide direct support to victims and families. I can tell members that the aim is to open the victim surcharge fund to bids from victims' organisations by the end of this year. In some ways, the impact of Covid on court business has delayed that and might continue to do so. However, that is still the aim.

We continue to work across all such issues sensitively and appropriately with victims organisations, including Victim Support Scotland. Victim Support Scotland's support service for families who have been bereaved by crime was launched in April 2018, and we have consulted on expanding the range of serious crimes for which victims can make statements to the court, for example. Action has been taken and changes have been made across a wide range of issues. Of course, we will continue to listen about where further action can be taken and needs to be taken—as any Government should do. The voices of victims of crime will be at the heart of that.

Ruth Davidson: I do not doubt the First Minister's intentions, but good intentions are not enough. Her Government's record simply does not match up to the rhetoric when it comes to strengthening the rights of victims of crime. The family of Michelle Stewart feel desperately let down by the Government—as do many other victims. Families consistently say that they want three things: to be heard during the process, to receive information about the offender, and to get practical support. As we have heard, in the experiences of Michelle's family and so many others, the Scottish Government is falling short in all three of those areas.

Two years ago, the First Minister promised concrete action that would tip the scales back in the victim's favour. When will we finally see that happening?

The First Minister: I have already gone through a range of areas where change has happened. The changes are to the great credit of victims of crime, who have made the case for those changes when the trauma of crime itself has been very significant.

We will continue to listen. I will be frank and open: it will always be the case that victims of crime will want more to be done. If I were a victim of a serious crime I would feel exactly the same. It is important that we listen to that. However, all Governments have an often difficult balance to strike between the rights and voice of victims, and the essential rights within the criminal justice system of an accused person, in order to ensure fair trial and a fair process of justice.

Those are not easy issues, but we take them extremely seriously. That is true of the victim

notification scheme, the victim surcharge, and the work that we have done with victims organisations to ensure that the voice of victims is heard and that victims feel that they have information, should they want it. As I said earlier, not all victims of crime want all the information, but when they do, they will have it.

Although this will be no comfort to anyone who has experienced serious crime—I do not want anyone to think that I make this point to suggest that it will be—because of a range of things that the Government has done, not least in supporting police numbers across the country, we are seeing levels of crime that are generally lower than they were some time ago, although they fluctuate from time to time.

We continue to take the issues seriously and we will continue to listen to victims. As has been said today, the justice secretary will meet Michelle Stewart's family to listen to more views, and we will continue to act in a way that tries to strike the difficult but important balance that I spoke about.

Health Protection Scotland (Covid Guidance)

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

I have been asked by workers in residential children's units in Glasgow to raise their concerns with the First Minister. They have been told to self-isolate at home because they have had close contact with a young resident who has tested positive for Covid-19. However, they have also been instructed to continue to go to work. The staff have been sent letters that say that, although they and their family households must self-isolate for 14 days, their place of work is being considered

“as a second household setting”

by Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board, and that they are part of the

“children's unit's bubble.”

That is not safe. In fact, it is in direct contravention of the guidance that has been set out by Health Protection Scotland. Those front-line workers are anxious. They are concerned that they may spread the virus to the people they care for at home and at work. What can the First Minister do to ensure that those residential childcare units in Glasgow allow staff to properly self-isolate when necessary and stick to the guidance of Health Protection Scotland?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I will personally look into that as soon as I get out of the chamber. I am not familiar with the terms of the letter that Richard Leonard refers to. I am very clear about the guidance, and of course the guidance right now in Greater Glasgow and Clyde, with the exception of Inverclyde, is stricter on the isolation of household contacts than it is

elsewhere in the country. In residential services, there will be some circumstances where a different situation applies because of the nature of those services but, without having seen the letter, I would not want to say whether I think that that is appropriate or not.

It is clear to me that all necessary precautions must be taken to limit the spread of the virus and that workers, which absolutely includes workers in residential children's services, must feel safe and supported in their workplace. If Richard Leonard passes on the contact details of the people who have contacted him, or gets them to contact me directly, I will personally look into that as a matter of urgency this afternoon.

Richard Leonard: I will certainly pass on the information, because there is concern that the relevant trade union has not been involved in drawing up any of the guidance, that the staff do not have access to appropriate personal protective equipment at all times, and that they do not have regular and routine access to testing.

Let me turn to testing. Since the start of the pandemic, the Scottish Government's testing programme has been hampered by delays and difficulties. Last month, it was limited access. This week, it is a growing backlog and slow turnaround of results. The Scottish Government's latest testing strategy is supposed to be about getting Scotland prepared for winter. We all understand that it relies on the United Kingdom testing infrastructure, and the First Minister has said in the past few days that she and her health secretary have repeatedly spoken to the UK health secretary, Matt Hancock. What guarantees has she secured that tests in Scotland will not be rationed or restricted, that her commitments on testing targets will be met and that the Scotland first approach, as outlined in her testing strategy, will be delivered?

The First Minister: Those are important issues. First, I think that our test and protect system is working extremely well, which is a great credit to the experts and contact tracers across the country. If we consider the "protect" part in particular, figures on that are published weekly, and well over 90 per cent of index cases—people who test positive—and their contacts have been traced, which is a very good record and one that we want to maintain.

Clearly, for that to work as effectively as possible, the testing part has to operate quickly as well and, by and large, it has been. Over the past few days, we have been experiencing longer turnaround times through the UK-wide Lighthouse laboratory network than we would want to see.

I have spoken personally to Matt Hancock and Dido Harding, who heads up the UK testing

system, and the health secretary spoke to Matt Hancock last night. We have received assurances on access to testing, which has not been an issue in Scotland in the past few days in the way it has been in England. People have not been unable to book a test; it is a laboratory processing issue in Scotland.

We have received assurances, first, that Scotland's access to testing through mobile testing units or regional testing centres will not be constrained to try to deal with any of that and, secondly, that Scotland's fair share of the laboratory processing capacity will be secured.

We monitor the matter carefully. I personally monitor it several times a day. Over the past couple of days, we have seen an improvement, with a reduction in the backlog, and we now want to make sure that the turnaround times improve as well.

It is a UK-wide network system, so we need to work with the UK Government to resolve these constraints. Of course, we have a second strand of testing capacity in the national health service, through which most of the routine NHS testing is done. We are considering whether, as part of what we can do to help solve the UK-wide issues, we move the routine regular care home testing into the NHS.

We are working hard to resolve the issues and we have seen signs of improvement. Overall, it is important to say that our system is working well. We are focused on making sure that it is resilient and capable of continuing to work well as we go into what is going to be a difficult winter period.

It is important for all of us to continue to stress to people that, if they have symptoms of Covid, they should access a test and self-isolate.

Richard Leonard: I wonder whether, as part of her consideration, the First Minister could think of this: at the weekend, a survey of home care workers and Unison members revealed that half of them had never been tested for Covid-19. Mike Kirby, Scottish secretary of Unison, said of the survey:

"Routine screening is how care staff protect their vulnerable clients and keep infection rates low. This is an urgent issue that needs dealt with now or we risk a new wave of coronavirus deaths with this potentially being the cause."

Home care workers have also asked me to raise their concerns. Community transmission is increasing. Winter is coming, with all the additional pressures that it brings. Our dedicated front-line home care staff are rightly anxious. They need all the support and reassurance that we can offer.

Will the First Minister allay the fears of those home care workers? Will she reduce their

exposure and the exposure of the vulnerable people for whom they care? Will she agree to regular and routine access to testing for Scotland's heroic home care workers?

The First Minister: Richard Leonard is right to raise the concerns of workers here. The health secretary regularly talks to the trade unions in the health and social care sectors, and we are very vigilant about making sure that the concerns of those working on the front line are raised, listened to and addressed.

On who we routinely test, we are—as I hope that everybody would accept—rightly guided by clinical advice on that, and we will continue to be. One thing that we are very clear about is that our response to constraints on capacity at the moment should not be to pull back on access to testing or to focus on people we think should be tested. Instead, we should tackle the capacity constraints. We want to continue to look at how we expand the groups of people who are tested, if clinical expertise says that it is appropriate. Home care workers are certainly one of those groups.

Every week, more than 30,000 care home staff are routinely tested, and that is an important part of the protection for care homes. These things are under on-going and regular review. It is important that we take clinical expert advice, and it is also important that we apply our judgment to that, which is what we will continue to do.

Covid-19 Testing Programme

3. Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Test and protect is the foundation of Scotland's strategy to contain Covid, but it does not work if people cannot get a test. The United Kingdom's testing programme is collapsing and the Tory Government has warned that it will take weeks to resolve. Like many, I am deeply concerned that we will pay for this chaos in the coming weeks.

The First Minister said that access is not an issue and that the system is working well, but one constituent tells me that she has been simply unable to get a test for her father, who is in a vulnerable condition and has carers visiting daily, and another tells me that after days of trying, she is feeling exasperated and frustrated. At the same time, symptomatic individuals are being sent hundreds of miles for tests, potentially spreading the virus more widely.

Does the First Minister accept that the current UK-wide testing regime is not fit for purpose? Will she return to the chamber with a new testing strategy, to further enable NHS Scotland to meet demand?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We will continue to make sure that we have in place a strategy that is right. It is important to be very frank

about where we are experiencing challenges. Some have accused me this week of trying to politicise the issue—nothing could be further from the truth. It is important to be up front with people about where we have challenges and what we are trying to do to address them, and that is what I have sought to do.

I would not agree with some of the language that Alison Johnstone has used. I am not saying that nobody in Scotland will ever find it difficult to get a test where they need it and without having either to travel or to wait. When schools went back a few weeks ago, we had a surge in demand for testing that did—for a few days—lead to some difficulties in accessing tests. That is not what we are seeing in Scotland now.

I am not complacent about that. Demand will vary, depending on the prevalence of the virus. But it is not right to say that the system in Scotland is not working. There is a capacity constraint in the UK part of the laboratory system and we are working to address that. We are seeing improvements in that, but they must be sustained.

I will not go into all the detail but, for things like access to contracts for testing kits and so on, it makes sense for the four nations to co-operate in order to maximise access to testing at scale. We also have a system of National Health Service laboratories through which we route as much testing as makes sense. We will continue to look at the balance between those two things.

I do not want anybody who is watching this in Scotland to get any other impression than this: if they have symptoms they should, with confidence, book a test. That is important and we will continue to work hard to ensure that any issues that we experience are resolved. That means not only working with the UK Government, which is important, but also looking at our own resources to ensure that we are bringing them to bear on resolving any issues.

Alison Johnstone: I agree that it is essential that we continue to work with the UK Government. In the evident absence of an effective four-nations approach, however, it is important that the Scottish Government takes all the actions that it can to augment and to improve the situation. It is vital that the public has complete confidence in the system.

Public buy-in is key to suppressing the virus. That is why there was shock across the UK earlier this week when it emerged that the Tory Government had convened an emergency meeting of senior cabinet ministers to exempt hunting and shooting from coronavirus restrictions.

For months, people across the country have made personal sacrifices to play their part in reducing the spread of the virus. Does the First

Minister believe that it is fair that—at a time when children cannot play with all their friends and when families cannot visit loved ones in care homes—shooting parties are permitted to load up their shotguns and head to the hills?

The First Minister: I will be clear: I have had no meetings in the past week or two, or during any part of the Covid pandemic, to discuss shooting exemptions. There is no specific exemption under the Scottish regulations for shooting. There is the ability to allow outdoor and sporting activities if those meet the criteria laid out in legislation and if they follow all the guidance and adhere to the physical distancing requirements. That applies to things such as angling, wildlife clubs and pony trekking, as well as to the sort of activities that Alison Johnstone talked about. That is not a specific exemption.

We continue to carefully consider the balance. I acutely recognise that there are always unintended consequences to the types of regulation that we must put in place at the moment. None of us wants to be in this position. We consider both the need for the restrictions that are in place and also which exemptions are or are not appropriate. We will continue to look at that and to make changes where we think that those are necessary.

Care Homes (Visits)

4. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Yesterday I met Cathie Russell. Her mother is in a care home. They are not allowed to meet for more than 30 minutes a week and they are separated by a plastic screen. They have not hugged or held hands for five months. Her mother's health is in decline. Cathie says:

"People in care homes need their families."

In Toronto, a limited number of family carers can visit care homes. They have personal protective equipment and they are tested. Why is the First Minister opposed to that for Cathie and her mother?

The First Minister: Such questions are legitimate, but any tone that suggests that I am willingly or deliberately trying to keep families away from loved ones in care homes is not.

These are difficult decisions. The health secretary will be meeting representatives of families tomorrow. They have legitimate concerns.

There will be few of us who do not have some experience of family or friends who have been in care homes. We know that visiting is a fundamental part of the health and wellbeing of those who live in our care homes, but that is particularly true for people with dementia. It is hugely difficult for all of us to see and hear the

distress of families who are not able to interact with loved ones in the normal way. However, the restrictions are ultimately in place to try to help us protect care home residents and save lives. It is important that, as we take those decisions, we continue to recognise the risks of communal living and the risks of infections getting into care homes.

That said, the guidance on families and relatives entering care homes remains under regular and on-going review—as I said, the health secretary will meet family representatives tomorrow—and we look at whether we could put more protections in place to allow a more normal visiting regime in care homes. I take all those issues seriously and probably no decisions have been more difficult and at times more genuinely upsetting than the range of decisions that we have had to take around care homes. We all want to allow families to visit normally as quickly and safely as possible, so we will continue to take these difficult decisions with the best of intentions but the greatest care as well.

Willie Rennie: The First Minister might not like what I said, but I have discussed the situation with the health secretary and the national clinical director, so I know what issues are at stake. The situation has been under consideration for weeks but, to be frank, Cathie cannot wait any longer. She needs change now. Cathie's mother comes into contact with multiple carers every day, yet the most important carer of all—her daughter—is left outside. A similar situation is happening to hundreds of people every day—a fraction of them were outside the Parliament building yesterday. So, extend testing, give Cathie PPE, check her temperature, make her self-isolate—do whatever it takes to keep people safe—but let her in. Will the First Minister make that happen?

The First Minister: I think that Cathie is one of the family members that the health secretary is meeting tomorrow. Around 40 per cent of the care homes around the country now allow and enable indoor visiting, and obviously we want to see more able to do that. Will I make that happen? I will try to take decisions that strike a balance between allowing families to have normal interaction with their loved ones, which I absolutely understand they want, and ensuring that we are doing everything appropriate to protect people in care homes. Those are not easy decisions, but it is my job to take them, along with the health secretary and colleagues across the Government. We have to do that and to listen to a range of voices and understand all the difficulties.

I do not enjoy making those decisions at all, but we will try to make them, taking the best advice and all the factors into account and balancing them in order to get to a position where we can have families able to visit normally in care homes,

which is what everybody wants more than anything else. However, I also want to ensure that we avoid a situation a few weeks from now—I do not mean this to be in any way critical, before Willie Rennie suggests that I do—where Willie Rennie is asking me questions about why we have outbreaks of infection in care homes. That is the difficult balance that we have to try and strike, and we will continue to try to do that with the best of intentions. That is an assurance that I can give to not just members across the chamber but families across the country.

Leisure Trusts (Financial Position)

5. Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports that several of Scotland's leisure trusts, which operate sports and other leisure facilities, are close to financial collapse. (S5F-04384)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We are in regular dialogue with leisure trusts and councils to understand the impact of Covid on community sport, and that dialogue informed the decision about reopening indoor sport and leisure facilities. The finance secretary has also been engaged in discussion with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to finalise the details of a lost-income scheme and has stipulated that that should cover additional financial support for councils' arm's-length organisations, including leisure trusts. The finance secretary confirmed that we will be providing councils with further funding of £49 million, which they will be required to pass on in full to support services, including those delivered through arm's-length organisations, to top up those allocations. She wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 4 July requesting details of the consequentials that we can expect to receive to help fund the scheme, but, as of now, we are still awaiting a response to that.

Brian Whittle: I know that the First Minister agrees that having access to and participating in such activities is essential to our wellbeing—more so now than ever before. However, leisure trusts report that 70 per cent of their annual revenue is generated by paying customers and that the pandemic has increasingly serious implications for their ability to sustain their offer.

It has been said that the Scottish Government and COSLA seem to be looking to each other to solve the issue. We cannot afford to risk losing those vital public services, so will the Scottish Government get together again with COSLA to work out a sustainable solution? What further support can the Scottish Government offer that crucial sector?

The First Minister: It is an important issue, and it is good that Brian Whittle has raised it again—I know that he has raised it in the past.

I return to what I said in my original answer. The finance secretary is in discussion with COSLA to finalise the details of a lost-income scheme. The United Kingdom Government's corresponding scheme specifically excludes arm's-length organisations, but it is important that the scheme that the finance secretary agrees with COSLA includes financial support for such organisations. I hope that that will be a positive development.

As I say, we are still awaiting a response about the consequential funding in relation to such schemes, but we are getting on with discussions with COSLA to finalise the details. I am sure that the finance secretary will update Parliament as soon as that has been done.

Covid-19 Tests (Young Adults)

6. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to reports that the highest proportion of positive Covid-19 tests is among young adults. (S5F-04388)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The virus is spreading again; that is obvious from the figures that we have been reporting in recent days. We know that there has been a larger number of young adults returning positive tests than was the case earlier in the pandemic. Our testing approach is different now from what it was then, so that will to some extent account for the increase.

More recently, the 18 to 39-year-old age group has shown the highest number of positive cases. That is not surprising, and I made this point last week: young people are more likely to be exposed to the virus because they are more likely to be back at work and required to be in higher-risk situations, and they are more likely to live in shared accommodation.

It is really important for us all to say that the increase in cases among the younger age groups is not their fault or something that they should be blamed for. That said, we cannot and should not be complacent about it. Younger people are less likely to become seriously ill or die from Covid, but they can still become gravely ill, and many people who get Covid but do not go to hospital suffer long-term health complications. A 29-year-old from Aberdeen reported his experience of that just last week.

Further, we know that if the virus spreads among the younger age groups, it will eventually spread to older age groups, who are at greater risk of illness and death, which is when, unfortunately, we would start to see a rise in the number of cases of hospital and intensive care admissions

and deaths. That is the trend that we see right now in countries such as France, which is why it is so important for everybody to stick to the restrictions, so that we can try to stem the spread of the virus.

Stuart McMillan: The First Minister is clearly concerned—as every MSP should be—about the reports of house parties continuing to be held, despite the measured approach that has been taken by the Scottish Government and Police Scotland.

Nobody wants an excessive or heavy-handed approach during this challenging time. However, with the greater numbers of local authorities with stricter lockdown measures and Covid-19 cases increasing daily, does the First Minister now consider it appropriate for tougher fines to be implemented for the hosts of house parties?

The First Minister: It is a legitimate issue and the same issue that Christine Grahame raised last week—I can hear her behind me reminding me of that. We continue to keep these important issues under review.

It is important that when there are really egregious breaches of the regulations, we do not just use fixed penalty fines, as the police are able to take more serious prosecution action.

The vast majority of people are abiding by the restrictions. Even when some are not, that is not deliberate, but might be through a lack of understanding, which is why it is so important that we continue to explain exactly what we are asking people to do and why. However, when people flagrantly breach the rules, that should be treated seriously.

I understand that young people want to socialise and see friends—of course they do; there is nothing more natural than that—but right now house parties are a danger to people's health and to life. Last weekend, Police Scotland responded to 405 house parties across the country. That demonstrates both that we still have to get that message across to people and that the police are taking appropriate action.

Any breaches of the regulations may be subject to enforcement action, including fixed penalty notices the level of which, for repeat offences, can be doubled up to a maximum of £960. Where prosecution is deemed appropriate, the sheriff court can impose a fine of up to £5,000, and higher fines can be imposed depending on the charge that is libelled. However, we will continue to keep the level of fines and the enforcement action under review.

Family Contact (Older and Disabled Care Home Residents)

7. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what urgent action the Scottish Government is taking to restore and support contact between family carers and older and disabled people living in care homes, which is considered essential to their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. (S5F-04387)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I have already answered aspects of that question in my response to Willie Rennie. I hope that no one would doubt it, but I want to make it clear that I understand how difficult this time is for people who have loved ones who live in care homes. To have restrictions placed on visiting our loved ones is the most challenging thing that I think any of us can imagine.

Visiting is a fundamental part of the health and wellbeing of people who live in care homes. On 25 June, the Scottish Government published guidance that outlined a staged approach to the return of such visiting. Currently, limited outdoor and indoor visiting is recommended, provided that strict criteria are met.

Balancing the risks to care homes both from Covid exposure and from reduced social interaction needs to take account of a range of factors, including the fact that we know that many residents are more vulnerable to the effects of Covid exposure. That becomes an ever-more important and challenging consideration when community prevalence of the virus is on the rise, as it is now. However, we hope to open up further visiting options for families as soon as it is safe to do so.

Monica Lennon: I am pleased to hear that the health secretary will meet Cathie Russell and will engage with the care home relatives Scotland group.

I say to both Willie Rennie and the First Minister that the issue is not just about the timetabling of visits; it is about recognising and reinstating family care givers as equal partners in their loved ones' care.

We all want to see the virus being eliminated, but we also need to address the psychological and physical harms of separating care home residents from their families. Experts and campaigners have called such separation a "hidden catastrophe". The editor of the *Sunday Mail*, Lorna Hughes, has written movingly about the guilt that she feels about her mother being alone in a care home, and there are thousands more like her. We need to change the story before it is too late. We must end this hidden catastrophe in care homes and avoid a winter of separation.

Does the First Minister agree that family care givers are important partners? Will the Scottish Government find a way to change the guidance urgently, to facilitate their vital role?

The First Minister: Yes is my immediate answer. It is important to recognise that a wider principle is at stake here. We are talking not just about family members visiting their loved ones in care homes, but about the role that family members play in the care of loved ones in care homes. The health secretary was keen to meet family representatives as soon as possible, because it may be that that provides some of the answers and solutions to us as we try to strike the right balance.

As I have said, we all understand how difficult this is. Further, I am sure that very few people in Scotland will not, at some point, have had experience of a loved one being in a care home, so what I am about to say will be of no comfort to anyone who is in that position. In the midst of a whole host of daily decisions, which have been the most difficult that I have ever faced in my life, this has been the most difficult.

In recent weeks and months, I have—perfectly legitimately—been challenged in the chamber about the numbers of people who died in our care homes at an earlier stage in the pandemic. That whole experience will absolutely stay with me forever. That does not mean that we should then take an approach that is overly cautious and keeps people away from their loved ones—that would equally be a wrong thing to do. However, it does mean that we take such decisions very seriously and try to get them as right as possible.

Whether people agree or disagree with the conclusions that we are reaching, I ask them please not to doubt the care and the seriousness, and the real weight of responsibility that we all feel, in reaching those decisions. With families, and with those who, rightly, speak up for their loved ones, we will try to get it as right as possible, and to get back as quickly as possible to a position that people want to be in.

As we have to do in so many aspects of this pandemic, we will also use it as a way to ask more fundamental questions, one of which is: what is the role of family members in the care of people in care homes?

None of that helps a person who is not seeing their loved one in a care home—I know that—but I hope that it gives some indication that the decisions are not straightforward and that we take them very seriously.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. We now move to supplementary questions.

Covid-19 (School Staff Support)

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Will the First Minister indicate what support is available for teachers and other school staff, to help manage additional pressures resulting from the pandemic?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We have announced £80 million of additional investment for the recruitment of more teachers; that will fund around 1400 additional teachers and 200 support staff, this year, which we hope will bring resilience to the education system and help those who are currently teaching in our schools.

We are also very mindful of the wellbeing of school staff at this time. Earlier this week, the Deputy First Minister confirmed an additional package of support that has been developed through the education recovery group and is focused on staff well-being. That is part of a £1.5 million funding package to help manage additional pressures as a direct result of Covid. That includes mental health support, new professional learning for post-probationary teachers, and a new coaching and mentoring offer. That will complement the excellent practice that is already taking place to support the wellbeing of staff in schools across the country.

Malicious Prosecution

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Last month, the Lord Advocate, who is a member of the First Minister's Government, admitted in court that David Whitehouse and Paul Clark—formerly administrators of Rangers Football Club—were the victims of a malicious prosecution by the Crown Office. That is unprecedented in recent Scottish legal history. They have already been paid £600,000 in costs, and are claiming another £14 million in damages, which will have to be paid by the Scottish taxpayer.

Does the First Minister agree with me that that scandal demands a full, detailed and public inquiry, on conclusion of the litigation, so that those responsible can be held to account?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I agree, but I am going to be careful. I may be wrong, but I think that Murdo Fraser is a lawyer by background, so probably should not require me to remind him of certain things. Those matters are still live before the court—in fact, he alluded to that himself—so I will deliberately be very limited in what I say, because it would be completely inappropriate for me to do anything else.

They also involve issues that relate to the independent prosecution functions of the Crown Office, not to functions of the Lord Advocate as part of the Government. Again, those are distinctions that members, particularly those who

have a legal background, should probably understand.

I will say—in general terms, because of the caveats that I have just had to insert—that, of course, for anything of that nature, in the fullness of time and when no live proceedings are under way, it is appropriate that there would be full, proper and appropriate inquiry into what gave rise to those circumstances.

That is probably as much as I can or should say at this point; I hope and expect that Murdo Fraser will understand.

United Kingdom Internal Market Bill

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Does the First Minister share my concern that the United Kingdom Government's blatant power grab, masquerading as the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill, means that critical funding that should be transferred to the Scottish Government will instead be controlled by Boris Johnson and the Tories at Westminster, regardless of the spending priorities of the people of Scotland?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes. I have many and varied concerns about the United Kingdom Internal Market Bill.

First, it breaches international law—something that the Advocate General for Scotland clearly could not stomach, and over which he has resigned his post. Unfortunately, the Scottish Conservatives seem to just roll over and accept anything that Boris Johnson decides to do.

Secondly, it is a power grab on the powers of this Parliament and, yes, it gives the UK Government the ability to override or undermine the spending priorities of a democratically elected Scottish Government that is supported by a democratically elected Scottish Parliament. The United Kingdom Internal Market Bill is a full-frontal no-holds-barred assault on devolution. Those who think that I would say that, as the leader of the Scottish National Party, should listen to the union-supporting First Minister of Wales, who has exactly the same opinion of the bill. In my view, the only way to protect the Scottish Parliament is for it to become a normal independent Parliament, which I think will happen sooner rather than later.

Business Interruption Insurance Claims (High Court Judgment)

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The First Minister will be well aware that thousands of businesses across Scotland are struggling with the economic effects of coronavirus. However, Tuesday brought a rare ray of sunshine, when the High Court found in favour of the Financial Conduct Authority's test case over business interruption insurance claims, which

removes a major roadblock and gives Scottish firms and the thousands of jobs that they support a victory of right over might. Does the First Minister agree?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I do. That is a positive judgment and development. At a time of multiple challenges for businesses, the member is right to see that as positive, and I am sure that businesses will welcome it.

Test and Protect (Scams)

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): We know that unscrupulous and dangerous criminals will always seek to take advantage of people through scams, even—unbelievably—during a pandemic. That includes, for example, pretending to be from the vital test and protect teams that are doing such a crucial and fantastic job in keeping us all safe. Can the First Minister explain how people might be able to tell the difference between a genuine test and protect contact tracer and a scammer? Does she agree that those criminals really are despicable?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I think that anybody who is attempting to scam test and protect is despicable—that is probably the mildest word that I can think of to describe them. Unfortunately, in recent days, we have been reminded that a small number of people—it is a small number—will seek to exploit any circumstance for their own gain. That is absolutely disgraceful.

I addressed this issue the other day, but it is important for people to understand what a legitimate contact tracer who gets in touch with them will and will not do. A contact tracer will ask you only for information about your movements and about people who you have been in close proximity to. A legitimate contact tracer will never ever ask you for your bank details or your computer passwords. They will never try to sell you anything or tell you that you have to pay for a test, and they will not offer any other services. Legitimate contact tracers from test and protect will always call from the same telephone number, which is 0800 030 8012, and they will give you the option of hanging up and calling back on that number so that you can verify that they are legitimate.

As with all types of scams, anybody who becomes a victim of an attempted scam should of course contact Police Scotland on the 101 phone number. If people need more advice on the issue, it is available from Advice Direct Scotland. I encourage people to listen to what I have said to ensure that they know what they can expect if they get a call from test and protect.

If you think that somebody is trying to scam you, hang up the phone, but you should be confident in test and protect and the legitimate contact tracers, who are doing an excellent job across the country.

Dental Services (National Health Service Patients)

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): A constituent has raised an issue of disparity in the treatments that are available from national health service and private dental services. She told me that, as an NHS patient, she cannot get a filling but, if she was a private patient sat in the same chair in the same room receiving the same treatment, she could. The chief dental officer has noted that, from 17 August, all dentists, both NHS and private, can provide a limited range of aerosol-generating procedures. However, it seems that there is no requirement for NHS dental contractors to provide the service. Can the First Minister explain why private dental patients can be seen quickly yet NHS services are not resuming, leaving constituents frustrated and in pain?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Not only will I try to explain that, as it is a legitimate issue, but I think that I did so last week in response to the exact same question from one of the member's colleagues. However, I am more than happy to do it again, because I understand the concerns that are being raised.

We have guidance in place, and the chief dental officer—understandably, and as people would expect—has spent a lot of time making sure that the guidance is right so that it allows for the safe provision of dental treatment. That guidance now allows a limited set of aerosol-generating procedures to be carried out, but there are still restrictions on what can and cannot be done. To supplement that—this has been the case throughout the pandemic—there is a network of urgent dental care centres across the country for people who need urgent dental care.

We expect—we have addressed this issue previously—dentists who provide only private care to abide by the same rules and regulations that we expect NHS dentists to abide by, but we have a different relationship with private dentists, because of how they are funded. Therefore, we do not have the same ability to insist on that, but we expect them to abide by those rules and regulations. Our focus, and that of the chief dental officer, is on getting NHS dental services working fully and properly as soon as it is safe for that to happen, and the chief dental officer will continue to focus on that.

Dundee (Regeneration)

Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP): What support measures are being put in place to help Dundee to recover and regenerate after the Covid-19 pandemic? Does the First Minister welcome the confirmation that Social Security Scotland's headquarters will be at the heart of the city's regeneration project on the waterfront, where it will potentially employ up to 900 people?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We will invest £150 million in the Tay cities region deal over the next decade, which we hope will help to create high-quality jobs and enable a sustained recovery. That programme includes £25 million for the growing the Tay cities biomedical cluster project at the University of Dundee, £6 million for the cyberquarter at Abertay University and £20 million to invest in skills across the region.

As part of our £30 million for regeneration to support construction as part of the economic recovery stimulus package, £264,000 will go directly to Dundee. In addition, as Shona Robison alluded to, it was announced yesterday that Social Security Scotland will become the first tenant in the waterfront regeneration project. That new public service has the potential to employ up to 900 people in Dundee and to contribute up to £100 million to the wider Scottish economy. That is good news for Dundee and a sign of the ambition that all of us have for that city.

Pay Offer (Burton's Workers)

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Biscuit makers are moving into what they call the shortbread season, when they increase production in the run-up to Christmas and new year. Yesterday, low-paid key workers at Burton's biscuit plant in Sighthill in Edinburgh were on strike over a miserable 14p per hour pay offer. That stands in stark contrast to the 33 per cent increase that their bosses awarded themselves.

Will the First Minister join me in calling on the management at Burton's to immediately return to negotiations so that the production of an iconic Scottish product can begin again in time for Christmas and new year?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I always encourage employers to get round the table and negotiate with workers, and I always encourage trade unions having the ability to make a proper contribution to that process. I am not familiar with all the details of the situation at Burton's, so I will not comment on that directly. However, in general, I agree with what has been said.

Obviously, the Scottish Government does not have the power to regulate pay negotiations between private employers and workers and, of course, we do not have control over employment

legislation—I wish that the Scottish Parliament did have control over that, so that we could set stricter conditions on such matters. I absolutely call on employers at all times, but particularly at times like this, to treat their workers fairly and to include workers and trade unions in all decisions that they take, not least those on the important issues of pay and conditions.

Food Banks (Increased Use)

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I would like to thank each and every person in my constituency for the work that they do in meeting emergency food need. However, I am sure that the First Minister will agree that no one should have to rely on food banks in the first place. Alarming, a report by the Trussell Trust forecasts a 61 per cent increase in use of food parcels in the coming months. What is the First Minister's response to that?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): That concerns me deeply—as, I know, it concerns everybody. Throughout the pandemic, the Scottish Government has invested significant amounts of money in helping to tackle food insecurity. We will continue to take that very seriously. The money includes, but is not limited to, the money that was provided to carry on provision of school meals throughout the school holidays. We have also increased the welfare fund and will continue to do everything that we can to support organisations that are involved in providing food to people who need it.

Obviously, we are also seeking to address poverty at source, which is why the new Scottish child payment will be so important. Work is under way to open applications for the payment later this year, and for payments to be made early next year.

Of course, some of the solutions to poverty lie in the hands of the UK Government. We need to make sure that we do not have a return to austerity and that we continue to see increases in investment to tackle poverty. We badly need some of the reforms to the welfare system that have exacerbated poverty in Scotland and across the UK to be changed, so that we have a welfare system that lifts people out of poverty, rather than driving them deeper into it.

Natural Environment

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I do not know whether the First Minister has seen David Attenborough's documentary "Extinction", which dramatically lays bare the collapse of the natural world on which we all depend. When will the Government pay farmers to recover nature rather than degrade it? When will Governments stop the dredging of our nature-rich

sea beds? When will the Government end the destruction of wildlife and end driven grouse shooting?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I will ask the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform to write to Mark Ruskell with updates on all those specific issues. We take the health of our natural environment very seriously.

The cabinet secretary is reminding me that we discussed at Cabinet this week the challenges that we face in meeting our climate change ambitions, and the work that we are doing on that. Notwithstanding Covid, we continue to give that work great priority. Peatlands restoration, forestry planting and all such things are incredibly important to us as we seek to meet the targets.

The environment secretary will give Mark Ruskell a more detailed update, but I assure him that the issues have the utmost priority within the work of the Scottish Government.

Childminding (Support)

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): The Scottish Childminding Association has described the Scottish Government's offer to childminders as "completely out of step" with what has been given to other parts of the sector.

In Orkney, 26 childminders have been excluded from the transitional support fund, and that picture has been repeated across the country. After I shared the latest response from the Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd, one local childminder contacted me last week to say that she felt undervalued and defeated. She said that the minister was

"deflecting the question by making it about our income when it is about development of our practice".

Given the priority that the First Minister has said she places on expanding childcare, why does the Government appear not to value the role that is played by childminders who are delivering that vital service? Will she now agree to give them access to the support they deserve?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Government and I value childminders highly. From the outset of the expansion of early years education and childcare, we have been very clear that childminders are a crucial part of that.

Throughout the pandemic, support has been made available to childminders—rightly so—through the transitional funds and support for the longer term. I will look at the correspondence that Liam McArthur referred to, and if there are further issues that we need to address, we will of course consider that.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):

Does the First Minister agree that the increase in the number of coronavirus cases creates a real worry for the economy and jobs, and makes it all the more important that the coronavirus job retention scheme be extended by the United Kingdom Government? Would it be helpful if all members of the Scottish Parliament across the parties were to back that call?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I think that the furlough scheme should be extended, and I hope that every member across the chamber will back that call. I know that many organisations and interested parties across the country back it. I have been encouraged by some of the noises that are coming from the UK Government about this—in particular, from the Chancellor of the Exchequer—in the past couple of days. Let us hope that we will see something positive.

Yesterday, the Scottish Government published an analysis of the impact of the furlough scheme and the impact of withdrawing it. The scheme really matters, and if it is taken away completely at the end of October, with nothing to replace it, we will see a large number of avoidable redundancies. I do not think that anybody, regardless of their politics, wants that to happen at this time.

We have always said that we will be open to discussions about the nature of any extension, whether it be a blanket extension or a sectoral extension. We all know, and must acknowledge because of the current figures, that the pandemic will not end at the end of October and that the impact on the economy will not end at the end of October, so support for businesses cannot end then, either. I hope that that call will be echoed by members from right across the chamber and by people outside it.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Waiting Times)

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): Earlier, the First Minister spoke about the effect of Covid on young people. Although they are less likely to suffer some of the severe physical effects of the virus, their mental health is suffering from secondary issues.

Since I joined the Parliament, members from right across the chamber have been raising the issue of access to mental health services. Waiting times were disgracefully long before the pandemic hit us, and they have not got any better. Will the First Minister finally commit to ensuring that all young people who need access to child and adolescent mental health services will get it within

the 18-week period to which her Government committed? We cannot let those young people down a day longer.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We are committed to that. Jamie Greene is right that there were issues before the pandemic, but some of the challenges relating to the CAMH services have, of course, been exacerbated by the pandemic. As I have said many times, delivering on the commitment requires increased investment, which we have delivered, but it also requires reform of how we deliver mental health services.

Part of the challenge has been that there have not been enough preventative and early intervention services, so people have ended up being referred to specialist services. If they had had help earlier, that referral would not have been required. That extends waiting times for those services. In order to provide that early intervention and preventative focus, we are putting more counsellors into schools and have committed to the wellbeing service for young people. That work is really important.

One of the complications of the pandemic has been the difficulty in providing face-to-face consultations—not just in CAMHS, but generally in the health service. Many health boards, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, have been doing that to try to reduce some of the longer waits for CAMHS, which is positive. However, we want reform of the service to carry on as quickly as possible, so that we have the right balance between early intervention and access to specialist services.

Brexit

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): The Advocate General for Scotland has quit, following the United Kingdom Government's plans to breach international law by overriding parts of the Brexit withdrawal agreement. Democrat Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, backed by presidential candidate Joe Biden, warned that there is "absolutely no chance" of a UK-US trade deal passing Congress if the Good Friday agreement is undermined. What impact will the utterly irresponsible behaviour of the UK Government, barely three months before Brexit hits, have on Scotland, our economy and, as part of the UK, our standing in the world?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Brexit will have a bad impact on Scotland's economy. Leaving the transition period at the end of this year without a deal will have an even worse impact on it. Even if there is a deal, it will be only the most minimal of deals, which means that there will, in the midst of a pandemic, be an avoidable impact on our economy.

The UK Government seems to be intent on trashing the UK's international reputation. To have a bill that threatens peace in Northern Ireland—people know my view that that makes it even more likely that Scotland will become an independent country—and which egregiously breaches international law says everything that needs to be said about the UK Government. Many people, even people on its own side—with the exception of the Scottish Tories, who seem to have the highest tolerance of anybody of all the dreadful things that the UK Government does—are seeing how unacceptable all that is. Many eyes in Scotland are being opened to the fact that we would be much better off being in charge of our own destiny, rather than being governed by a UK Government of such a nature.

A83 Rest and Be Thankful Pass (Landslide)

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands (Con)): The third major landslide at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful pass happened on Saturday night, which has caused yet more woe for residents and businesses in Argyll and the west Highlands.

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity spoke about holding a consultation on a new permanent route in December 2020, with an announcement for a final proposal to come in March next year. For the sake of the many communities that are affected, will the First Minister give a cast-iron guarantee that that consultation will happen?

The First Minister: The situation obviously causes inconvenience and distress to people who rely on that transport link. I addressed the issue at First Minister's question time—I cannot remember whether it was last week or the previous one—before the latest landslip. We are committed to finding a fundamental long-term solution to the problem and are considering a number of options on a cross-party basis, as is right and proper. The Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that we find not just temporary stop-gap solutions, but sustainable long-term ones, because the residents who rely on them deserve exactly that.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time. I urge members to observe social distancing rules as they leave the chamber. The next item of business will be questions to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

13:30

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body question time. There are four questions and we have 20 minutes, so I should be able to take a couple of supplementaries.

Members' Allowances

1. **Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what consideration it has given to re-establishing members' ability to vire an element of office cost provision to staff cost provision so that they can make their own spending decisions on using the allowances. (S5O-04606)

Liam McArthur (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): Parliament agreed to remove the ability to vire between the office cost provision and staff cost provision at the end of session 4, when it amended the overall members' expenses scheme.

Consideration was given to re-establishing viring during the recent members' expenses scheme review. However, the SPCB determined that the best way to ensure that all members were supported in a more consistent and sustainable manner was to go to the root of the issue and re-examine the overall staff cost provision. That is currently under way. As such, we do not propose to reintroduce a viring provision in the scheme for the next session.

However, the point that Bill Kidd makes about flexibility within the scheme is something that we have considered. The SPCB aims to create more flexibility for members in other ways by creating two new provisions—an office property cost provision and an engagement provision—that members can flex within set parameters to better suit their costs and ways of working.

Bill Kidd: I thank the SPCB for its reply, which is very interesting. The rationale behind my question is that, as all MSPs know, there has been an exponential rise in the number of inquiries from constituents and organisations since the advent of Covid-19. Our members of staff are inundated with questions on a very wide range of issues and subjects, and I believe that they are due whatever payment our allowances allow for their hard work on those tasks.

Liam McArthur: Bill Kidd is absolutely right to point out what he described as the "exponential

rise” in demands on MSP staff, and, indeed, on Parliament staff generally over the past five or six months. We all owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

The allowances scheme currently has capacity to allow for overtime—not bonuses—to be paid, albeit within set budget limits. There is general recognition that there are increasing demands on parliamentary staff due not just to Covid, but to expansion of the responsibilities of the Parliament. It is with that in mind that the SPCB is undertaking its review to ensure that, going into the next session, the staff cost provision is fit for purpose and meets the needs to which Bill Kidd alluded.

Members’ Local Offices (Covid-19-related Costs)

2. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it will pursue establishing an account to allow for the costs of Covid-19-related requirements at local offices to be paid directly by the Parliament. (S5O-04605)

Sandra White (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): I thank Christine Grahame for that question, which is of interest to all MSPs in the operation of their constituency offices.

The SPCB has looked to assist members by using our current providers to enable members to order items that they need to reopen their offices. We have also made arrangements with other suppliers, which will directly invoice members for any order that they place.

If members purchase items through either Parliament’s suppliers or direct from another supplier and receive an invoice for it, the invoice can simply be authorised and emailed to the allowances office. The allowances office will pay the supplier direct, which means that the member is not out of pocket. The costs will be met from the incidental and ancillary employment provision, as detailed in the Covid-19 advice pages.

Christine Grahame: I thank the corporate body. I think that that is the answer that I wanted, although I am not sure. [*Laughter.*] I was trying to follow it.

I think that the gist of it is that we no longer have to purchase, pay the bill and then recoup, which we had to do previously, and which was going round the houses and a waste of everybody’s time. Can the SPCB confirm that now we simply put in our order and everything else is done by the Parliament?

Sandra White: I thank Christine Grahame for elaborating on that. We must be clear on that issue, because it is important to members.

The answer to the question is yes: as long as the member has a receipt from the supplier they can submit it to Parliament under the ancillary employment provisions, and the amount will be paid direct to the supplier. Members must first get a receipt. Does that answer the question?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is probably not my place to say so, but I think that Ms White used the word “receipt” instead of the word “invoice”. Would you like to come back again, Ms Grahame? This could develop.

Christine Grahame: It is a double act.

I was puzzled by the word “receipt”, because that seemed to me to be exactly what I am trying to get out of.

Sandra White: It is never simple to deal with Christine Grahame.

I did say “invoice” in my first answer. I apologise for my slip of the tongue in saying “receipt”. I meant “invoice”.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I will make my question a little easier.

Many members are keen to re-open region and constituency offices. The information that has been provided by Parliament has been comprehensive, and the offer of assistance from parliamentary staff is very welcome. However, the process of understanding what to order, who to order it from and who pays for it is not simple. It is not a case of ordering just hygiene or safety items: some offices might require physical modification. Who will undertake that work? Who will risk assess the premises?

Will the SPCB ask Parliament to provide a dedicated single point of contact and resource for members who are trying to reopen their offices, who will project manage all that and consolidate all members’ concerns in one place, so that we can open our offices as quickly and as safely as possible?

Sandra White: The SPCB has discussed that. We are looking at new ways to assess offices. Guidance will come out next week and Parliament will notify members of that.

Mr Greene makes a good point about having one point of contact. I say at this point—I have said “point” three times now—that if the member wishes to notify Jackson Carlaw, who represents his party on the corporate body, he can raise the matter, too. There is a point of contact, and members will be updated on the assessment of offices.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think that that is called collective responsibility.

Voting System

3. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it has confidence in the hybrid system of voting. (S5O-04607)

Andy Wightman (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): In short, yes. The corporate body has confidence in the voting system. I should clarify that we do not have a hybrid voting system; we have one voting system that has been put in place to enable members to take part in hybrid meetings and to do so at home, remotely or in the chamber.

The voting application, which was developed during the summer recess—I thank staff for their work on that—allows all members participating in proceedings, whether remotely or in the chamber, to cast their votes accurately and securely from any device with an internet connection and a suitable browser.

We are aware that some issues have arisen with that system. The Presiding Officer wrote to members on 9 September and a written question on that matter from Daniel Johnson was answered on 10 September. Issues have arisen with the system and with the communications that it relies upon, and also with members and users themselves. The system has been constantly tested and refined to ensure that votes continue to be recorded accurately and I assure the member that analysis of the logs and the voting results confirms that we can and should have confidence in their accuracy.

The SPCB recognises that this is a new system and a new way of working for Parliament. It is a vital way of working that enables members—for example those who are shielding and for whom it is impossible to come to the chamber—to contribute remotely.

As I have said, the SPCB recognises that, during the introduction of the new system, several issues have arisen, and it would like to reassure Neil Findlay and all other members that Parliament staff are working hard to address the issues that have been identified and to make improvements to the system and the procedures that are involved.

Neil Findlay: I think everyone wants a system that works and that we can all have confidence in. Unfortunately, depending where in the country members are, connection to the current system can be unstable, voting is subject to problems and delays, problems are slow to be remedied, and results are subject to the Presiding Officer's interpretation.

Parliament staff are doing everything that they can to help, but I am not sure that things are getting an awful lot better. When the big decisions

that are made here—sometimes by a single vote—can have such a big impact on people's health, jobs, businesses, life chances and wellbeing, a voting system in which too many factors can go wrong does not instil confidence. What action is being taken to resolve the problems and how much has been spent on the system so far?

Andy Wightman: We will get back to Neil Findlay on the question of costs, as I do not have them to hand.

Any system that is developed, and which is designed to be able to be used remotely, will rely on communications. The communications for members who are in Aberdeenshire or in Dumfries and Galloway, or in their home or constituency office, will all vary. It is important to recall the advice and guidance that was given to members in relation to using the voting system. It is now well established that, if any member is not confident that their vote has been recorded, they can either raise that via the BlueJeans platform if they are taking part in proceedings in that way or they can raise a point of order in the chamber.

I understand that voting takes time, and that there is still a delay for testing, but the point of that is to ensure that every member who is participating in proceedings is able to cast their vote. We ask for continuing patience from members.

On the question of the Presiding Officer's interpretation of results, we are not responsible for that. The Presiding Officer has ultimate discretion and authority to make decisions on the votes in the chamber. If it is of any assurance to Neil Findlay, we have a detailed log of every member who has logged on to the BlueJeans platform, when they did so and when they logged off, when they logged on to and off the voting system, the votes that have been recorded and whether they have been changed. If the Presiding Officer has any doubt as to the validity of a vote, including votes that are tight, he will, in the normal course of events, and as happened last week, seek to delay declaring the results, in order to satisfy himself from an analysis of the voting system and the logs that all votes were recorded correctly.

I can say little more than to assure Neil Findlay that the system is under constant review, and that any member who has ideas or feedback has been encouraged from the beginning to feed them in. I stress that we need a system of voting to enable parliamentary business to continue. We are doing all we can to make sure that the voting system continues to command confidence.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have a lot of requests for supplementary questions, and we have had quite a comprehensive answer from Mr

Wightman. I wish to take all the supplementary questions because the issue is important, but could we be aware of the time, please?

Neil Findlay: Under the system that we had in the Parliament, if we missed a vote for any reason, such as speaking to a pal, being in the toilet, or daydreaming, the vote was rightly not recorded. At the moment, that can happen, but someone just needs to say, "On a point of order, Presiding Officer: my vote was not recorded." Is that correct?

Andy Wightman: As I understand the standing orders, under the previous system, if a member was daydreaming, in the toilet or delayed by a train, their vote was not recorded—there was no means by which they could have the vote recorded because they were not present in proceedings. If a member is present in proceedings—that is to say, they are on the BlueJeans platform or in the chamber—and has any doubt as to whether their vote was recorded in the way in which they intended, they should raise a point of order. [*Interruption.*] Mr Findlay is asking about missing a vote. If a member has missed a vote, they have missed the vote.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I want to raise the issue of the extreme length of time that it is taking to vote. Last week, it took us 40 minutes to get through four votes. We are all busy people with more important things to do than to sit in here waiting for the voting system to work. This is supposed to be a family-friendly Parliament; there are many members with childcare commitments in the evening, and an extra half hour suddenly being added to the day wreaks havoc with that. If we cannot get the system to work more quickly, can we ditch it for one that does?

Andy Wightman: I understand Murdo Fraser's point about delay, which is a significant issue for some members with caring responsibilities who have plans to get home from Parliament. It is probably a timetabling issue to be raised in the first instance with the Parliamentary Bureau.

We need to allow a period of time to ensure that all members who are present during proceedings are capable of voting. I am sure that if Murdo Fraser was sitting remotely and having connection problems, he would want that time to be allocated—perhaps in particular for a tight vote or a vote on his own amendment—and that is what the Presiding Officer is doing.

I know that it is frustrating, particularly at the end of a busy and long day, but these are some of the compromises that we have to make to ensure that we have a Parliament that can continue to function when many members are not able to be present.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I congratulate the SPCB on what is

an excellent technical solution, which supports my health and that of other older members who wish to be remote from Parliament, if possible.

In the light of the difficulties, which seem to be mostly human rather than technology based, will the SPCB look at standardising the technology platforms that we use more generally? Sometimes, we use Microsoft Teams and BlueJeans. Not everyone is comfortable using multiple platforms and there are opportunities for simplification of the interface. Will that be looked at?

Andy Wightman: I do not know what evidence Stewart Stevenson has for saying that most of the problems have been human; certainly, a lot of the problems are down to users' continuing unfamiliarity and user error, but there have also been issues with communication. We have a log and we know exactly what all the problems have been.

Stewart Stevenson makes a point about standardising and having one platform, but among the reasons for developing the app in its current specification are that it is secure, which is important for a legislature taking votes, and it can be deployed across a range of platforms. Members use a range of platforms, so it accommodates their needs and wishes. It would be inappropriate and might add far greater complexity if we were to insist on standardising platforms that members might perhaps have been using for years.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): In the letter from the Presiding Officer to members on 9 September, which Andy Wightman referred to, there was a reference to external partners being asked to validate and make any necessary improvements to the app. Has any independent specialist been appointed to undertake that work?

Andy Wightman: I do not know; that is an operational detail. We will ensure that the SPCB gets back to Miles Briggs to let him know.

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Everyone appreciates the hard work that staff are putting in to ensure the integrity of the voting system, but there is no doubt that it is causing anxiety.

When somebody's vote has not been recorded and they raise a point of order, the Presiding Officer deems that he can add on the vote accordingly. Is that consistent with the Parliament's standing orders for the recording of votes?

Andy Wightman: Questions on the interpretation of standing orders are not really for us in the SPCB to address, although I note the fact that the Presiding Officer has substantial discretion in ensuring that he is comfortable with

the votes and that they have been recorded. I have no doubt that the Presiding Officer is applying the standing orders correctly, but I am not in a position to interpret the standing orders myself.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Kelly, I will ensure that the Presiding Officer's office sends out an answer to your question.

Staff Cost Provision (Review)

4. **James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body when it will publish the terms of reference and timeline of its review into the staff cost provision. (S5O-04608)

Liam McArthur (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): I announced to the chamber at the previous SPCB question time in March 2020 that there would be a review during this parliamentary session of the staff cost provision. Following that, the Presiding Officer wrote to business managers on 13 May 2020, and a memo was issued by SPCB members to their parliamentary group members on 14 May. That included the report and recommendations arising from the review of the reimbursement of members' expenses scheme, as well as the agreed terms of reference for the review of the staff cost provision as commissioned by the SPCB. The remit for the staff cost provision review, along with the report of the wider review of the members' expenses scheme, are available on the SPCB pages of the Parliament's website.

The review is on-going, and the SPCB expects to consider its findings later in the autumn. If, following that consideration, any changes to the staff cost provision are recommended, those will be subject to a resolution of the Parliament. The SPCB expects that to take place towards the end of the current session in order that any changes could be introduced from the beginning of the next session in May 2021.

James Kelly: As was highlighted earlier, there is no doubt that there has been substantial growth both in the number of queries that members' offices have received during the Covid-19 pandemic and in the complexity of those queries. I pay tribute to all parties' staff for their work in serving our constituents.

The pandemic has also highlighted the need for members to have capable, experienced staff who are able to assist them with such queries and to support them in scrutinising legislation and Government activity in the Parliament. Therefore it is essential that the staff cost provision review is carried out timeously and comes to an appropriate conclusion. There must also be sufficient transparency around it. The GMB union has raised

with me its concern about the lack of consultation with trade unions and with those in the workplace.

What is the process for the review? Will the SPCB set out a clear plan for engaging not only with members but with staff representatives and trade unions?

Liam McArthur: I thank James Kelly, who, perhaps prompted by Bill Kidd's earlier remarks, has rightly pointed out the substantial increase not just in the number of questions but in the complexity of the issues that members' staff are having to deal with. That situation is very much informing the current review. It is considering not just the scale or the level of the provision but the way in which job descriptions and roles are defined, both to provide the flexibility that members quite clearly need and to reflect the changing nature of the roles themselves.

I also thank Mr Kelly for his involvement in the review. A number of members have committed to being interviewed as part of it. I encourage Bill Kidd and any other member with an interest to make their interest known to the Scottish Parliament information centre so that it can involve them. Following a survey of members' staff, interviews are also taking place with individuals among them.

The involvement of trade unions has been raised previously. Ultimately, members are the employers of their staff, so the review needs to take into consideration the views of both members and those staff. I am sure that the concerns that the GMB has made known to the SPCB in writing will be reflected through the interview and survey process.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that the ultimate responsibility will fall to members, but we must ensure that the staff cost provision provides them with the wherewithal to employ the staff they need if they are to perform their roles on behalf of their constituents.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body question time. There will now be a short suspension so that some of the desks can be cleaned.

14:53

Meeting suspended.

14:56

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Economy, Fair Work and Culture

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is portfolio questions. As usual, in order to get as many people in as possible, short and succinct questions will be good.

Members who are tuning in remotely and who want to ask a supplementary question should please indicate that with the letter “R” during the relevant questions. Others should press their request-to-speak buttons.

Covid-19 Assistance for Cultural Organisations (North East Scotland)

1. Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what financial assistance it has made available for cultural organisations in the north-east since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown. (S5O-04597)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): Cultural organisations in the north-east have received funding from many Scottish Government Covid-19 funds, including Creative Scotland’s open project funding and performing arts venues relief fund; the pivotal enterprise resilience fund; the creative, tourism and hospitality enterprises hardship fund; the third sector resilience fund; and Covid-19 emergency funds administered by Museums Galleries Scotland.

Aberdeen Performing Arts, Castlegate Arts, the Out of the Darkness Theatre Company in Elgin, Deveron Projects in Huntly, and Findhorn Bay Arts are among those that have received funding.

I have also recently announced further funding of £59 million for the culture sector, from which cultural organisations in the north-east will be able to seek assistance.

Liam Kerr: It is clear that that funding is too little, too late for the first city in Scotland to have had to contend with a second lockdown.

In the past few weeks, one of Aberdeen’s biggest nightclubs, Nox, has closed its doors. Three other venues have had to launch a crowdfunder in order to survive. Comedy clubs, including Breakneck Comedy, have written to the Scottish National Party Government warning that Scottish comedy is at breaking point. Restaurants and pubs are closing, including, just yesterday, the popular Under the Hammer.

For all the warm words and self-congratulation, when will the SNP Government finally start to take an interest in the north-east, and provide some genuine support that might reverse the trend?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is a succinct question for you.

Fiona Hyslop: The cultural organisations that I speak to are very grateful for the funding that has been announced. Much of it comes from consequentials from the United Kingdom Government, which may have been announced but are yet to be spent.

From today, the £15 million culture organisations and venues recovery fund, which will help support many of the organisations that Liam Kerr has talked about, including the comedy and theatre sectors, is open for applications. I encourage those who want to apply to make sure that they contact Creative Scotland to do so. That is action; it gets the money to cultural organisations; and people are very grateful for the efforts that have been made.

It is tough; it is difficult for everyone. However, I hope that Liam Kerr will also encourage the UK Government to think about the other sectors—in particular, the events sector—that cannot open any time soon, and to think about providing them with additional funds. That would bring consequentials, so we could do even more than we are already doing to support the north-east.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Last year, the cabinet secretary visited Creative Stirling, and I am sure that she was impressed with its role as a real incubator of innovation and social enterprise. However, across Scotland, such organisations are struggling to fit with Creative Scotland’s very narrow vision of what the sector can do. How will the cabinet secretary ensure that organisations such as Creative Stirling get the funding that they need to help lead placemaking and the recovery from Covid?

Fiona Hyslop: The culture organisations and venues recovery fund is very broad, and deliberately so. I cannot give an answer today as to whether Creative Stirling, which I have visited, is eligible, but I encourage it to consider applying to the fund. The fund has opened to applications today and the guidance was produced last week.

I was extremely impressed with Creative Stirling’s support for freelancers and artists and the vibrancy that it is bringing to the city centre. It is a really good example of what the creative industries and culture can bring. We have announced funding for freelancers and we hope to open that fund to applications soon, which will help individual artists. The Creative Stirling venue, the service that it provides and the energy, innovation

and ideas that I experienced when I visited it are all welcome. I want Creative Stirling to survive and thrive.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): On breakfast television, I saw Brian Cox doing an interview in which he said that he had written to the First Minister to make the case for the King's theatre in Edinburgh, which is an independent theatre. I have tried to make that same case in writing to the cabinet secretary in relation to the Alhambra theatre in Dunfermline, which is also an independent theatre. Some independent theatres do not seem to be included in the money that is being distributed. Can that be looked at?

Fiona Hyslop: The King's theatre is eligible for the performing arts venues fund, and it has applied to that. Brian Cox's interest was to do with a capital project at the theatre, which we have had discussions about previously. In August, I replied to two letters from Capital Theatres in relation to that issue, and discussions on that are on-going.

However, the £15 million culture organisations and venues recovery fund is exactly for the type of theatre that the member wrote to me about. It is not just about support for regularly funded organisations. We want to try to prevent insolvencies and support freelancers. That fund is open for applications today, and I am sure that the Alhambra theatre, which the member wrote to me about, can consider applying to it.

Regional Economic Development (Ayrshire)

2. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on progress with Scottish Enterprise's strategic approach to regional economic development in Ayrshire. (S50-04598)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): Our response to the advisory group on economic recovery committed Scottish Enterprise to working intensively with partners in Ayrshire over the next 12 months as part of a continued shift to a more regionally focused place-based model for economic development. Scottish Enterprise is examining ways to strengthen collaboration in the region with partners in the Ayrshire regional economic partnership. The strategic approach to economic development in Ayrshire will also be the focus of discussion by the Scottish Enterprise board in early October.

Willie Coffey: I am pleased that that approach to delivering economic growth for Ayrshire is focusing on our local needs and aspirations. Can the cabinet secretary give an indication of what engagement there will be with the private and public sectors and whether that will include direct

participation by local members of the Scottish Parliament and members of the United Kingdom Parliament?

Fiona Hyslop: I encourage Scottish Enterprise to work with the regional economic partnership, of which it is part, along with the local authorities. Obviously, engagement with elected members in the Scottish Parliament, Westminster and the local authority is expected of the regional partnerships.

We are keen that the Ayrshire growth deal is signed as soon as a date can be co-ordinated with the UK Government, as that will help to drive forward the investment that we are looking for. The vision for Ayrshire and collaboration between the three Ayrshire councils are really important. Central to that is support and investment from the private sector. All the growth deals have a combination of public funding and private investment. That co-ordination and regional focus from Scottish Enterprise will, I hope, bear fruit. We are in difficult times, which is exactly when we need the vision and drive to deliver economic growth in Ayrshire.

Apprenticeships (Highlands and Islands)

3. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what additional action it is taking to protect apprenticeship schemes in the Highlands and Islands, and how this compares with the rest of Scotland. (S50-04599)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): Apprenticeships are a core part of Scotland's skills system and continue to play a key role in our economic recovery from Covid-19. In the Highlands and Islands specifically, Skills Development Scotland, the Scottish Government and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have signed a charter agreement that includes a commitment by the local authority to provide low-cost housing for apprentices to enable young people to earn, learn and live in the islands.

Funding is also available to support the provision of modern apprenticeships in Scotland's rural areas through the rural supplement, and in 2019-20, spend in the Highlands and Islands was £459,250.

In addition, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Skills Development Scotland has been working with partners in the Highlands and Islands to support regional economic planning and to protect and expand existing apprenticeships within the region.

Edward Mountain: Apprentices in the Highlands face particular problems relating to travel. As many of them are unable to drive, they rely on transport that is provided by their employer and which is driven by another employee. To

some employers, that is providing an unacceptable level of risk.

What advice can the minister give to employers and apprentices who face that challenging situation?

Jamie Hepburn: I would say to them that they should discuss that matter with their training provider. The very point of the rural supplement that I mentioned is to take account of the additional difficulties that I recognise exist in rural communities—Edward Mountain will have a better appreciation of those challenges than I do—in being able to commute to and from a place of work. The rural supplement provides support to meet some of the additional costs involved.

As I said, in any circumstance, I would encourage the apprentice and the employer to discuss such matters with their training provider in the first instance.

Consequentials (Allocation to Arts, Culture and Heritage Sectors)

4. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Government how much of the £97 million in United Kingdom Government consequentials announced on 5 July for the arts, culture and heritage sectors is still to be allocated, and when a decision will be made on the allocation of any remaining funding. (S5O-04600)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): The £81.47 million of emergency funding that has already been announced, together with the £10 million for performing arts venues, brings the total to more than £91 million.

Today, I can confirm that a further £5 million will be provided. That includes £4 million for historic environment sector recovery, which will support organisations to remain solvent, protect jobs and ensure that attractions can reopen. It will also assist investment in critical repairs and maintenance, and support historic building projects across Scotland that have been put at risk because of the pandemic. The other £1 million will support Scotland's science centres as part of funding that has already been announced.

We are still in discussion with the sectors about the remaining funding, and we will consider, for example, supplementing the funds that have already been announced once demand is fully understood.

Claire Baker: Although it is welcome that some of the funds are already open, the timescale for delivery of the funds goes well into November. Can the funds be accelerated? Is any bridging support available to enable organisations to get to that point?

Can the cabinet secretary confirm that companies can apply to the funds in question even if they already receive the small business support grant? The awarding of that grant excluded companies from receiving the events industry support fund.

Fiona Hyslop: The fund that has been announced today is the £15 million culture organisations and venues recovery fund. The guidelines for that were announced a week ago, and it opens for applications today. The applications will be assessed by 24 September. We are taking a very quick and rapid approach to our treatment of that fund.

As Claire Baker said, it might take until November for some of the funds to be allocated, but that is no different from the situation with the United Kingdom funds. The UK funds were announced earlier, but the application process is later—they will be distributed in November.

I am sorry—I should correct what I said. The additional funding for the performing arts recovery fund will be announced on 24 September. Applications can be made to the culture organisations and venues recovery fund from today and the deadline is Thursday 24 September.

We want to ensure that we reach as many organisations as possible. We are being quite targeted, and we are looking at how we can expand provision for freelancers.

We have also included nightclubs that provide live music as part of the venue's activities—we know that that is an issue that Claire Baker and others have talked about. I understand the desire to get the funds distributed as quickly as possible but they have to be dealt with through a robust application process.

The awards for the grass-roots music venues stabilisation fund will be announced on Tuesday 22 September, and applications for the independent cinemas recovery and resilience fund opened on 14 September and have a deadline of 5 October.

There is a lot of work to be done on trying to process the applications and set up the schemes from scratch, but we are doing it by trying, where we can, to make sure that we have focused funds in areas where we know that there is general interest—the culture organisation and venues recovery fund is an example of that. We are also trying to make sure that we reach as many people as possible, and that is why we are holding back some funds—although it is not a huge amount—because we know that there will be great demand for the freelancers fund, for the venues fund and also, I suspect, for events funding.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I appreciate that your answer had to be long because there was a lot of detail in it, cabinet secretary. I will take a brief question from Maurice Golden.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): In recent correspondence, the Scottish Government was unable to confirm whether further support would be available for Glasgow's Pavilion Theatre. Will the cabinet secretary take the opportunity today to remove that uncertainty for one of Glasgow's much-loved institutions?

Fiona Hyslop: Maurice Golden was probably the last of about 20 MSPs who wrote to me about the Glasgow Pavilion Theatre. It has probably had more letters written about it than any other venue.

The Pavilion is a commercial theatre and it has international backing. It is quite well provided for, but it has pressures—I understand that. If Maurice Golden reads the letter that I wrote to him, he will see that I said that we are looking at what can be provided. A week ago, the theatre would have understood that applications to the culture organisations and venues recovery fund would open today; the guidance was available last week.

I am pleased that Maurice Golden has come belatedly to the final charge from all the members from across Glasgow and beyond to support the Glasgow Pavilion Theatre. It can now apply for the recovery fund, but Maurice Golden might want to tell it that the deadline for applications is Thursday 24 September and to put in an application; it has been able to look at the guidance for the past week.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I want to try to get through all the questions. Question 5 is from Murdo Fraser.

Covid-19 Restrictions (Business Support)

5. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is giving to businesses that have been impacted the most by Covid-19 restrictions. (S5O-04601)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government has provided a package of direct support for business that is worth more than £2.3 billion. We have provided £972 million-worth of Covid rates relief to reduce business costs. That includes 1.6 per cent in rates relief for all non-domestic properties in 2021 and 100 per cent relief for properties in retail, hospitality, leisure and aviation. We have also funded more than 90,000 grants, exceeding £1 billion, targeting businesses that have been impacted most by Covid-19 through the small business and retail, hospitality and leisure support grants.

In addition, we have provided £157 million to 4,060 small and medium-sized enterprises and 5,676 self-employed people through our hardship and pivotal enterprise resilience funds, which gave our enterprise agencies and local authorities the flexibility to identify and support businesses that were suffering the greatest impact from the economic crisis. That support is provided on top of United Kingdom Government schemes, which we have welcomed. However, as we have pointed out repeatedly, the UK Government can and should go further to support Scottish businesses during these challenging times.

Murdo Fraser: We have a number of wedding venues in Perthshire. They make an enormous economic contribution through direct employment and, more particularly, through indirect employment with ancillary employers. Those venues are struggling; they have had no income for most of this year, and they have no certainty about their ability to take bookings for future events. What more can the cabinet secretary do to assist those struggling venues?

Fiona Hyslop: We take the issue of wedding venues very seriously. Indeed, my colleague Fergus Ewing has engaged with the sector and in particular with venues such as hotels that rely on weddings for their income.

The announcement of changes to the number of people who are able to take part in receptions was welcomed by the hospitality industry because that can create the movement that they need for bookings.

A member of my family is getting married next year, so I know that there is a lot of pressure because of the lack of activity at the moment. Next year will be extremely busy and a lot of the issues are about sustainability between now and when businesses can reopen.

We are looking closely at the very few sector areas that still require to be closed or to have severe restrictions. I have discussed that with the UK Government. We know about aviation from yesterday's debate and about the events sector, which we have talked about. We also know about nightclubs that do not have music, for example, as well as wedding venues. We are looking at the issue very seriously, and we are trying to take some steps.

The emergency funding through the hotel recovery programme, which Fergus Ewing also announced, will help particular venues and hotels. Again, that additional funding is specific to Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I would like to get everybody in, so I ask for short answers and short questions.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Murdo Fraser seems to have forgotten one lifeline. An extension of the furlough scheme would provide a lifeline for businesses that have been impacted most by the coronavirus restrictions and which will not have fully recovered by October. Given that the UK Government is not willing to extend the scheme, does the cabinet secretary agree that further fiscal flexibility should be devolved to Scotland to enable us to protect jobs and firms?

Fiona Hyslop: If the UK Government does not want to take on the responsibility to extend the furlough scheme, the least that it could do is to provide Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland with the flexibility to borrow, to allow us to move forward.

This afternoon, we have an opportunity to vote collectively for an extension to the furlough scheme. We understand that it cannot be extended for ever. Ken Skates of the Welsh Government, Nadhim Zahawi of the UK Government and I had an active discussion about the furlough scheme only yesterday at the quadrilateral meeting. There was no indication that the UK Government will change its position, but the minister was open to understanding the arguments for why the position should change.

I appeal to the Parliament to get behind the Government's motion today and to send a strong message from Scotland that, given the evidence base and the international comparisons, we should be able to find a way forward.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): With so many large offices rightly adapting to home working, the challenges that face independent businesses in our city centres are immediate and long term. What steps can the Scottish Government take right now to prevent our city centres from dying? Does the cabinet secretary agree that, in the long term, increasing the amount of domestic residential use in our city centres is one important part of the solution?

Fiona Hyslop: Last week, I had an active discussion with the Scottish Cities Alliance and the political leadership of all of Scotland's cities about Patrick Harvie's last point. We looked at how we can ensure that there is a vibrancy to our city centres that respects the changes in work patterns, which is important.

Only yesterday, the First Minister and I were on a call with the Scottish Retail Consortium, which is obviously very concerned about the footfall issues. We are also working with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and the Scottish Trades Union Congress on how we might have a sensible phased return to remaining offices that respects home working and the changes and shifts that

most companies are now making, which will probably be permanent.

We need to look at the lifeblood of city centres. That means diversification, and a revisioning of what that means. Rethinking residential use in city centres will help people who are looking for more housing, but it will also help the independent businesses to which Patrick Harvie referred.

Home Working (Public Sector)

6. Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports home working in the public sector. (S5O-04602)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): In July, we published cross-sectoral guidance on home working that supports the public sector and all employers with the continuation of home working, where possible.

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture wrote to public sector leaders across Scotland recently to encourage them to act in accordance with the statement of fair work practices, which was published on 19 July. That includes facilitating home working and other flexible working arrangements. The statement outlines the shared commitment to putting fair work at the heart of Scotland's economic recovery.

Dr Allan: The trend towards home working that has been brought about by the pandemic has the potential to be beneficial in the longer run for Scotland's rural and island areas, with more and more people able to pursue their chosen career path without having to move away from their communities. What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that more posts in the public sector can be open to people working from home or, perhaps, from hot desks in rural offices?

Jamie Hepburn: A recommendation on the subject was made at a meeting of the Convention of the Highlands and Islands in October 2019 and the Government has committed to analyse it with particular reference to the Highlands and Islands. Covid-19 has somewhat overtaken that work, but we are seeing that shift happen anyway, as employers are responding to the challenge and facilitating home working.

We need to show leadership in that regard. The Scottish Government is facilitating home working for its own workforce and is also committed to assessing the scope for the establishment of a centre for workplace transformation. Part of that work will involve discussions with those who represent the rural economy. We are committed to that exploration both as a short-term necessity and for the many benefits that it will bring in relation to flexible working for individuals and local

economies, such as those that Alasdair Allan represents.

Investment (Stimulation)

7. Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how it plans to stimulate greater investment in Scotland's economy in the wake of Covid-19. (S5O-04603)

The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (Ivan McKee): The Government recognises the role of investment in Scotland's economic recovery, as is clearly illustrated in the recently published programme for government 2020.

We have already launched our £3 billion green investment portfolio and will launch our inward investment plan in October this year to build on our performance as the best-performing place in the United Kingdom, outside of London, in attracting inward investment.

Jamie Greene: The minister knows fine well that Derek Mackay, the then finance secretary, promised a foreign direct investment growth plan. Where is that plan? How much has it raised and how is it different from the inward investment plan? When will the latter be published?

Ivan McKee: The member is perhaps a bit confused. The programme for government 2019 was quite clear that we would publish a foreign direct and inward investment plan in the summer of this year. That has clearly been delayed by a few weeks as a consequence of officials rightly focusing on the response and recovery plans in reaction to Covid. The FDI plan will be published, as I said, at the beginning of October this year. I look forward to seeing the member in the chamber for my statement on it and to answering his questions then.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Greater London, with 13 per cent of the UK's population and 0.6 per cent of its area, received 28 per cent of UK Government transport investment and 46 per cent of UK Government infrastructure investment last year. What discussions have been held with the UK Government to ensure that Scotland receives its fair share of taxpayer-funded investment in transport and infrastructure?

Ivan McKee: I agree that it is essential that Scotland receives a fair and sufficient funding settlement on transport and infrastructure as well as on other key areas of spending and investment. The UK Government has been focused on London for too long and needs to deliver on its rhetoric of levelling up across the UK.

We published a paper in June that outlined 10 principles that the Scottish Government believes

the UK Government should follow to support the economy and public finances as they recover from the impacts of Covid-19. Those principles include pressing the case for a significant fiscal stimulus and accelerating major investment in infrastructure, as well as loosening the restrictions on our borrowing powers.

The Scottish Government remains committed to increasing levels of investment through our national infrastructure mission, and the Scottish ministers will continue to promote the value of infrastructure investment in our dialogue with the UK Government.

Covid-19 (Funding for Grass-roots Music Venues in Glasgow)

8. Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how much funding it has provided to grass-roots music venues in Glasgow since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. (S5O-04604)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): The grass-roots music venues stabilisation fund is worth a total of £2.2 million. Applications closed on 3 September and outcomes are expected to be notified on 22 September. To date, almost £240,000 has been awarded to grass-roots music venues in Glasgow from other Scottish Government funds.

Johann Lamont: Although any support is welcome, industry representatives still have serious concerns about the long-term survival of our much-loved venues and potential redundancies are just around the corner. Glasgow cannot afford to lose those vitally important venues. More than 16,000 jobs in Glasgow depend on the night-time economy, which generates £2.16 billion per year in income.

Can the minister urgently review what further support can be provided to that vital industry for Glasgow and work with local authorities, industry representatives and trade unions to ensure that that desperately needed support is provided?

Fiona Hyslop: My Scottish Government colleagues have engaged with the night-time economy and I encourage them to go further with that. We understand that 98 applications have been received for the fund that I just mentioned, 29 of which are from Glasgow venues.

I have had several recent discussions with Susan Aitken, the leader of Glasgow City Council. She has underlined the importance of the night-time economy and the music industry to the survival of much of our culture and the vibrancy of music tourism. As the UNESCO city of music, Glasgow has a great focus on that. I understand and appreciate, and am fully aware of, the

seriousness of the issue. We will constantly look at other means by which we can help to support the night-time economy—I mentioned further issues regarding nightclubs that we will continue to look at.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions on economy, fair work and culture. Time is pressing, so I will move straight on to the next item of business as I see that members are all here and ready.

Employment Support

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next item of business is a debate on S5M-22731, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on employment support. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak-buttons.

15:25

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): Back in April, the Scottish Government welcomed the introduction of the United Kingdom's job retention scheme. The furlough scheme has maintained the viability of businesses and protected jobs in what has been a period unlike anything that we have experienced in our lifetimes.

As the economy opens gradually and safely, some have been able to return to their jobs, but the job retention scheme continues to support many. Although we welcome measures that have been taken by the UK Government, UK ministers should follow the lead of other European countries by extending the job retention scheme. Ending the furlough scheme prematurely runs the risk of pushing many businesses and employees into crisis.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Hepburn: If Murdo Fraser can explain why that is a sensible thing to do, I will happily give way.

Murdo Fraser: I am grateful to the minister for giving way so early in his speech. At this early stage, I wanted him to set out on the record that the UK furlough scheme has been among the most generous in the world.

Jamie Hepburn: I am happy to concede that the UK furlough scheme has been an excellent initiative. That might be why I am here urging the UK Government to extend such a sensible scheme. I look forward to the member supporting that at decision time.

Just yesterday, the Scottish Government published new analysis on Scottish firms' use of the furlough scheme. It shows that, over the piece, nearly 100,000 people in Scotland have been supported by that scheme, that an estimated 15 per cent of Scotland's workforce are still on furlough and that, of all firms that were surveyed, two thirds were still furloughing their employees to some extent.

As highlighted by the Scottish Government's chief economic adviser in his report, extending the job retention scheme for even just eight months could reduce unemployment in Scotland by 61,000

through the first half of next year. Although only a temporary measure, that would have a positive impact on the labour market, preventing unnecessarily higher levels of unemployment over the next few years. Many businesses have a viable long-term future, but only if they continue to be supported. Keeping people in jobs rather than transferring the cost to the state through the social security system makes sense. Sustaining businesses to reduce economic decline, which jeopardises other businesses and jobs, makes sense. Without longer-term support, there is a risk that firms will fall off the cliff edge and that many people who otherwise might not have, will fall out of the labour market. That does not make sense.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I support the motion and the minister's contribution so far. Back in June, the Parliament agreed to set out in financial terms the total sum of what the benefit would be, or has been, of the furlough scheme to Scotland. Has the minister been able to calculate that and can he tell us what that figure is? What is the financial benefit to Scotland?

Jamie Hepburn: Just yesterday, as I have alluded to, the chief economic adviser published a full assessment of the benefits of the introduction of the furlough scheme. I refer Mr Rennie to that report, so that he can see the assessment in more detail.

Willie Rennie: Will the minister give way?

Jamie Hepburn: I am afraid not, Mr Rennie. I am happy to give way in closing.

In calling for the UK Government to extend the furlough scheme, I recognise the role that this Government must play in supporting businesses and workers in Scotland. We have taken that role seriously and continue to do so. That is why we moved quickly at the outset of this crisis to put a package of support in place that is worth more than £2.3 billion for Scotland's businesses. That support has been essential for Scotland's business community and we have looked to bridge gaps in support wherever we can.

The support has included £34 million for the newly self-employed hardship fund, to provide help for those who entered self-employment after April 2019 and were not covered by UK Government support, and it has included £30 million for the creative, tourism and hospitality enterprises hardship fund. In August, the First Minister announced £59 million in support for our important creative industries sector. We will be also be supporting our recovery with a £100 million green jobs fund, our £60 million youth guarantee, our £25 million transition training fund and other interventions as we move forward.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): How many young people will the £60 million youth guarantee scheme provide for?

Jamie Hepburn: The fundamental principle of the scheme is to guarantee every young person in Scotland the chance to get employment, education or training. I am not suggesting that that fund alone will cover all of that but, clearly, that is the role that it will play. That is the nature of the guarantee.

We need the UK Government to continue its support too. We have seen a number of other countries realise that such support, through equivalent schemes, will need to continue in the medium to longer term. France and Germany are extending their equivalents to the furlough scheme. Ireland and Denmark, which are of similar size to Scotland, have both extended their support schemes, too. Those countries have realised that it is only through on-going help and support that they can assist their economies, protect jobs and promote business survival.

Why can the Chancellor of the Exchequer not do the same? Let me be clear. Were Scotland, which is of similar size to Ireland and Denmark, an independent country, that is what we would be doing right now. Yet, according to the chancellor, that is not the right approach for workers and employers here. In a recent letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, he stated:

"Leaving the furlough scheme open forever gives people false hope that it will always be possible to return to the jobs they had before."

We are not asking for the furlough scheme to be continued for ever. However, it was introduced in the first place because restrictions on normal economic activity had to be put in place to save lives.

The progress that we have made in tackling Covid-19—as fragile as that may be—has already meant that businesses in many sectors that faced restrictions at the start of the crisis are now able to open safely. However, some restrictions remain, and they are essential if we are to contain the spread of the virus. Ending the furlough scheme prematurely, before we are able to lift those restrictions, will cause unnecessary and widespread disruption. People who are doing the right thing now, by staying home and keeping their businesses closed, should not be abandoned while they still need support. Although in some sectors a significant number of people have already gone back to work, we should recognise that the research that we published yesterday indicates that around two thirds of businesses overall might have at least one person on furlough.

In the chancellor's summer economic update, he announced the job retention bonus scheme. It is a one-off payment scheme to employers of £1,000 for every employee who was previously claimed for under furlough who remains in continuous employment through to 31 January 2021. We are concerned that it does not target support at the employers and workers who are most likely to need it. The bonus scheme will cost around £9.4 billion if all employers UK-wide take it up. However, a temporary extension of the furlough scheme is estimated to cost around £10 billion. The bonus scheme is untargeted, which means that firms could be paid for retaining jobs that were never at risk. Extending the furlough scheme could be more effective at saving jobs that are at risk in the short term, and it could be a better utilisation of public funds.

It is not just the Scottish Government that is of the view that the job retention scheme should be extended. Many others have made similar calls for the UK Government to change its approach. The general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress has said that the UK Government must ensure that the scheme continues past October, and the general secretary of Unite has called for the same. Our business organisations, which I speak to and engage with regularly, are expressing their concern about a premature end to the furlough scheme.

We will take all possible action to support the economy. As outlined in our programme for government, that includes a range of measures to protect key sectors that are badly affected by the pandemic, but employers and workers in Scotland continue to need wider support that can currently be offered only by the UK Government. It has done that, correctly, through using borrowing powers that the Scottish Government does not have. It has delivered its schemes, again correctly, through Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, which the Scottish Government has no responsibility for.

We need to be able to respond to the continuing public health challenge of Covid-19. As we have seen in Scotland, other parts of the UK, and indeed globally, that will sometimes mean reintroducing restrictions to help contain the virus to save lives. The furlough scheme has been the foundation of the support available to businesses and workers to help them to comply with public health requirements. It has been a welcome contribution in responding to Covid-19, but the pandemic is not going to disappear at the end of next month, and neither is the economic impact. Ending the furlough scheme prematurely would not be a welcome contribution to responding to Covid-19. The UK Government's insistence that the scheme should end on 31 October, with no indication of a replacement, is out of step with the

decisions that many other countries are taking, out of step with the views of many here in Scotland and across the UK, and out of step with the needs of employers and workers the length and breadth of the country.

The UK Government must extend the furlough scheme, and this evening at decision time the Scottish Parliament must make its voice heard in calling for that.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that the UK Government's furlough scheme should be extended to provide support and certainty to employers and workers in Scotland for as long as public health restrictions are required to control the spread of COVID-19, recognising that there are specific sectors that will be affected for a longer period.

15:37

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): No one should be under the illusion that we face anything less than a full-blown jobs crisis. The latest figures show that Scotland now has the highest unemployment rate anywhere in the UK. The rate here is 4.6 per cent—in England it is 4.1 per cent, in Wales it is 3.1 per cent and in Northern Ireland it is 2.9 per cent. Those are not just numbers. Real people are facing redundancy across Scotland—at Rolls-Royce, in the oil and gas sector, at our major city airports and on high streets up and down the country.

Every effort must be made to save jobs and get people back to work. I welcome Labour's amendment, which is a positive addition to the debate, and I look forward to hearing more from Labour members as well as from other contributors.

The Scottish Government has made some welcome proposals to aid our economic recovery—for example, the Logan report on digital skills and infrastructure, "Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review", which contains recommendations for immediate action and long-term strategic change. That long-term change will be needed to build resilience and opportunity in the employment market in order to mitigate a future crisis.

The same can be said of Benny Higgins's report, "Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland: Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery", which is focused on saving jobs and reducing inequality. The former is obviously of immediate concern, but tackling inequality is especially important over the long term, and will be crucial to building the resilience that I spoke of, and to ensuring equality of opportunity for all in respect of employment.

The Higgins report is also right to highlight the need to focus on the opportunities that are

available to young people, because young people are bearing the brunt of job losses—not least, because many work in hard-hit sectors including hospitality, in which the pub trade alone could see as many as 12,500 jobs go. I therefore welcome the youth guarantee, as outlined in Sandy Begbie’s initial report, to help to ensure that young people are given targeted support. That support should be particularly tailored to smaller firms, given the fact that they, as the Federation of Small Businesses advises, account for 99.3 per cent of all private sector businesses. It would also be helpful if the various employment support schemes were better co-ordinated.

To aid the youth guarantee further, and in order to help as many young people as possible, it is vital that it complements the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s new £2 billion kick-start scheme for 16 to 24-year-olds who are most at risk of long-term unemployment. I was pleased to see that Sandy Begbie recommends that approach. I urge ministers to get behind the kick-start scheme, just as they got behind the chancellor’s coronavirus job retention scheme, which the Scottish National Party admitted is one of the best in the world. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture went as far as to say that the furlough scheme is a “lifeline”.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I thank Maurice Golden for taking an intervention. I have just one point to make. Last week, in a debate in the House of Commons, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Steve Barclay, said:

“It is in no one’s long-term interests for the scheme to continue, least of all those trapped in a job that only exists because of the furlough scheme.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 9 September 2020; Vol 679, c 634.]

Does Maurice Golden agree with that? If so, does he have anything to say to those who are trapped in sectors that are yet to reopen?

Maurice Golden: I thank George Adam for that intervention.

If we listen to the SNP, the Scottish Government paper “COVID-19: Analysis of Extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme” said that

“the furlough scheme cannot continue indefinitely”.

The SNP has also admitted, as I said, that the scheme is among the best in the world but there is a balance to be struck.

Jamie Hepburn: Will the member give way?

Maurice Golden: I am developing the theme. Spending more increases debt, potentially decreases the credit rating of the UK, will increase the cost of borrowing and risk stagflation. However, we need to stop long-term scarring, and that is why I have consistently argued for sector-

specific packages, as George Adam mentioned in his intervention. I am happy to give way.

Jamie Hepburn: Maurice Golden recognises that we are not calling for the scheme to be extended for time without end, but are asking for a sensible extension to support people through a difficult time. Will he acknowledge that a short eight-month extension has the potential to save 61,000 jobs in Scotland over the first half of next year? Surely that is something that we should get behind.

Maurice Golden: The minister should understand the wider economic impact and—as I have mentioned—with regard to increasing borrowing, the risk to the overall deficit. Those are the issues that the chancellor will be considering.

Several members rose.

Maurice Golden: I am going to make progress.

I also respect the minister’s and the cabinet secretary’s views on the furlough scheme. If they had listened to SNP back benchers, who booed the scheme when I last mentioned it in the chamber, they would have put party politics ahead of welcoming almost a million Scottish jobs being saved.

However, the furlough scheme must end at some point, as the SNP has admitted. Even once it draws to a close, that is not the end of the story, because the job retention bonus will pay £1,000 for every furloughed employee who is kept on. The furlough scheme is just one part of the massive £16 billion support that the UK Government has deployed in Scotland.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Maurice Golden: I take it that I do not have extra time, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give you extra time for interventions

Keith Brown: I thank Maurice Golden for giving way. Does he agree with the Resolution Foundation, which has said that the job retention bonus

“will not make a major difference to employment levels”

and cites the “significant deadweight” that the minister referred to? If he does not agree with the Resolution Foundation on that point, can he explain why?

Maurice Golden: Keith Brown, who during his tenure as minister presided over a disastrous economic strategy for Scotland, has a hard neck to try to lecture me on economics.

I will outline other measures that are complementary to the job retention bonus. For example, 63,000 Scottish businesses have benefited from a bounce back loan from the UK Government. In total, the loans are worth £1.8 billion.

Several members rose.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Do you wish to give way, Mr Golden?

Maurice Golden: No, I am going to make progress.

More than 2,600 firms have received support worth almost £600 million from the coronavirus business interruption loan scheme. VAT has been slashed to just 5 per cent to help our hospitality industry, and hospitality businesses and families got another boost with the eat out to help out scheme, which has served up more than 8,500 half-price meals in Scotland. That is all direct help from the UK Government to protect businesses and save jobs.

Of course, the story does not end there, and the UK Government must look at further measures to support specific sectors. However, we must also address the deep-seated problems in the Scottish economy—problems that existed before Covid. In August, the number of people starting new jobs dropped to its lowest rate since February, but even before the crisis, Scotland's jobs growth rate was the worst in the UK. Since the SNP took power, the number of Scots in work has increased only by 4.6 per cent, compared with 10.2 per cent for the UK as a whole. In effect, SNP policies have cost Scotland more than 250,000 jobs.

In contrast, the Scottish Conservatives have set out a range of practical measures to save jobs, get the economy moving and build resilience against future shocks. They include: job security councils to match skills with vacancies to mitigate further unemployment; a hardship fund for businesses that are forced to re-close because of local lockdowns; a town centre adaptation fund to improve active travel and make other health and safety changes; a Scotland-first procurement plan that would favour local suppliers; the creation of a joint UK and Scotland infrastructure investment vehicle to allow joint funding of national-level projects; use of the city deals model to help our smaller towns and rural areas; and much more besides.

Those policies are ready to help people now—if the Scottish Government is willing to listen and to put protecting jobs and saving the economy ahead of constitutional arguments. If it can rise to that, the Scottish Conservatives stand ready to help.

I move amendment S5M-22731.2, to leave out from “believes” to end and insert:

“welcomes the protection of more than 900,000 jobs in Scotland as part of the UK Government’s Job Retention and Self-Employment Income Support schemes; notes that the Chancellor’s scheme has already ensured that more than 50% of those furloughed since May 2020 had returned to work by August; welcomes that, at the height of the pandemic, more than a third of Scotland’s workforce was furloughed as part of the Job Retention Scheme; further welcomes the UK Government’s Job Retention Bonus that will pay £1,000 to employers for every employee that is retained; recognises that continuing interventions will be necessary from the UK Government, and calls on the Scottish Government to protect Scottish jobs now by setting out specific support for businesses and sectors most affected by COVID-19, particularly given the guaranteed additional £6.5 billion from the UK Government.”

15:47

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to discuss the support that is needed to help employers retain jobs across the UK and, where that is not possible, to help people who find themselves unemployed to get a job. The figures are stark—on a scale hitherto unseen—and will worsen substantially when the job retention scheme comes to an end in October.

Without the option of furlough, millions of workers across the UK would have found themselves immediately unemployed with no income and no idea of when, or if, they would be able to find work again. That includes more than 800,000 workers in Scotland who are on the furlough scheme. Estimates suggest that, when furlough unwinds, as many as 350,000 people in Scotland could find themselves out of work.

According to the Institute for Public Policy Research, 34 per cent of young people will lose their jobs when furlough ends—that is 100,000 young people. That will be the highest level of youth unemployment ever seen in this country. That is truly catastrophic. We need radical action if we are not to condemn a generation of young people to the dole queue. Anything that we do must be about providing real hope and opportunity—and we have to do that quickly; we cannot afford to wait.

The past few weeks have shown that the virus is far from over, which in turn means that the problems that Covid-19 has created for business and industry are not over either. It therefore makes almost no sense to end the job retention scheme next month. Employers need continuing support.

We need the job retention scheme to continue in some form. I have argued before for sector-specific deals, which means support for those industries that have been worst hit by the pandemic and where there is no certainty for their employees. That support must be tailored to the needs, strengths and weaknesses of the Scottish economy.

Our economy has a greater reliance on sectors such as tourism and hospitality, aviation—as we debated yesterday—and oil and gas than economies elsewhere in the UK. A sector-specific approach would be a sensible one to take. Equally, I want both Governments to invest in growing particular sectors such as the financial services and information technology sectors, to drive forward increased employment opportunities. Waiting until businesses fail is not an option, and we should be working with the Confederation of British Industry Scotland, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and others to identify those areas at risk and invest. Let us have interventions that address the issues that are being faced by those in work who might be made redundant, in order to prevent job losses.

We also need to focus quickly on implementing the Scottish Government's proposals to tackle the widespread unemployment that we are already experiencing. This is without doubt the biggest economic issue of our times and we cannot afford to sit around and wait for the UK Government to act. The situation requires the Scottish and UK Governments to work together.

I fully support the Alliance for Full Employment that Gordon Brown has initiated with the Welsh Government and metro mayors of cities and regions across England. It is hugely important to come together and act together on the employment crisis, mobilising all the resources across the UK to end the recession and create good-quality jobs. The AFE is a great initiative—it is exactly what is needed. Will the Scottish Government join in? Will it co-operate with others across the UK to focus on jobs? I will be happy to take an intervention from the minister if he wants to tell us. Yes or no?

Jamie Hepburn: If people approach us and let us know about things, we might consider co-operating with them.

Jackie Baillie: I look forward—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should really let me call you back in, Ms Baillie, but there you are.

Jackie Baillie: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I look forward to the minister positively signing up, then, because we need to work together. Our young people need us to work together, as do those who are facing unemployment.

The UK Government's attempt to tackle youth unemployment is the kickstart scheme for 16 to 24-year-olds. It is welcome, but it is simply not enough. It will assist only 250,000 of the 3.5 million under-25s who are not in full-time education, and then only for six months.

I am interested to know what the Scottish Government's job guarantee will deliver. It is aimed at young people, and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture announced £60 million for the remainder of the current financial year. I understand that the source of the money is UK Barnett consequentials. That is welcome. The cabinet secretary's press release talks about providing paid employment, education, an apprenticeship, training or volunteering. I agree with all that, but it is light on detail. How many young people will be covered, and over what period?

The minister said that it is a guarantee, but the numbers do not stack up. Given the expectation that an extra 100,000 young people in Scotland will be out of work as a result of the furlough scheme ending, does the minister consider that £60 million will be enough? It works out at £600 a head, which will not get us very far at all; it does not represent the scale of intervention that is required. That is all the more reason for Scotland to join the Alliance for Full Employment in order to maximise the funding that we can put towards tackling youth unemployment. It is one thing to make a guarantee, but we need it to be delivered, and the Scottish Government has not provided resources on the scale that is required.

Jamie Hepburn: I do not want to strike a note of discord, as we will support Ms Baillie's amendment, and I hope that we will vote the same way, but I think that her comment might reflect some of the problems in her party. Her party leader has met Sandy Begbie, who is progressing the job guarantee. I do not know whether she does this often, but I urge her to speak to her party leader—I know that she is the deputy leader—and have a chinwag about it so that she understands what the job guarantee is all about.

Jackie Baillie: I speak to my leader all the time, but I say to the minister that he is providing £60 million for 100,000 young people who are about to become unemployed. That is not enough; it is not the scale of the ambition that this country and our young people require.

In summary, I want the furlough scheme to be extended—of course I do—but I also want the Scottish Government to do three things. First, I want it to work with the Welsh Government and the regions and cities across the UK in the Alliance for Full Employment. Secondly, I want the scale of the Scottish Government's response to be sufficient to meet the scale of the challenge that we face. It needs to set out how many young people will be helped, when, and the cost of that. Thirdly, there is huge urgency, but we have not seen the detail yet. How will young people apply? When will the scheme be open? Who will deliver on the ground? Will it be councils, Skills

Development Scotland or private training providers? I hope that it will be all of them. When will we know the detail? Young people are unemployed now and many more will follow.

We are in a crisis that is about to get a whole lot worse. It is politically easy to blame the UK Government, but it is harder for the Scottish Government to do something itself. However, if we do not act quickly and at scale, we will let down a whole generation of young people.

I move amendment S5M-22731.1, to insert at end:

“; calls on the Scottish Government to act quickly to put in place a range of measures to support employment that are coherent and targeted at businesses at risk and those who find themselves out of work, in particular young people, women, disabled people and ethnic minorities; recognises the existing fragility and inequality in Scotland’s labour market, and calls on the Scottish Government to produce an industrial strategy that lays out increased investment in housebuilding, green energy and transport, to put Scotland back on track and ensure fairer, greener and sustainable jobs for all.”

15:55

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): From our social security system to our national health service, and from social housing to social care, one of my core political beliefs is that Government should be there for people when they need help. The job retention scheme was established in unprecedented circumstances, when more than 10 million people were facing immediate and unexpected unemployment. The UK Government was absolutely right to introduce the scheme.

Of course, these unprecedented circumstances are still with us, and the UK Government’s decision not to extend the scheme ignores the fact that so many parts of our economy are simply not back up and running. Many people in many companies in many sectors require support for a longer period. The Conservative amendment ignores that, too, and Greens will not support it. How does the chancellor expect businesses to survive without support when they cannot do business now because of continued restrictions?

As an MSP for the Lothian region, I represent tens of thousands of people who are employed in tourism, events and other sectors that have been extremely hard hit by restrictions. Among them are the managers and employees of Carnival Chaos, an event production company in Leith. It has been successfully providing sets and props for events for more than 20 years. However, due to understandable restrictions on holding large events, it has not been able to provide its services since March. Of course, the rule of six, which was introduced for the most necessary of public health reasons, means that there will not be any events

for the company to support in the foreseeable future.

If that business plays its part in helping to suppress the virus, we need to help it to be able to play its part in the recovery. Carnival Chaos and hundreds of other businesses in Lothian are successful and have good track records. They can have a bright future, but they will struggle over the medium term, because events entirely outwith their control have disrupted their trade. Cutting a vital lifeline, at a time when restrictions are being reimposed, and making life even harder for them will condemn many viable businesses to failure and put employees out of work.

Of course, that is avoidable. The job retention scheme obviously comes at a cost—around £37.5 billion across the UK so far. However, that figure pales in comparison with the £137 billion bailout of the irresponsible banks that caused the previous economic crisis, and the more than £202 billion that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament estimates it would cost to renew the UK’s dangerous and useless nuclear weapons programme.

The Scottish Government estimates the cost of extending the scheme for another eight months in Scotland to be around £850 million. The minister pointed out that that could save 61,000 jobs over those months, and a number of analyses have projected that that would make a significant difference to unemployment.

Like many colleagues across the chamber, I left school in the 1980s—a time when unemployment was consistently above 3 million. Many of us have experienced unemployment. We have experienced the suffering of friends and family who were made unemployed for reasons outside their control and who struggled to find work for a long period. We cannot go back to that.

The Scottish Government’s analysis of the impact on unemployment of an eight-month extension of the scheme is that it would reduce the unemployment rate in Scotland by 2.5 per cent in the last quarter of this year. Even as far ahead as 2023, unemployment in Scotland would be a whole 2 per cent lower. Of course, as well as being a personal tragedy, long-term unemployment is costly not just in terms of unemployment benefits, but in terms of health, wellbeing, self-confidence and self-esteem. I think that a colleague noted that the respected National Institute for Economic and Social Research concluded that, if the furlough scheme had been extended beyond the end of October, it would have been

“a relatively inexpensive measure, and by preventing a rise in long-term unemployment might have paid for itself.”

If we had had a universal basic income scheme already in place before the pandemic started, people would have had an established safety net—a safety net that might now have enabled them to build new livelihoods or take up new courses of study.

I want to point out that some of the most vulnerable people in our society are suffering badly at the moment. I have constituents who work in the Camphill community of Tiphereth and the Garvald centre. Those organisations create invaluable work opportunities for some of our most vulnerable citizens, including people with learning disabilities and who face other challenges. I am concerned about the impact that the pandemic is having on them, and I would be grateful if the minister could say, when concluding, what support the Scottish Government can provide to them.

It is also that important that employment support is made available to people who are helping to suppress the virus.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have given you a little extra time. Please conclude shortly. Mr Rennie, I will give you that extra minute back. You have taken an extra minute Ms Johnstone.

Alison Johnstone: I will conclude. Those who are self-isolating should have access to pay that is similar to sick pay, as should those who are on precarious or zero-hours contracts.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must stop, in fairness to other members who keep to their time. It is all right Mr Rennie, I am going to give you five minutes.

16:00

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Five minutes? Good; that is excellent. I can fill that.

From my discussions with constituents, I know that many are hurting and that they are worried about their future. When one in 10 people could be unemployed by the end of the year and the economic hit could last for three years, it is no wonder that they are concerned

It is right that the debate focuses on the furlough scheme and its extension—that is important—and the Liberal Democrats will support the Government's motion. We have argued for some time that the furlough scheme should be extended to ease organisations and businesses back to work when it is safe to do so.

Consumer and business confidence has been on a roller coaster. Large tracts of the economy were shut down to suppress the virus. We had a slower easing in Scotland—which was frustrating for some businesses—as the Scottish Government pursued an elimination strategy or

“zero Covid,” as some call it. We are now back to tighter restrictions in the west of Scotland, with others in Aberdeen before that and the rule of six is now in place, imposing restrictions on pubs and restaurants. The economic outlook is uncertain, which adds to the need to have the furlough scheme in place.

We should remind ourselves why we had the furlough scheme in the first place. It was as much a health protection measure as it was an economic one. It allowed people to stay safely at home when it was not safe to go out to work. People could not necessarily afford to stay at home and neither could businesses afford to keep them at home. The furlough scheme was there to protect people's health as much as it was to protect the economy. It is right, as we are in an uncertain period with varying degrees of lockdown and restriction, that that support mechanism should continue for as long as those restrictions are in place.

The furlough scheme is also an economic measure. It is necessary to have the ability to keep viable companies alive while they wait for economic and health conditions to improve. The money that we have invested in that in recent months could be wasted if we withdraw support at the last minute. We need that support to continue for longer.

The debate should be about much more, however. That is why I am attracted to Jackie Baillie's amendment, which sets out a broader ambition that the Scottish Government should focus on, beyond the inadequacies of the UK Government. The Logan review, the Higgins report and the work of Sandy Begbie are all steps in the right direction. I welcome the fortnightly discussions with the economy secretary and her advisers: those are useful.

However, we must think bigger. The country that we created after the second world war was bigger, bolder and better. We should have the same kind of ambition as we recover from the current economic catastrophe.

The chancellor's announcement later this month will be the start of that process. I hope that he will set out a recovery plan that will be about not only the economic measures and interventions that we should make, but the size of the state. Any idea that the investment made over the past few months should be recovered in a short period of time, inflicting economic pain, is not one that we should pursue.

There is significant tolerance in international markets for greater borrowing by Government, because the United Kingdom is seen as a good place to invest. We should use that opportunity to build a new, better, greener economy, investing in

renewable technologies while also making sure that our society is fairer and that we invest in our excellent universities.

We need to go beyond the furlough scheme. We have not mentioned the self-employed, who also need support. That is not mentioned in the motion, and it should be. We have not talked about the gaps in financial support that still exist, with people suffering far too much and way beyond what is necessary. Jamie Stone, a former member of the Scottish Parliament, has been doing a sterling job in ensuring that the Government addresses the support that is necessary for those people.

Alison Johnstone is right that there was an opportunity to introduce a universal basic income. I was disappointed that the minister did not even refer to it in his speech.

Bob Doris: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: I am sorry, but I am about to conclude. I know that Mr Doris is desperate to get in.

The final thing that I want the Government to pursue is bringing forward the roll-out of the childcare proposition—we cannot afford to wait for up to a year for that to happen. There is no strong economic recovery without a robust childcare offer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Lewis Macdonald): We move to the open debate. I call Keith Brown, to be followed by Gordon Lindhurst.

16:06

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): The Covid-19 pandemic has without a doubt had an extremely serious impact on the economy, not only in the UK but right across the world. Scotland is no exception, with figures published yesterday confirming that our economy contracted by over 19 per cent in the second quarter of this year. The past six months have seen businesses and workers put into a serious situation, which the Scottish Government has sought to address with a package of support to businesses worth over £2.3 billion to protect Scotland's economy and to ensure that as many people as possible keep their jobs.

Over two thirds of all Scottish firms still access the furlough scheme and it still supports 217,000 people in Scotland. I am happy to admit that the furlough scheme has been a crucial lifeline for people, protecting thousands of jobs in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire areas of my constituency alone. However, it is my view that the scheme does not go far enough, and I think that members who have seen the submission that we have all had from the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland will also acknowledge that fact. The

scheme should certainly not come to an end, as planned, in October.

Having spoken to local businesses in my constituency—in Clackmannanshire, Bridge of Allan and Dunblane—I know that many are not yet seeing normal levels of trade, which means that there is simply no way that they are in a financial position to retain their full workforces. Many of those businesses have a viable long-term future, but only if they continue to be supported and are allowed to recover. It is clear that to avoid a large number of redundancies and harming the longer-term economic position, some form of the job retention scheme needs to remain in place. As has been mentioned, research shows that extending the furlough scheme by even eight months could save 61,000 jobs in Scotland. The cost of saving those jobs would be met by the wider economic benefits that it would deliver, such as increasing gross domestic product, tax revenues and preventing higher levels of unemployment, which we know come with longer-term social and economic consequences.

For that reason, I welcome the range of efforts, as outlined by the minister, announced by the Scottish Government through its programme for government to train and retrain people who have lost their jobs through the crisis, as well as invest in supporting opportunities for young people and expanding the number of modern apprenticeship places available. All that will be crucial in reshaping our economy as we come out of the crisis. However, we are all acutely aware that the Scottish Government is doing that with a limited budget and no borrowing powers. In contrast, the UK Treasury has been able to fund business and employment support schemes to date entirely through borrowing. It is worth pointing out that it is not largesse given by a UK minister or the Treasury, but money borrowed at a cost to Scottish taxpayers—they pay for that.

It is now essential that the Scottish Parliament is granted the additional powers that it needs to properly manage a response to the crisis as we move towards recovery. While the UK Tory chancellor plans to prematurely end the furlough scheme entirely in just six weeks' time, we are seeing European countries such as France committing to extending its employment support scheme until July 2022, while Italy confirmed an 18-week extension until the end of 2020 and Germany has confirmed that its Covid-adjusted scheme will continue until the end of 2021, bringing certainty—the point that Alison Johnstone made—to millions of workers and businesses who are worried about their future. The lack of worry and concern about people's jobs helps the economy.

The jobs and livelihoods of many people in my constituency and across Scotland are on the line. The UK Government must rethink its catastrophic plan to scrap the furlough scheme early and extend the measures now, into 2021. I think that we all agree that large-scale unemployment seems extremely likely now, but it does not have to be long-term unemployment. We all know the costs of long-term unemployment from the mistakes that were made in the 1980s.

The Tories will not let Holyrood have the powers and will not borrow—let us face it, they are good at borrowing; the national debt has doubled to £2 trillion under the Tories. If they will not borrow for that good purpose, as was outlined, then they should give the Scottish Parliament the opportunity to do that. If they do not, the people of Scotland will not hesitate to let the Tories know what they think of them when it comes to the election next year.

16:10

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): The Covid-19 public health measures have presented Scotland's businesses and, crucially, workers with unprecedented and, sometimes, seemingly insurmountable challenges. Plunging demand, deserted town centres and lower spending levels mean that Scotland's economy has become a challenging place in which to find and keep employment.

The UK Government has stepped up in some brilliant and well-publicised ways, most prominently in the form of the job retention scheme, which was a vital part of the effort in the early days of the crisis to prevent an economic catastrophe. As a result of that support, innumerable people have been able to live through this tumultuous period in relative security, support their families and avoid the worst effects of what amounted to an almost total shutdown of our physical economy, with no one to frequent coffee shops, buy goods on our high streets and support jobs in the parts of our economy that are dependent on Scots being able to go out, spend and live normal lives.

Although UK-wide action has not necessarily been perfect, the actions of the Scottish Government—crucial to employees of businesses around Scotland—have caused many unnecessary difficulties. In spite of massive funding from the UK Treasury for the Scottish Government to organise and distribute, the SNP has failed on many fronts. The legitimate complaints that I have received from constituents about the lack of support for businesses and individuals in Lothian have been specific, persistent and voluminous.

Jamie Hepburn: Will Gordon Lindhurst take an intervention?

Gordon Lindhurst: Not at the minute. I am sorry—"In a minute" was what I meant to say.

There have been cases in which application deadlines have been abbreviated with little warning, for example. I understand that many have found themselves ineligible for more generous targeted industry support, such as the events industry support fund, because they had applied in good faith to more general schemes earlier on in the crisis.

Jamie Hepburn: Gordon Lindhurst refers to the correspondence that he has been receiving from his constituents. Has he had any article of correspondence from a constituent calling for an end to the furlough scheme? I have not had one.

Gordon Lindhurst: I have had correspondence from constituents who are pleased with what the UK Government has provided and from those who have received support from the Scottish Government. The furlough scheme, as such, is not something that people have been focusing on, because it has been and is still running. A lot of people have written because they want businesses, the economy and the country to get back to normal, which, in part, will have to be through the current situation changing.

Other countries that have been referred to by members on the SNP benches have completely different set-ups for workers in their economies. For example, Denmark, which has been mentioned, has a different set-up and its scheme does not apply to the self-employed, owner-managers or people with casual contracts. Would the minister like to bring in a similar whole-scheme approach in which there is no legal minimum wage?

Germany is another example in which the country comes from a totally different position and has a different approach; Germany has a scheme that has been adjusted in the light of Covid but which goes back to something like 1924.

Those are different situations to that of the UK set-up or the circumstances in Scotland, and my constituents recognise that. They are not trying to simply lift examples from other countries to be used here, as the SNP Government suggests should be done—although it is not suggesting that whole systems should be lifted.

It is down to the UK chancellor to seek to do, as he has, what is best for the whole country in regard to a number of measures and not just the furlough scheme. That is what constituents expect from us.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members who wish to take part in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons in good time.

16:15

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I am pleased to be called to speak in this timely debate, brought by the Scottish Government, on the urgent need for the UK Government to signal an extension to its furlough scheme as soon as possible.

As we have heard, the furlough scheme is due to expire in just over six weeks. That would be a disaster for jobs, particularly those in the sectors that have been most heavily impacted by the Covid-19 global pandemic. The UK Government is on record as saying that it would do “whatever it takes” to protect jobs and livelihoods; therefore, it must act now.

The crisis is affecting people’s lives, careers and businesses, and their ability to pay their bills and look after their families. Predictions have been made that a failure on the part of the UK Government to signal an extension, in some form, to the furlough scheme will result, in short order, in a tsunami of redundancy notices being issued and significant job losses ensuing.

As the member for the Cowdenbeath constituency, which comprises many communities that are still fragile following the mass unemployment policies of the Thatcherite Tory Government of the 1980s, I find it absolutely unacceptable that we could see further scarring of those places, which still suffer from significant levels of deprivation. As we have heard, analysis carried out by the Scottish Government’s chief economist has estimated that the direct cost of extending the furlough scheme in Scotland until June next year would be around £850 million. He concluded that the ensuing economic benefits, such as an increase in GDP, would mean that such spending could effectively pay for itself. It is estimated that such an extension could save 61,000 Scottish jobs.

Perhaps I could put that £850 million up-front cost into context by recalling some examples. The current estimate for the UK Government’s spend on the high speed 2 rail project in England is £106 billion and counting; the estimate for the London crossrail project is £18 billion and counting; and, as was referred to earlier, the estimate for the Trident nuclear submarine renewal project is £205 billion and counting. If the UK Government can spend £205 billion on weapons of mass destruction, it would surely not be unreasonable for it to spend £850 million to save 61,000 jobs and so avoid both an economic crisis and the social devastation that would result from it.

In that regard, it is perhaps instructive to look further of the UK, where we can see that extensions to equivalents of the furlough scheme have been made in, for example, Germany, France, Austria, Ireland, Switzerland and Australia. Indeed, it is worth noting that the extent of the fiscal stimulus package announced by the German Government in the summer is some €130 billion, which represents 4 per cent of Germany’s GDP. We can contrast that with the similar package announced by the UK Government, which represents £20 billion—that is quite a different level of spend and focus on economic recovery.

The reason why we are having to hold this debate is that the Scottish Parliament does not have the necessary powers just to get on and do what normal, independent countries across the world do—that is, borrow to help their economies through unprecedented times. If the UK Government will not extend the furlough scheme, we must secure the necessary borrowing powers to enable us to act to save jobs and businesses in Scotland, and to prevent mass unemployment and social devastation. That is what independent countries have opted to do, so, in the interests of our economy and wellbeing, I say that Scottish independence cannot come soon enough.

16:19

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I have only four minutes, so my comments will, naturally, be constrained. However, for the absence of doubt, and to avoid misrepresentation, I say that I support an extension of the furlough scheme beyond October, because I believe that that will make a difference to the economy—rather than what we heard in the last speech, yet again, which is the core position of the SNP. That was the easy bit.

I found it dispiriting to see the energy that so many in the Scottish Government have spent in establishing a dividing line on furlough. I see that as being in sharp contrast to their approach to the responsibilities and opportunity that power brings to them. There is an urgency to address the scale of the crisis that is not apparent in the Scottish Government’s response.

It is impossible to overstate how serious this is. People who were in secure work, or who were running the most secure of businesses, have seen the ground open up under their feet. People who worked in hospitality have already been made redundant, despite furlough. Many young people are already working their way around businesses, handing in CVs. People are spending all day applying for jobs, with little or no response. The scale of distress and despair is palpable; the response of Government has to be commensurate with it.

People in front-line hospitality and retail jobs, who are managing the Covid rules and the routine abuse that goes with that, are experiencing a deterioration in their conditions, and a seeping realisation—which on occasion is exploited by unscrupulous employers—that their jobs are so fragile that they dare not complain. In whatever schemes are developed, there is an issue about conditionality—about employee rights and expectations of businesses that are securing public funds.

Of course, intention without action is simply daydreaming. We need the Government to be proactive in creating and sustaining jobs, and in providing training in real terms. People in our communities need to know about, and be able to access, the targets, goals, funding and evidence. Talking about it takes us only so far.

I have some ideas about what may be done, and I would welcome the Scottish Government's comments on them.

On the Scottish Government's own funding, what budget lines have shifted to address the crisis, from the budget that it had decided? Has the Scottish Government changed the remit of Scottish Enterprise, so that it is again responsible for people and place—for the opportunities that people need, rather than just looking for success for businesses and giving them money? What new targets have been set for Skills Development Scotland to deliver training, jobs and apprenticeships, and how do people know that those exist? What funding has been made available, for example, to housing associations and co-operatives, to allow them to plan for economic opportunities in a local environment? How much of the money that has come from the UK has already gone out of the door?

As a matter of urgency, I ask what extra money has gone to local authorities. Money was made available to the Scottish Government to support local authorities, and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance said that, before she could release the money, she needed to know what their plans were. What a failure of imagination in being unable to understand exactly why local authorities need money now! It is needed to support care organisations; to give more support for vulnerable young people in schools, post-lockdown; to create home link workers and more cleaners; for partnerships that harness private, public and third sector organisations; for training providers, to give the economic and employment opportunities that people need; and to support the very organisations that can help people to cope with Covid and to access the opportunities that are out there.

This morning, the First Minister spoke about avoidable redundancies, in relation to furlough.

Redundancies are happening now, in my city, in organisations that could help those who need support to secure work.

The crisis has been going on for seven months. Albeit that it is never enough, there is money. The fear is that delay means that the crisis gets worse, and that the money remains unspent, only perhaps to make a reappearance next year, when it is all too late.

If ever there was a time for Government leadership, it is now. The debate should have been about pulling together everyone in the Parliament, and beyond, to match the crisis. It is not enough to say what should be done elsewhere; the Government needs to work with all members in the Parliament to identify real plans and how to deliver them.

It is simply not good enough to say, "We're going to do this and we're going to do that," when there is no real evidence that those initiatives are working out there in our communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Lamont, you must conclude.

Johann Lamont: The UK Government needs to pay attention on the question of furlough, but we all have a responsibility to understand that that is a necessary but not sufficient condition to address the scale of the crisis that all too many people in our communities face.

16:24

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): The debate is probably one of the most important ones that we can have, because we are dealing with people's lives and livelihoods. I want all members to think about and acknowledge the fact that it is important that everyone works together so that we see ourselves through to the other side of the current situation. The issue goes beyond party colour, Parliaments and other institutions. At the end of the day, we are dealing with real lives and real issues.

At one point, I thought about redoing my speech from yesterday. I decided that I would spare colleagues that, because I have a whole lot of new stuff to bring to the debate. As I have said previously, retaining the job retention scheme is the most important thing that we can do, but it is just a start. It is one of the things that we can do in our economic recovery. We are, quite literally, dealing with people's futures and their families and lives, and with the very important issue of keeping a roof over their heads. How we support them in their time of need in our varied constituencies is the most vital point during these difficult and challenging times.

The UK Government wants to withdraw the scheme next month, but that is just not good enough. We all know about yesterday's announcement by the Scottish Government. This has been mentioned already, but it has to be said again that 61,000 jobs in Scotland would be saved if the furlough scheme was extended for eight months—that is 61,000 jobs saved by an eight-month extension. It would pay for itself through the wider economic benefits alone. However, even more important than that, it would help every man, woman and child who is supported by those 61,000 jobs.

We might think that the Conservatives would see the sense in extending the furlough scheme, but they do not appear to be listening. As I mentioned earlier, last week, in a debate in the House of Commons, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Steve Barclay, said:

"It is in no one's long-term interests for the scheme to continue, least of all those trapped in a job that only exists because of the furlough scheme."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 9 September 2020; Vol 679, c 634.]

I do not see that anyone in those circumstances is trapped in that job. It is supporting them through this difficult time and ensuring that they and their families have a future so that we can rebuild our economy when we get into a more positive place. Those people do not feel trapped by the job retention scheme; they feel that it is one bit of stability in a world that is in chaos as they try to get through. I urge Conservative members to look at the issue and talk to their colleagues in Westminster, because we all need to work together to ensure that we can provide for our constituents.

Yesterday, Mr Simpson said that there would be a "tsunami of job losses" if support was not provided. Well, this is the start. He should support the idea of continuing the job retention scheme, because that will help as we continue through these very challenging times.

So far, we have asked much of the people of Scotland during these difficult times. They have supported us in every way they can so that we can get through the current difficulties. If Westminster will not continue the scheme, let it get out the way and give the Scottish Parliament the powers to do so, and we will ensure that it supports Scotland's people.

16:29

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Before I move on to the body of my speech, I think that it is important to reiterate the point that George Adam and Keith Brown have made, which is that the moneys that we get from the furlough scheme do not come through the generosity of the Tories

at Westminster; they are moneys that every single person in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has put into the Treasury through taxes. It is about time that that was recorded and that people were told about it. We are responsible for paying for the scheme, and we will do so, so we should have a say in how the money is spent. If we in this Parliament and people in Scotland more widely say that the furlough scheme should be extended, it should be extended. If people in England, Northern Ireland or Wales do not want it to be extended, that is up to them and their Governments, but we pay money in and we should have a bigger say in how it is spent.

Like many other members, I have been inundated by concerns from constituents who are deeply worried about what the future holds for them and their employment. There are hundreds of small and medium-sized businesses in my Glasgow Kelvin constituency, and their owners are terrified that those businesses will not be there in six months' time, never mind a couple of years' time. It is incredibly difficult for employers and their employees throughout the country, and they need our support.

It is a hammer blow that the UK Government is even thinking about withdrawing support, and if it does so, that will have a devastating effect. In Glasgow alone, up to 80,000 people have been furloughed. We welcome that, but, as I said at the start, we pay in money—people should not forget that—so it is not a handout that we are getting.

As Johann Lamont and others have mentioned, the sector that has been hardest hit—this is certainly true in my constituency—is the entertainment and recreation sector. More than half the workforce has been furloughed. We are very worried about what will happen in six months' time, after the furlough scheme has ended. Will those businesses still be there? The night-time economy is important to Glasgow city centre and the rest of Scotland, but it is particularly important to my constituency. At the moment, because of Covid-19, night clubs cannot open. That is not the fault of businesses or employers. A caring Government would step in to help those businesses and to ensure that they flourished instead of having to close down. They are fighting for their existence. They have been put through so much and they are terribly worried that they will not be here at all, never mind be in a position to rebuild. The ending of the furlough scheme would be the death knell for all those businesses.

Glasgow is a UNESCO city of music and it puts on a variety of concerts. It is extremely worrying that many of those might not be held; it is already the case that we will not be having half the stuff that we would normally have at Christmas and new year. What will happen next year? As

Annabelle Ewing mentioned, other European countries have far better furlough schemes. Keith Brown mentioned that countries such as France, Germany and Australia are extending their schemes until July 2021, and others are extending theirs to the end of this year. If they can do that, why cannot the UK Government?

I reiterate that we pay in a lot of money through taxes, and I think that we should have a say on where our taxes go. The furlough scheme should be extended.

16:33

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a shareholder in a small business.

It is clear from the contributions of members across the chamber that we agree that the UK Government's interventions were a lifeline in protecting nearly a third of Scotland's workforce. In my constituency, around 11,000 jobs were furloughed.

Although the chancellor's support for businesses in all parts of the UK was unprecedented, today we are discussing what more can be done with the economic levers that we have available here. Given that we have a shrinking economy that is now 21.1 per cent smaller than it was in 2019, the Scottish National Party Government must take affirmative action to help people who are at risk of unemployment and those who are furthest away from the job market. However, we cannot let Scottish workers dangle in perpetuity. A shrinking economy means less on the order books, fewer widgets and fewer employees. Less work leads to a reduced workforce, and sustaining the same number of employees in an organisation becomes unsustainable.

The SNP has done the sums. My question to it is this: what will happen if we are still in the pandemic eight months down the line or beyond? The furlough scheme is almost like a holding chamber for the workforce, and I think that we should be looking beyond it to interventions that reskill, upskill and retrain people. We should be looking to give people dignity through schemes such as fair start Scotland but, frankly, those schemes are a shambles.

Compounding the woeful economic outlook, there have been restrictions on many businesses because of Government policies and localised and regional lockdowns. It is important that the SNP looks at ways to support businesses more fervently. We all know that it is not their fault.

I agree with Johann Lamont that, instead of putting all her eggs in one basket, Nicola Sturgeon should consider the measures that are in the gift of her own Government, such as extending the 100 per cent business rates relief and repurposing areas of the Scottish budget. She should reconsider what we can do in that sense. We have also not heard what has happened to the £6.5 billion in Barnett consequential that have come to the Parliament. Has all the money been spent on businesses, as Nicola Sturgeon promised?

It is exceptionally difficult to find employment at the moment, especially for young people and women, who have been worst affected by the pandemic. The number of women who are in insecure and temporary jobs has risen by one third in the time that this Scottish National Party Government has been in power. Furthermore, women are more likely to lose their jobs or to be affected by underemployment during a recession.

That is also true for young people. Leaving school, college, or university must be incredibly daunting right now. The latest universal credit figures, which are for June and July, show that a higher proportion of people starting on UC—more than at any point in the past several years—have been in the 16 to 24-year-old group. We have seen the UK Government act swiftly, through the kickstart scheme, to provide an unprecedented £2 billion in funding along with the job retention bonus scheme that my colleague Maurice Golden spoke about. We have also seen significant financial and policy backing to help young people to get on the jobs ladder and to help businesses to retain employees.

Concerningly, that ambitious package of measures sits in stark contrast to what is on offer from this Government. Nicola Sturgeon said of young people that is not their fault and it certainly is not. Jackie Baillie is absolutely right. Take for example the SNP's youth guarantee, which is worth £60 million. Although it and Sandy Begbie's report are welcome, it falls woefully short of what Scottish young people need right now. The first report on the youth guarantee scheme admitted that work has not even started on an implementation plan. When, where, and how will it start? We need to move on this. We have not got much time. I have not got much time, so I am going to sit down.

16:37

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I thank Rachael Hamilton for trying to get some consensus there—well done Ms Hamilton.

None of us really knows what the economy will look like this time next year. There is uncertainty

about demand and markets, not just because of the Covid restrictions caused by lockdown but because of Brexit uncertainty.

I notice that the Scottish Government has estimated that extending furlough—quite rightly called the job retention scheme—could save 61,000 jobs. We should just think of the demand that would be generated by that, or indeed lost if 61,000 workers were moved from paid employment on to benefits.

Rachael Hamilton mentioned widgets. I will tell her what will happen when we put people on to benefits and the economy bounces back: we will be importing those widgets from Germany and keeping people on benefits in Scotland. I say to Ms Hamilton that it is time to support the Scottish workforce.

Of course, it is the human cost that will take its toll. If individuals and families are out of work and on benefits, or on reduced and fixed incomes, that will cause real hardship. It also might take many years for the jobs that are lost to the economy to return.

The UK Government called the loan scheme, which I welcomed, the bounce back loan scheme but, without an extension to furlough, there may be no jobs to bounce back to. I ask again: what will the economy look like this time next year when we have ditched our highly skilled jobs and others have retained theirs? We will be importing, and that will damage our economy. It makes no sense.

The furlough scheme is sustaining my constituents' jobs, and I have no doubt that ending it will result in many jobs being lost. I urge Rishi Sunak, as the vast majority of members in this Parliament do, to think again on the furlough scheme. He should take a compliment. We think that the scheme has worked very well, and we want it to continue. If required, it should be targeted at the manufacturing industry, transport and aviation, hospitality and so on.

I also have no doubt that the economic crisis and recession will cause huge inequalities. I do not think that anyone has referred to the Close the Gap briefing that we received ahead of the debate. I will do so now to show the impact that the crisis is likely to have on women. The briefing says that, because of occupational segregation, women are more likely to work in a shutdown sector, such as hospitality and retail. That is especially the case for black, Asian and minority ethnic women and younger women. Women are more likely to have lost their jobs and had their hours cut. Women already face economic inequality within society, and the pandemic will only compound it.

The same is true for BAME members in my constituency and for the predominantly working-class communities that I serve. I worry that my

Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn constituency will be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

In the time that I have left, I want to talk about a universal basic income, which a few members have mentioned. I am referring to it only because others have brought it up. It is not possible to deliver a universal basic income without the Scottish Parliament having full fiscal powers or without the compliance of the UK Government. We currently have neither. That is not just my view; it is the perspective of the Social Security Committee of this Parliament.

Other members have mentioned the Scottish youth guarantee, which involves £60 million for starters, and the UK Government's kickstart scheme, which involves £2 billion across the UK. My understanding is that, under the kickstart scheme, young people up to 24 years old will be paid a minimum wage for up to 25 hours a week for six months. That is welcome, to a degree. However, to be honest, I would rather that the money that will be paid out through the kickstart scheme be given to this Government, so that a co-ordinated, essential and strategic youth guarantee can come from this Parliament. I do not trust the UK Government to manage that money well.

There is almost full agreement, with the exception of the Conservatives, on sustaining and extending the furlough scheme. Despite the tone of some of the debate, there is consensus—again, with the exception of the Conservatives—on the vast majority of things that we have to do to address the economic crisis that has been caused by Covid-19. I hope that we find a way to express that consensus more often in the chamber.

16:42

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): The points today have been well made. There can be absolutely no doubt that the UK Government should extend the furlough scheme. Six countries, including our neighbours in France and Ireland, have already extended their equivalent schemes, so let us not be last to the party. Yes, many folk are now back at work but, equally, there are sectors in which people are not, and might not be for some time. As we have heard, the tourism and hospitality sectors are particularly affected. As Bob Doris mentioned, Close the Gap provided us with a briefing that reports a disproportionate impact on women.

We do not know what will happen in relation to further local, or even national, restrictions. There is talk of curfews and of pubs and restaurants closing at 10 o'clock as we go into the winter, so let us take a commonsense approach and expand the scheme.

I want to focus my speech on local issues that have been brought to me; as is the case for other members, there have been many—far too many to mention today. I have already said that the hospitality and tourism sectors are struggling. Owners of small businesses, such as pubs and restaurants across Coatbridge and Chryston, have come to me with concerns about what the end of the furlough scheme will mean. Some local pubs and restaurants have already shut their doors. We cannot stand back and allow there to be more—people's jobs and livelihoods are on the line. The furlough scheme could help if there is another full lockdown or if curfews are introduced in the coming months and fewer staff are needed.

I have also been contacted by nightclub owners. As Sandra White said, the furlough scheme has been a massive safety net for them. With little prospect of nightclubs opening any time soon—at least, not in their pre-Covid form—here is yet another whole industry that can be supported by simply continuing the furlough scheme.

Soft-play centres are in a very similar position, although they have an indicative opening date in early October. We have to say that nothing is certain, given the way that things are going with infection rates, and soft-play centres have already remained closed for a long time. I spoke to the owner of Funky Monkeys soft-play centre in Coatbridge, which is an excellent facility that I hope colleagues with children—I am looking at Bob Doris—will get a chance to visit in the future. The owner told me that although the £10,000 grant near the start was welcome, the centre is now on its knees. To take furlough away from such businesses at this hour could be the final straw.

Do not get me wrong: sectors that remain affected such as nightclubs, soft-play centres and others about which we have heard—dance groups, the wedding industry and more—need more support than the furlough scheme. I have written recently to the Government about soft-play facilities but, again, I know that much of that support relies on UK funding. The simple message from the debate is that the removal of furlough could exacerbate the situation. We are here to stand up for our constituents locally so I hope that everyone—regardless of their party—will do that at decision time.

I also want to touch on leisure trusts and that sector generally. Brian Whittle asked at First Minister's questions today about the pressures that the sector faces, but I politely say to my colleague that one of the possible fixes for that situation is for him and his party to support the motion today and to call for an extension of the furlough scheme.

My friends who work in the North Lanarkshire Leisure and South Lanarkshire Leisure and

Culture Glasgow Trusts have been on furlough through this time. Although their industry is now returning, as we know, it does so to a major period of uncertainty. The famous time capsule water park in Coatbridge is due to open at the end of the month on a much-restricted basis—quite rightly, as we need to put safety first—and it stands to reason that less staff will be required.

That is the situation across the leisure sector, especially as some activities cannot yet return. The furlough scheme is essential to get those bodies through this further difficult period and to help them to readjust to different staffing needs.

The SNP Government has taken action to support both employers and employees whom coronavirus has impacted and we will do everything in our power to ensure that our economy and labour market feel supported. A package of £2.3 billion has been put in place so far and we have committed a further £100 million to targeted employment support. However we all need to do our bit—everybody does—so I call again on everybody to support the motion for an extension of the furlough scheme.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches. I remind members that all those who take part in the debate should be back in the chamber for those.

16:47

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): In closing for Labour, I want to reiterate the point that Jackie Baillie made: Scotland cannot build back better in isolation from the rest of the UK, which is why we need a partnership that includes the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly as well as the regions across the UK. We build back better when we can do so together.

Willie Rennie made a pertinent point about the danger that all the good work that the chancellor created through the introduction of the furlough scheme, which the majority of members in the chamber welcome, could be lost. If the Scottish Tories support the idea that we need to build back together across the UK, they should knock down the door of number 11 and push for the UK Government to extend the furlough scheme. The Tory amendment does not address the key issue of the Government's motion, so Labour cannot support it.

Willie Rennie also made reference to the Keynesian economics of the post-war consensus. I agree with him and believe that it is time for a new post-Keynesian consensus for building the country back as we recover from the pandemic. Guaranteed jobs and access to education, skills, training for new jobs and housing must be at the

forefront of that process. We need to build the country back through an investment in our infrastructure and in many of the existing needs of our communities. We support the Government motion.

George Adam asked for Scotland to be given more powers so that it can use them. We ask members today to use the powers of this Parliament and not to make excuses and blame others—I believe that the Scottish people will start to see through that argument. We, in this Parliament, have the powers to begin that build-back process and it is high time that we used them. This is a strong Parliament and we should use every power at our disposal.

One example is Scottish Labour's plan for a green new deal and the creation of good skilled jobs; that includes expanding Scotland's bus network and investing in buying new electric buses from domestic manufacturers, which would create direct jobs in Scotland.

We need to see a national house building programme across Scotland in order to demonstrate—

Bob Doris: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Rowley: I will in a minute.

We need such a programme to demonstrate that we can invest in housing and put a roof over people's heads. The housing crisis in this country is unacceptable and we have the powers to be able to invest in a national house building programme.

We should be looking at fuel poverty legislation—in my view, the act that this Parliament passed lacked ambition and we should be investing in that area. Our budget for investing in flood prevention is far too low when there is flooding across Scotland as a result of climate change. That is one example where that level of investment could be brought about.

Bob Doris: I welcome Mr Rowley's comments, because he has a strong track record in this Parliament of trying to reach a budget consensus with the Scottish Government. He has provided lots of ideas for what could be budget negotiations with the Scottish Government. I do not work at that pay grade, but I hope that Mr Rowley is signalling that the Labour Party wants to secure consensus and a budget that is in Scotland's national interest going forward, rather than posturing on the budget. I would welcome any comments on that.

Alex Rowley: We need to work together on this. First, the capital budget for this year has been underspent. Labour supports an extension of the borrowing powers from this Parliament and we will work with the Scottish Government to make that

case. Housing and flood control are examples of areas in which major capital investment could be made in a way that would address the housing crisis and create jobs, while giving people opportunities to develop their skills and in education and training. We need a programme.

We urge the Tories to knock down the door at number 11 to get an extension to the furlough scheme. To this Parliament, we say, "Let us use the powers of this Parliament to invest in Scotland's future."

16:52

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

The debate has been short, and there has been some consensus and there have been some points of disagreement. I will start with the points of consensus.

There has been broad recognition by members across chamber of the value and importance of the coronavirus job retention scheme. More than 900,000 jobs have been supported and of those, more than 50 per cent of people had returned to work by August. Even the SNP's paper that was published, I think, yesterday, about the SNP's plans to extend the scheme, says that

"The UK scheme compares favourably to wage subsidy schemes in other countries."

The SNP credits the scheme with keeping unemployment in Scotland at a rate that is 3 per cent to 4 per cent lower than it otherwise would have been. I welcome that, as well as the minister's comments acknowledging that it is one of the most generous schemes in the world, and that it has made a huge difference to supporting the Scottish economy.

Of course, that is not the only thing that the UK Government has done to support jobs in Scotland. The job retention bonus, which was mentioned by Maurice Golden, provides £1,000 for every employee who has been kept on, and the £2 billion in the kickstart scheme creates hundreds of thousands of high-quality work placements. There has been expansion in work-search support for people who are searching for work, a cut in VAT for hospitality and the eat out to help out scheme. And so the list goes on.

However, we are here to talk specifically about the job retention scheme. I recognise the concern of many members about what will happen when that scheme comes to an end at the end of October. I have also heard that concern from businesses that are worried about the prospect of a cliff edge. While a lot of people have gone back to work, some sectors of the economy are struggling because they are still restricted.

Earlier I had an exchange with the cabinet secretary about the wedding industry. It is desperate to get back to work but is, because of the current restrictions, very much constrained in doing so. Therefore, many of its employees are furloughed.

What will we do next? This afternoon the SNP has called for an extension to the furlough scheme. It is, of course, the easiest thing in the world for the SNP Government to call for something to be done by somebody else when it will not have to pay for it, and that somebody else will.

As Alex Rowley pointed out in his winding-up speech, we have to look at what the Scottish Government can do to assist. Remember that the Scottish Government has been given a guarantee of an additional £6.5 billion in the current financial year. Johann Lamont made a very good point when she asked whether all that money has been wisely spent. Has it all been spent? Where has it gone? We still do not know how much of it has been spent or where it has all gone. We could do with answers to those questions.

In the context of money, let us not forget that the SNP Government has, since 2007, benefited from fiscal transfers from the rest of the UK totalling over £62 billion. I repeat: £62 billion has come from the rest of the UK to support spending in Scotland.

It would not be a debate in this chamber without the usual tiresome mentions of independence by SNP members. We even had them from the minister. "If only we were independent, we could extend the furlough scheme indefinitely—forever." There was no word about how it would be paid for. There would not be enough in the way of unicorns and fairy dust in an independent Scotland to pay for the furlough scheme that we have had, never mind an extension to it. The SNP Government simply could not have afforded it.

I accept the point that a number of members made, that there are issues for business as we get towards the end of October. We need to look at what can be done to fill the gap. There is an argument for considering extension to the furlough scheme, and there might be an argument for looking at extensions in particular sectors of the economy that have been hardest hit. However, there is no conclusive argument, which is why we do not support the Government's motion. We are not persuaded that that is the only answer at this point.

I say that because the economy is changing, and we have to recognise that. Some jobs that existed before Covid might not have a long-term future, because of economic changes. For example, we know that, as a result of Covid, many

people will work from home instead of commuting to a workplace. That will have an impact on the supply and servicing of office space. It will have an impact on transport services, including the number of people who use public transport. We heard about the impact on aviation in yesterday's debate. I suspect that it will be a long time before people are flying in the numbers in which they were flying last year. A furlough scheme extension of eight months will not be a lot of help in the long term to people in that sector.

Rachael Hamilton made a really important point. We need to be supporting the people who are in jobs that might not have a long-term future because of economic change, and we need to use resources for retraining and support, instead of for extending the furlough scheme for those people for a longer period. We should be looking at that sort of solution.

Something should replace the furlough scheme—that is what we say. It might be a targeted extension, or it might be a direct job subsidy. It might be more cuts to employers' national insurance contributions, or it might be something else. I know that the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, will be looking at all those possibilities. This Parliament should not be tying his hands to one particular solution when there is a wide range of alternatives that he is looking at to ensure that we address the legitimate concerns of the business community about what is going to happen after the furlough scheme ends—*[Interruption.]*

I hear members shouting. I would have been happy to take an intervention, but I am in my final minute.

I will say this in closing. We should recognise the benefits of the furlough scheme; it has been massively to the advantage of workers and business in Scotland. We should also agree that we need more action to be taken by the UK Government after the end of October. However, we should consider all the options and not tie ourselves to one particular outcome, as the motion would do.

Above all, we need to ask the Scottish Government to look to its own resources, which is all the extra money that it has been given to support business in Scotland better than it has been doing. That is the point that we make in our amendment, which I am pleased to support.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Jamie Hepburn to wind up the debate.

17:00

Jamie Hepburn: I thank all those who have contributed to the debate from across all parts of

the chamber. Like Murdo Fraser, I try to seek consensus on these matters, and I was going to reflect on how consensual his contribution was right up until the moment when he started to go off on one about unicorns and fairy dust, which was not such a positive contribution.

We are debating a serious issue of the utmost importance: how we sustain our economy, our business and our people in what continues to be an extraordinarily difficult period. Consensus has been reached today that the job retention scheme established by the UK Government—to its credit—has been an effective mechanism and a vital contribution in supporting and sustaining people over the last period of time.

I thought it was interesting that Murdo Fraser said that more action will be necessary and something else should be put in place, but it was telling that he did not say what should replace the job retention scheme—neither does the Conservative amendment. In reflecting on the point that he made when intervening on me and on his contribution on the success of the scheme that has been in place and has supported people, surely our starting position should be to look at the scheme and consider an extension of it as a sensible way forward.

Murdo Fraser: I am genuinely surprised that the minster was not listening to the range of alternative possibilities that I laid out. I talked about a possible extension of the scheme on a sectoral basis, a new job subsidy support and cuts to national insurance. We have put forward a range of possibilities in the debate. What we have been saying is that we should not be stuck on only one outcome, as the Scottish Government is.

Jamie Hepburn: I cannot help but notice that the Conservatives did not settle on a proposition and place it before Parliament today for our consideration. We have done that, and I hope that the Parliament will reflect on the success of the scheme and the necessity to continue it over the coming period of time. We must send a clear and strong message to the UK Government at decision time.

I listened carefully to the points that were raised during the debate, and I recognise—I made this point clearly in my opening remarks—that it is incumbent on this Government to respond to the circumstances that we find ourselves in. I have laid out the range of ways in which we are seeking to do that, and I agree that that has to be a collective and shared endeavour, such is the nature of the crisis before us. If any member wants dialogue on any element of what we seek to take forward on the youth guarantee, we would be very happy to have that dialogue.

Members will be unsurprised to hear that we will not support the Conservative amendment, not least because it would remove the call to extend the furlough scheme, which has been the very point of today's debate. I thought it was interesting—it goes back to the point that I have been making about reflecting on the success of the scheme—that Maurice Golden complained about SNP members booing the scheme. We are certainly not doing that today; we are calling for an extension of the scheme.

In recognising that we should do that, I thought that it was an odd observation that Mr Golden made about the wider economic impact in relation to his concerns about borrowing. We know that the job retention bonus scheme, which Rachael Hamilton mentioned, will be paid for through borrowing. It will cost £9.4 billion. We also know that, at £10 billion, a short-term extension to the furlough scheme would cost only marginally more. We should consider the comments of the Resolution Foundation, which said:

“The Job Retention Bonus of £1,000 for firms that bring back furloughed workers and still employ them in January will not make a major difference to employment levels.”

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research said that extending the furlough scheme by a further eight months, at an estimated cost of £10 billion,

“would have been a relatively inexpensive measure, and by preventing a rise in long-term unemployment might have paid for itself.”

We call on the UK Government to do what other jurisdictions in other countries are doing in extending their equivalents of the furlough scheme. Gordon Lindhurst asked whether I believe that we should lift systems from the other countries that have been mentioned. No, I do not believe that we should do that, but I believe that, in Scotland and across the UK, we should look to the examples of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland and—further afield—Australia and Canada. We should not seek to ape or replicate their schemes but should copy what they are doing in recognising the necessity of extending the period of their equivalent furlough schemes in order to see people over the course of this difficult time.

Jackie Baillie's amendment makes reference to a number of areas in which the Scottish Government has already taken action to soften the impact of the pandemic, and we will support her amendment. Our current economic strategy, which is based on the mutually reinforcing powers of boosting competitiveness and tackling inequality, remains in place.

We have published a range of strategies in areas including transport, manufacturing and

innovation. Our infrastructure investment plan is helping to boost inclusive economic growth, tackle the global climate emergency and build sustainable places. Our future skills action plan points us in the direction of providing people with the attributes and talents that will be needed for the industries of the future, responding to the point that was made in conclusion by Mr Fraser. Of course, we must ensure that people have that skill set.

The programme for government commits us to introducing an inward investment plan and updating our climate change plan. The national manufacturing institute is beginning its work to support innovation skills and productivity.

All those measures are in place to ensure that we have an industrial strategy to meet current and future economic, social and environmental challenges and opportunities.

It was interesting that Ms Baillie said that it would be the easiest thing in the world to blame the UK Government when things go wrong. I am not doing that, because, in this instance, it has not yet gone wrong; the UK Government still has the opportunity to recognise the necessity of extending the job retention scheme.

As though I was blissfully unaware of it, Johann Lamont was at pains to mention the scale and nature of the challenges that we face, here and now, in Scotland. I am fully cognisant of those challenges, which is why we are responding with the range of initiatives that we are putting in place, such as the green jobs fund, the transition training fund and the youth guarantee. We are maximising our range of capital investment to create opportunities in Scotland.

We will continue to act in recognition of the challenge that the virus brings and the fact that it has not gone away. We will play our part in responding to support people in the face of Covid-19, but so, too, must the UK Government. It must extend its income support schemes through the job retention scheme and, in response to Rachael Hamilton's question, for as long as is needed. We cannot stand back and do nothing in the face of a potential tsunami of avoidable redundancies. We will not do that, but will the UK Government? This evening, we have the chance to stand together and tell the UK Government that the job retention scheme must be extended.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:09

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-22737, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument. I ask Graeme Dey to move motion S5M-22737 on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Aberdeen City) Amendment Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/253) be approved.—[Graeme Dey]

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:10

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-22731.2, in the name of Maurice Golden, which seeks to amend motion 22731, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on employment support, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

I will suspend proceedings for a short technical break to allow all members to access the digital voting system.

17:11

Meeting suspended.

17:18

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, colleagues. Broadcasting is now back on and we will resume proceedings.

We believe that all members who are online or in the chamber are now on board in the voting system, so we will proceed with the division on amendment S5M-22731.2. Members should cast their votes now. This is a one-minute division.

Any member in the chamber or online who thinks that their vote was not acknowledged should raise a point of order.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (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)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

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)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 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)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (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)
 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)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (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)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 29, Against 88, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-22731.1, in the name of Jackie Baillie, which seeks to amend the motion in the name of Jamie Hepburn, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-22731, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on employment support, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

If any member does not think that their vote was recorded, either here in the chamber or online, I ask them to make a point of order, please.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 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)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (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)
 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)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (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)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Meeting closed at 17:24.

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 89, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that the UK Government's furlough scheme should be extended to provide support and certainty to employers and workers in Scotland for as long as public health restrictions are required to control the spread of COVID-19, recognising that there are specific sectors that will be affected for a longer period; calls on the Scottish Government to act quickly to put in place a range of measures to support employment that are coherent and targeted at businesses at risk and those who find themselves out of work, in particular young people, women, disabled people and ethnic minorities; recognises the existing fragility and inequality in Scotland's labour market, and calls on the Scottish Government to produce an industrial strategy that lays out increased investment in housebuilding, green energy and transport, to put Scotland back on track and ensure fairer, greener and sustainable jobs for all.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-22737, in the name of Graeme Dey, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Aberdeen City) Amendment Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/253) be approved.

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

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

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.parliament.scot

Information on non-endorsed print suppliers
is available here:

www.parliament.scot/documents

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000

Textphone: 0800 092 7100

Email: sp.info@parliament.scot



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba