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Scottish Parliament

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[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 14:00]

Portfolio Question Time

Communities and Local Government

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Lewis Macdonald): I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across Holyrood. I encourage members to follow those measures, as appropriate.

The first item of business is portfolio question time. We begin with questions on communities and local government. In order to allow as many members as possible to speak, succinct questions and answers would be appreciated.

Stirling Council (Meetings)

1. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met representatives of Stirling Council and what was discussed. (S5O-04801)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives of all Scottish local authorities, including Stirling Council, to discuss a wide range of issues as part of our commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland.

We continue to work closely with local government and with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on our strategic approach to suppressing Covid-19 outbreaks. That work includes regular engagement with all local authorities about levels of restrictions and protective measures that apply.

Dean Lockhart: Like many local authorities across Scotland, Stirling Council is facing a growing backlog of repairs to local roads due to the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic. That backlog is more severe in rural Stirlingshire, where many roads remain unrepaired and potholed after last winter. What additional assistance can the Scottish Government provide to Stirling Council and the Scottish Government road agencies to address the backlog in local road repairs?

Aileen Campbell: We have provided local authorities with resources to help them to cope with the issues that they face. That included a pre-Covid settlement for local government that was an

increase of £589.4 million, or 5.8 per cent, in day-to-day spending for local authorities. We continue to work with local authorities and to provide them with support.

If the member wishes to raise issues about particular roads in Stirling, I would be happy to take the matter up and to engage with my colleague Michael Matheson on any transport issues that have arisen as a result of the need for local authorities to focus on Covid. I am happy to engage further with the member, but we have given local authorities resources to cope with the issues that they face.

Community Organisations (Dumfries and Galloway)

2. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting community organisations across Dumfries and Galloway to help the most vulnerable people during the Covid-19 pandemic. (S5O-04802)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): The £25 million community and third sector recovery programme was launched on 21 September and provides funding for community and third sector organisations as they continue to respond to the on-going impact of the pandemic and to adapt and restart delivery of their community services and activities. The programme also provides business support and investment to help organisations to adapt their operations and their means of income generation to increase sustainability.

A small number of applications for the recovery programme have been received from organisations in Dumfries and Galloway, and assessment is on-going, with one award of £16,712 made to date. The area has benefited through other community funds totalling £1,293,630 from the supporting communities, wellbeing and third sector resilience funds, as well as through an additional £1.8 million investment from the investing in communities fund over the years 2019 to 2022.

I encourage community and third sector organisations that are based in Dumfries and Galloway, and across Scotland, to consider the recovery programme and to make an application.

Emma Harper: Many local people, community groups and businesses have gone above and beyond to support vulnerable people during the Covid-19 pandemic, and they deserve our thanks. Two examples have been the Lochside and Summerhill community centres in north west Dumfries, where the teams have prepared and delivered meals to people across the community. Will the cabinet secretary join me in welcoming those efforts and other similar efforts across

Scotland, and will she outline how the Government will continue to support community groups to deliver anti-poverty measures throughout the winter?

Aileen Campbell: I pay tribute to the specific groups that Emma Harper has mentioned, as well as to other groups across the country that are doing phenomenal work to look after communities. They are motivated by compassion and care, and they have been critical and fundamental to the country's response to the virus.

We have recently announced a winter plan for social protection, to help those who are on low incomes, children, and people who are at risk of homelessness or social isolation to cope with winter weather and the economic impacts of coronavirus and Brexit. That is backed by £100 million, and the package includes another £15 million for our community and third sector recovery programme as well as £15 million of flexible funding for local authorities that are entering level 4 restrictions, to support the people and communities that are impacted.

The winter package will be fundamental to the communities and groups that Emma Harper has highlighted, and it will be critical to people as we hit the harder and more expensive winter months ahead. I underline the point that I made in my original response, that her constituents should continue to apply for the funding that is out there.

Food Banks

3. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it provides to food banks. (S5O-04803)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government provides assistance to food banks in a number of ways, including through over £13 million of funding this year and wider advice and support. We have gone beyond our original £70 million food fund commitment and have now committed over £130 million to tackling food insecurity that has been caused by the pandemic, as well as having committed to the provision of free school meals to Easter.

Our focus is on strengthening household budgets to reduce the need for food aid, and we are doing that by promoting a cash-first response to food insecurity. Our £45 million Scottish welfare fund and the further flexible funding that we have provided to local authorities are helping to get both cash and food to those who need it. We have continued to press the United Kingdom Government to support people further through the social security system, not least by making the £20 uplift to universal credit permanent and by extending it to legacy benefits.

Jackie Baillie: I am sure that the cabinet secretary will want to join me in praising the work of the Helensburgh and Lomond Foodbank, the Roseneath peninsula food bank, West Dunbartonshire Community Foodshare, and food for thought at St Augustine's church, for all their efforts to help low-income people put food on the table. Their work during the pandemic has never been so important.

Does the cabinet secretary agree with the Trussell Trust that, if we want to end the need for food banks, we need to concentrate on getting money into people's pockets? If so, I join her in arguing for the retention of the £20 increase in universal credit, but will she consider how to better use the Scottish welfare fund to do that as well?

Aileen Campbell: I thank Jackie Baillie for mentioning all those organisations in her constituency. I started to jot them down, but there were so many that I did not get the chance. I certainly extend my thanks to all the groups that she mentioned—as I did to the groups that Emma Harper mentioned—for doing so much to ensure the resilience of the country.

I echo the calls and pleas of the Trussell Trust. I met its representatives just last week to hear their thoughts and views on how to tackle food insecurity and, in effect, put themselves out of a role by stopping food aid, because it is not the dignified response that we want for people and communities. That is why the winter package that was announced by the First Minister is critical. It is about getting cash to families, because they know how best to spend it and to meet their needs. How they do that should not be dictated to them by the Scottish Government. That is also why we have taken a cash-first approach to food insecurity, using the infrastructure that we have through the Scottish welfare fund.

I agree with the Trussell Trust on that approach, and we discussed areas where we might be able to make improvements. Again, in the work that we will take forward with the trust, we will try to develop good learning, good practice and good ways in which we can make as much use of the Scottish welfare fund as possible, particularly as we go into the darker, colder and more expensive winter months. We also have Brexit challenges ahead, so there is a lot of need for us to ensure that the money that we put in to support families gets to them in the most dignified way possible.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Richard Lyle has a supplementary question.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): [*Inaudible.*]

Aileen Campbell: Presiding Officer, I cannot hear Richard Lyle.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are not alone. Give us a moment.

We will move on. If Richard Lyle's connection is restored in time, we might come back to him.

Housing Developments (Delays)

4. Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how many housing developments have been delayed because of the absence of front-loading capital for schools infrastructure. (S5O-04804)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): [*Inaudible.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, your microphone does not appear to be working properly. I will suspend the meeting for a moment to see whether we can get the minister a card that works.

14:10

Meeting suspended.

14:12

On resuming—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We resume the meeting, and I call Kevin Stewart.

Kevin Stewart: There seem to be gremlins in the works, Presiding Officer.

The Scottish Government does not monitor delays to individual housing developments. However, local authorities do record site programming and build-out as part of their housing land audits.

Alex Rowley: I suggest that the Scottish Government needs to look at the issue quickly. Over the years, I have raised with the minister the fact that front loading is a serious problem. I intend to write to the minister in the coming days, setting out the number of developments that are being stalled right now and those that will have to stop unless the matter can be resolved. I am having those discussions with local authorities, which are saying that it is a problem but not one that they can solve. At a time when we want to tackle the housing crisis, when we should be encouraging more skills and apprenticeships in housing and when we need more jobs, surely we need to pull together to address this problem.

Kevin Stewart: I point out to Alex Rowley something that, as a former council leader, he already knows. It is the statutory responsibility of local authorities to manage their school estate. The Scottish Government's funding through the school-building programme is intended to augment, not replace, a local authority's

investment in the school estate. The new £1 billion learning estate investment programme will benefit approximately 50,000 pupils across Scotland by the end of the next parliamentary session. That package includes replacement schools for Woodmill and St Columba's high schools, in Fife.

Beyond that, city deal commitments mean that we have been in discussion with local authorities about other aspects of this. We put in place the Winchburgh standby facility, and I understand that Fife Council is developing an outline business case to deliver 8,000 new homes in the Dunfermline area, 25 per cent of which will be affordable.

I am always more than willing to speak to Mr Rowley about any issue, and I look forward to receiving his letter. I will make sure that he gets a prompt response.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): As a direct result of the chancellor's spending review, Scotland is seeing its capital budget cut by 5 per cent going forward, with no explanation given. What impact is that likely to have on capital investment not just in schools but in hospitals, housing, roads and so on?

Kevin Stewart: It is, indeed, the case that the Scottish Government's capital budget is being cut by more than 5 per cent. Scotland needs an infrastructure-led economic recovery to deliver new jobs and speed up the transition to net zero carbon. We know that capital investment can have one of the biggest positive impacts on economic growth, so a cut during this time is especially harmful and goes against the grain, because most other countries are investing in capital projects at the moment in order to ensure an economic recovery from Covid. What that action by the United Kingdom Government means is fewer homes, fewer schools and fewer hospitals, as Mr Gibson has pointed out. That is why we need independence.

Food Banks

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now return to the supplementary to Jackie Baillie's question, which is asked by Richard Lyle with Aileen Campbell to reply.

Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): Covid-19 has had a significant impact on household incomes across Scotland and the winter period will be challenging for many. What is the Scottish Government doing to support people to stay afloat this winter?

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): I am glad that we got a chance to hear Richard Lyle's question. I have given details of some of the investments that we are making that will help in

some ways, such as the top-up of the Scottish welfare fund. More particularly and specifically, the £100 million winter package that was announced recently will help to support communities, individuals and families on a range of different fronts, making sure that they are protected as much as they can be and helped as much as possible during the winter months ahead. We hope that that will provide a bridge until the Scottish child payment starts to be paid to families across Scotland in February. That has been described as “a game-changer” for families by anti-poverty campaigners.

Those are a range of ways in which we are seeking to do our best to support the people who have been hit hardest by this nasty pandemic.

Social Inequality (Local Authorities)

5. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is ensuring that local authorities are sufficiently empowered to address social inequality during the pandemic. (S5O-04805)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): We recognise the impact that the pandemic is having on people and communities; that is why the Scottish Government has taken decisive action to commit £382.2 million so far in additional funding to local authorities in Scotland, including £50 million of hardship funding and more than £200 million of consequential support to support local efforts during the pandemic.

The funding includes a £30 million package to tackle financial insecurity and enable local authorities to respond flexibly to emerging needs, including supporting households with food, fuel and other essentials, and to cover free school meal provision right through to the Easter holidays. A further £15 million has been made available for local authorities entering level 4 restrictions as part of our £100 million winter plan for social protection.

Clare Adamson: I have been contacted by individuals and businesses that are unable to access various sources of Scottish Government Covid-19 support because the relevant local authority has determined that the applicant is ineligible. Our local authorities are working very hard to deliver the support in unprecedented circumstances and many of the anomalies have subsequently been rectified through an appeal, but some have not. What is the Scottish Government doing to ensure that local authorities feel able to apply discretion to the various Covid-19 support schemes when individual circumstances do not meet the exact requirements but are well within the intended spirit of such schemes?

Aileen Campbell: We have provided local authorities with guidance that is flexible and gives consideration to local challenges. We recognise the difficulties of working in such challenging times and have great confidence in the efforts that are being made by local authorities across the country that are working hard to support as many people and businesses in as many communities as they can. Scottish Government officials continue to work closely with their local counterparts to ensure that they are able to deploy the significant resources available to them and respond most effectively to the needs of communities.

If Clare Adamson wants to raise any issues directly with us, I would be happy to hear them and to work through the question of what further advice, support or guidance may be needed to give local authorities confidence around the discretion and flexibility that have been provided.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): Homelessness remains a serious problem across the country, with the pandemic bringing it into sharp focus. As we enter the winter period, the problem will only get worse. Glasgow City Council services have seriously let down homeless people and rough sleepers in my city. What action is the Scottish Government taking to encourage the Scottish National Party council administration in Glasgow to fulfil its duties to homeless people across the city?

Aileen Campbell: A huge amount of work has been undertaken in partnership between the Scottish Government—led in particular by Kevin Stewart, who is in the chamber—and local authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to ensure that we respond swiftly to homelessness needs. Staying safe from the virus requires people to stay at home; they need the safety and security of a home in order to do that, so that work has become an important public health tool.

Local authorities, the third sector and a huge number of others have done an inordinate amount of work to ensure as best they can that people are looked after and cared for. That effort has been no less in Glasgow; I know that there has been a lot of work between the Scottish Government and council officials there to work through and try to overcome any challenges.

An important part of the winter package is about ensuring that we apply additional funding to support homeless people going into the winter. I highlight in particular the recommendations from the homelessness and rough sleeping action group. HARSAG was brought back together as a result of the changing context because of the pandemic, and we are working through those recommendations. Jon Sparkes, who led that

work, is also working with us on our social renewal work.

We want to ensure that we support people to keep their homes and avoid homelessness, and that people who are homeless are supported adequately. I know that Kevin Stewart and our officials across Government are working tirelessly with officials across local authorities to ensure that people are supported and protected.

Rent Affordability

6. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken since 2019 to ensure that tenants can afford their rent payments. (S5O-04806)

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning (Kevin Stewart): We have taken forward a range of additional measures to help tenants in the private and social sectors. That includes an increase in the discretionary housing payment fund from £11 million to £19 million and the development of a new £10 million tenant hardship loan fund, alongside extended eviction notice periods and new pre-action requirements for private landlords.

It is crucial that tenants are made aware of that support, which is why we have delivered a number of awareness-raising campaigns. That has included writing to all private and social sector tenants in Scotland to provide information on their rights and the support that is available to them. We have continued to urge the United Kingdom Government to provide more support to tenants, and we urge it also to uprate local housing allowance rates and make permanent the return to the 30th percentile.

Mary Fee: I thank the minister for that answer. However, the reality is that, between 2010 and 2020, private accommodation rents in Scotland have increased above consumer prices index inflation. Last year, rents for two-bedroom properties increased above the CPI inflation rate of 0.5 per cent in 11 out of 18 areas, with the largest increase being 4 per cent in East Dunbartonshire.

Nothing short of real and radical change will protect tenants from unfair rent increases. Will the minister commit to supporting my colleague Pauline McNeill's Fair Rents (Scotland) Bill?

Kevin Stewart: Although we agree with its overall policy aim of affordable rents for all, we have concerns about the bill, and I have discussed those with Pauline McNeill. I am aware that the Local Government and Communities Committee has issued a call for written views on the bill, and we await with interest the outcome of that exercise. In the meantime, the Government is actively considering how best to address key

issues that the bill picks up on, such as a lack of data collection in the sector. Alongside that, we are examining how rent pressure zones could be made to work better in order to tackle rising rents in hotspot areas.

I know that a number of members have concerns about affordable rent. We will move forward on that, and I will continue to keep Mary Fee, Pauline McNeill and other members abreast of what we are doing.

Social Enterprises

7. Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting social enterprises. (S5O-04807)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government acted swiftly to ensure that there were accessible support packages in place for those in the social enterprise sector. That included launching the £350 million emergency communities Covid-19 fund in March, with more than £100 million going directly to the third sector, helping to safeguard thousands of jobs and to protect the vital work that many social enterprises do in communities throughout Scotland.

As we move forward, the support that is required by organisations is changing. In September, I launched the third sector and communities recovery programme, with a £25 million fund that helps organisations to adapt to the changing circumstances in which they find themselves. The programme combines financial support with business advice, helping organisations to recover and to support their communities from the terrible impact of Covid. I can confirm that I announced yesterday that we would top up that fund with a further £15 million as part of our winter package of support for our most vulnerable communities.

Tom Arthur: I thank the cabinet secretary and welcome that commitment to further funding. That key issue was discussed at the most recent meeting of the cross-party group on social enterprise. Social enterprises are looking towards recovery and will require support to adapt, restart and repurpose.

What role does the Scottish Government envisage social enterprises playing as we move into recovery and as we seek to build back better?

Aileen Campbell: I thank the member for his question and for his continued interest, as convener of the cross-party group on social enterprise.

There is a critical role for social enterprises in helping the country to recover. If we do not just want to revert to the old ways of doing things, we

need to think about what we need to do to move forward and to rebalance the economy. Social enterprises are already doing that: they have that social mission driving their purpose and their businesses, and it is that type of business that we want to see more of. They speak to the need for enhanced wellbeing, and they help us to move from our vision of the national performance framework to something much more tangible and real. Social enterprises have a critical importance in helping the country to recover, not just in the social sense but in the economic sense—the jobs and investment will be critical.

The supports that we have in place, delivered in partnership with our social enterprise sector—including loans, further support, help with adapting and advice—are all critical, too, for enabling social enterprises to move forward.

The other thing that we can all do is to support the buy social Scotland campaign, which launched just yesterday. There is a new directory that enables us all, as well as shopping local this Christmas, to think about buying and supporting social products.

Central Scotland Local Authorities (Meetings)

8. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met with local authorities in the Central Scotland region, and what was discussed. (S5O-04808)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives of all Scottish local authorities to discuss a wide range of issues as part of our commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland. That work of course includes our regular engagement with local authorities on levels of restrictions and protective measures that apply as a result of our efforts to suppress Covid-19.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask for a brief supplementary and a concise answer, please.

Monica Lennon: I am grateful to the cabinet secretary, and I place on record my gratitude to local authority workers.

I am interested to hear the Government's response to a recent survey carried out by Unison Scotland. It found that only 18 per cent of school cleaners said that they had enough time and the right materials to clean properly. Can the cabinet secretary advise me on how many extra cleaners have been employed in local authorities during the pandemic?

Aileen Campbell: I do not have that detail to hand, due to the very specific nature of the question. Mindful of the time that we have, I will

endeavour to find out some detail on that for Monica Lennon and to follow up on any further questions that she might have, if that will be helpful to her.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you—that is indeed helpful.

Social Security and Older People

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next item of business is portfolio questions on social security and older people. I remind members that questions 1 and 5 and questions 2 and 3 are grouped.

Older People in Level 4 Areas (Family Visits)

1. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what arrangements are in place to allow older people in areas subject to level 4 restrictions to be visited by their family. (S5O-04809)

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): In our strategic framework, we fully acknowledged the need to protect vulnerable people and to combat isolation and loneliness. Even in level 4, wherein the most restrictive protective measures are in place, people are still able to both enter and travel to another household when there is a requirement to provide care and support to a vulnerable person. In such scenarios we ask that they continue to practice appropriate health precautions, including physical distancing and good hygiene, which minimises the risk to both themselves and, importantly, those whom they are caring for.

Willie Coffey: To maintain contact with families is vital for the wellbeing of our older people, particularly when grandchildren are involved, and for those older people who might be in care homes. That contact is made much more difficult when families live across different boundaries. Can the minister offer further hope for families that allowing that contact will be among our priorities as we, I hope, come out of the level 4 restrictions on 11 December?

Christina McKelvie: I echo Willie Coffey's comments. A lot of folk will be looking for some hope that they will be able to see family over the next few weeks. I know family who I am dying to hug, and I am sure that Willie Coffey is exactly the same. That is especially the case for children and grandchildren. We are working really hard to realise that possibility. In the daily briefing today, the First Minister announced the good news that we will see vaccine roll-out in the next week or so; that will give lots of people hope. In the meantime, we are planning as much as we can to lift some of the restrictions over Christmas. Although we are saying to people, "Please don't, if you don't have

to,” we hope that we are giving a bit of comfort to families to come together and get so much of that love that we have all missed out on.

Older People (Family Visits)

5. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what measures it will put in place to allow older people to be visited by their family during the winter period. (S5O-04813)

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): As I said in my response to Willie Coffey on the subject of the Christmas period, keeping in touch with family is vital for our wellbeing and we fully recognise the need to enable that to continue, especially during the winter and over Christmas, when isolation can hit people particularly hard.

As well as support being able to be provided to vulnerable people in their homes, people who live alone are able to form an extended household with another household and they can agree on how they do that. We have also reached agreement across the four nations for up to three households—a maximum of eight adults—to spend time with their friends and family for a short period over Christmas. I hope that that is welcome news.

Sarah Boyack: The news is indeed welcome. Has the minister met any groups of care home relatives? They have concerns that the 12 homes that are piloting the lateral flow tests is just not enough. I have been told of worries about the resourcing of visiting plans that care homes have drawn up and that there is sometimes a bit of a delay in directors of public health signing off on those plans. Are any resources going to those care homes?

Christina McKelvie: The policy decisions and directives around care homes do not fall in my portfolio area, but a few weeks ago I met care home families, along with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport. I will endeavour to take Sarah Boyack’s questions to health colleagues and get her a direct response on the particular issues that she has raised, for example around the roll-out of lateral flow testing.

Older People (Support in Pandemic)

2. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what support it is providing to older people during the Covid-19 pandemic. (S5O-04810)

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): We know that people have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and we have an unprecedented package of support, which includes specific targeted funding of more than

£1.3 million for organisations at a national and local level to help older people.

As part of our funding package of more than £100 million to support people this winter, we will be investing a further £5.9 million to promote equality and tackle social isolation and loneliness, the majority of which is targeted at older people. That includes £4.3 million of additional funding for our Connecting Scotland programme, specifically to get 5,000 older people online this winter. There will also be support through older people’s organisations that are offering a number of services, including signposting to advice and information, delivering food and providing friendship.

Neil Findlay: We have had older people being pressured into taking out do not resuscitate notices, the discharge of Covid-positive patients into care homes, patients being denied hospital treatment, the personal protective equipment scandal and older people in care homes being denied visitors for nine months, and thousands are dead.

Can the minister look the care home residents of Scotland in the eye, and say that they have been treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve during the pandemic?

Christina McKelvie: The pandemic has been an absolutely horrific situation for everybody and anybody. Of course, it is incredibly difficult to make decisions—it is easier to do so with hindsight. The primary focus of the Scottish Government’s work is to keep people safe from the virus, which I think we have done as far as possible. The pandemic is an issue not only for the Scottish Government; it is a global issue that every single person is grappling with. We will work incredibly hard to make sure that we get through the pandemic and support people, including the older people, of Scotland as much as possible.

Older People (Services in Pandemic)

3. Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what further support will be made available to help services respond to the needs of older people, in light of the Covid-19 restrictions. (S5O-04811)

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): I continue to meet regularly with the older people’s strategic action forum and the national implementation group for social isolation and loneliness to hear at first hand the emerging issues, and discuss what further support we can provide. That engagement has fed directly into our winter support package, which I mentioned earlier. The package will involve an investment of nearly £6 million, much of which is to support older people, with a particular emphasis

on tackling loneliness. In addition, our third sector fund has been increased by £15 million to £40 million, and is open to organisations that are supporting people through the pandemic, including in relation to social isolation and loneliness.

For areas in level 4, we have made available an additional £15 million for local authorities to support people, including older people, in those areas.

Oliver Mundell: I commend the excellent work of day centres and local organisations in Dumfriesshire, which have gone above and beyond to respond to the needs of their members. However, as time passes, it is clear that some of those services, which were redesigned as Covid-19 first emerged, are now under sustained pressure. In the light of the measures that the minister has set out, what further action will the Scottish Government and its partners take to ensure that those smaller, community-run organisations get funding to enable them to keep lifeline services open through the winter months?

Christina McKelvie: I too pay tribute to the organisations across Scotland, including those in Oliver Mundell's constituency.

In my earlier answer, I mentioned our older people's strategic action forum. A number of members of that forum, including the Pensioners Forum, Age Scotland, Befriending Networks Ltd and Generations Working Together, have access to thousands of members, and they feed back almost weekly. We also have a fortnightly update from Age Scotland on what it is picking up from older people in the local communities. There is real pressure on services, but there has been additional funding—the winter support package, the additional funding for the third sector fund and the additional funding for local authorities—to ensure that small local organisations get the support that they need.

If Mr Mundell has specific examples that he wishes to raise with me, I ask him to please do so, because I am keen to know that there is a proper geographical spread of all such services.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Particularly for older people, Covid and the related restrictions have demonstrated the value of being connected to the internet. The minister said that there is £4.3 million of funding to connect people. With that in mind, is the minister prepared to meet virtually with digital buddies in the Scottish Borders, which provides older people with not only tablets, but a 24 gigabyte pay-as-you-go SIM card, as well as individual mentoring and support, which builds their confidence in technology? There may be something to learn from the organisation.

Christina McKelvie: I am always delighted to accept an invitation from Christine Grahame. Like Oliver Mundell, she has brilliant organisations in her constituency.

The work to get people digitally connected is incredibly important. We do not think that it is a panacea for everything—digital connections are not what everybody wants right now—but it would be good to link up more people. I am more than happy to meet the group from Christine Grahame's constituency and give them a detailed update on the roll-out of the Connecting Scotland programme, as we would like to make contact with an additional 5,000 older people.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): Christina McKelvie may be aware of reported figures stating that the number of women dying at home with dementia has risen sharply this year—by 75 per cent. Does the minister agree that that is because of pressure on health pathways, as stated by health data analysts? Will she confirm that policy responses for older people during the pandemic are being developed in a way that recognises and differentiates between women's and men's needs to address inequalities?

Christina McKelvie: I, too, was quite concerned to read the report that Elaine Smith talks about. Yes—to answer her questions straight. I will speak to health colleagues, because this is another area that does not fall in my portfolio responsibility, although it is one on which I work with colleagues across Government. I will definitely speak with health colleagues on that, because we take seriously our intersectional approach to issues, especially health issues, that affect women and men differently. Clare Haughey is leading the work on our women's health initiative that is currently under way. I will come back to Elaine Smith with an update on that, because I am incredibly interested to see what we can learn from it and how we can apply it to policy.

Older People (Loneliness)

4. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to research by Age UK, which suggests that 157,000 over-65s in Scotland are expecting to feel lonely over the festive season. (S5O-04812)

The Minister for Older People and Equalities (Christina McKelvie): The Scottish Government works closely with Age Scotland, which is a member of our older people's strategic action forum and our social isolation and loneliness national implementation group. We have fortnightly updates from Age Scotland, which ensures that we hear issues as they arise for older people around the country. That is incredibly important, because we recognise the devastating

impacts of isolation and loneliness that the Age UK research highlights.

As well as the work on the winter plan and other areas that I outlined in previous answers, I am pleased to say that Age Scotland's helpline has now received more than £1 million of Scottish Government funding so that it can be part of a network of vital support for older people and their families, which will remain in place over the festive period, into spring and beyond. I encourage all members to promote the helpline, because it is not just about giving people help, but about giving them friendship and a chat, which will be really important for folk over the winter period.

Murdo Fraser: I thank Christina McKelvie for the good news about the Age Scotland helpline.

Highlighting the issues of loneliness and isolation, Age Scotland has asked the Scottish Government to develop a winter action plan to support older people in the hope of getting people connected and supporting services in place.

Earlier this year, thousands of people signed up to volunteer to help others in their community. That is a great resource, but how can it be used to reduce loneliness and isolation for older people over the Christmas period?

Christina McKelvie: As I said, Age Scotland is a member of our social isolation and loneliness national implementation group. Age Scotland raised the issue of a winter plan, and other members of the group supported that. We pushed forward across Government, which is why we now have the winter package, the winter care home plan, the winter vaccination plan and a number of other things. We take winter planning incredibly seriously, and even more seriously in the pandemic.

Murdo Fraser mentioned social isolation and loneliness, as well as the issue of keeping people connected and how to use volunteers for that, which has been a topic of conversation for our implementation group for a while. Many of the organisations involved, if not all of them, have benefited greatly from the massive army of volunteers who came forward this year, and we want to continue that work.

At the last meeting that I had with the implementation group just a few weeks ago, we decided to look at how we can further utilise that army of volunteers and keep some of them engaged. For many of the volunteers, volunteering was the answer to their own social isolation and loneliness, so that was a double win for lots of people. I want to investigate that further and ensure that we can apply that approach to our recovery work as we move out of the pandemic.

Disabled People (Impact of Pandemic)

6. Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on disabled people. (S50-04814)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): We recognise that disabled people have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. We have been working closely with a number of disabled people's organisations to understand the impact of Covid-19 on disabled people and develop solutions wherever possible. Nearly £275,000-worth of funding has gone directly to DPOs to support their Covid response work, and more funding to reduce isolation is planned over the winter.

We established our social renewal advisory board to focus on tackling poverty and disadvantage and advancing equality. The board specifically considered issues that disabled people have experienced over this period, having wide-ranging discussions and hearing about potential solutions to tackle issues in relation to health, employment, social isolation and loneliness.

Johann Lamont: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the complex challenges that young disabled people face when making the move from school to work, college or university. I trust that she will be aware of my Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill, which aims to help the 4,000 disabled school leavers each year and ensure that they get the support that they desperately need.

Given the crisis and its disproportionate impact on disabled people, will the cabinet secretary commit to having a discussion with her ministerial colleagues about how my proposal can be taken forward as a matter of urgency to ensure that young disabled people can achieve their full potential, and that coronavirus does not compound the significant inequalities that they already face in their daily lives?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Johann Lamont is quite right to point out that Covid-19 has amplified the existing deep-set inequalities in our society and the importance of tackling them. She is also quite right to point to the importance of the points of transition to adulthood in a young person's life.

The Government will, as we always do, look seriously at all the opportunities to assist young people—particularly young disabled people—as they progress into adulthood and involve them in discussions about their future.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): A United Kingdom survey of

6,000 people by Citizens Advice found that disabled people were at twice the risk of redundancy as non-disabled employees, with one in four disabled people surveyed facing redundancy. Given the poor record of the Government's flagship fair start Scotland scheme, which found work for only 11,421 disabled people out of a target of 40,000, can the cabinet secretary explain what additional policies are being implemented to improve that situation, which has happened at the hands of her Government?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I am sure that Ms Hamilton is aware, a number of projects have been impacted by the pandemic this year. As we support people to find alternative employment or, indeed, to find new employment if they are still out of the labour market, we are absolutely determined to support everyone. We have a no-one-left-behind employment strategy to ensure that we deal with people who are far removed from the labour market and who face specific challenges in entering it. That, of course, includes some young disabled people. We are determined to take that issue on, and that is exactly what the Government's policies are designed to do.

Universal Credit

7. Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it is having with the United Kingdom Government regarding the time that it takes to receive and access universal credit. (S5O-04815)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): I remain deeply concerned about the minimum five-week wait for first universal credit payments. Repayable advances are available, but they result in an unacceptable choice between forgoing essentials or incurring debt to be repaid by reducing benefit payments that are already set at subsistence levels.

I have repeatedly written to the UK Government on the issue, most recently on 27 October, urging it to accept the Work and Pensions Committee's recommendation to offer non-repayable starter grants during the five-week wait.

We will continue to urge the UK Government to do the right thing and address that harmful policy, fix the rest of the flaws in the UC system and commit to keeping the £20 uplift next year. Without that uplift, hundreds of thousands across the UK who need support will instead be pushed into further poverty.

Richard Lyle: Many of my constituents are distressed about the time that it takes for an application to be processed, especially during the pandemic. Has the cabinet secretary had any discussions with her UK counterpart in order to

speed up the processing time for universal credit applications? What is her view on the timescales? Can we make progress on non-repayable grants, rather than have people waiting for weeks for money?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I completely appreciate the anxiety that is felt by Richard Lyle's constituents, which is shared by many across the country who are in the same situation. The five-week wait for the first payment is unacceptable and has been shown to lead to increased debt, hardship and food bank usage.

The Work and Pensions Committee found that, at the peak of universal credit applications earlier this year, more than 200,000 people across the UK faced a wait that was longer than five weeks. In addition, disabled people and those with health conditions are more likely to wait longer to receive their first payment because of the time that it takes to complete a work capability assessment.

Richard Lyle can be assured that I have made, and will continue to make, representations to the UK Government about the issue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions. I apologise to Fulton MacGregor, whose question was not reached because of a lack of time on a busy afternoon.

Urgent Question

14:51

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Lewis Macdonald): The next item of business is an urgent question, which has been selected by the Presiding Officer. As a consequence, decision time will be somewhat later than originally planned, and members will be kept informed about that over the course of the afternoon.

Retail Sector (Jobs)

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is providing to the retail sector, in light of reports that thousands of jobs are at risk as Christmas approaches.

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): This is an extremely challenging time for the retail sector, and a worrying time for those who are facing job loss and an uncertain future, particularly so close to Christmas. Every job that is lost or under threat is a concern.

We have sought to mitigate the impact on businesses, including retail businesses, throughout the pandemic. That has included supportive measures totalling more than £2.38 billion, including business support grants and non-domestic rates relief. In the sad event that any person is facing redundancy, we are providing support for employees through our partnership action for continuing employment. Through providing skills development and employability support, PACE aims to minimise the time during which individuals are out of work.

Daniel Johnson: I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, as a director of a company that has retail interests and as a member of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

Yesterday's news that Debenhams UK has collapsed, which came days after the Arcadia Group was placed in administration, bears out the fears of many that the retail industry is facing a catastrophic set of factors this winter. Retail is the biggest single private sector employer. That means that thousands of workers are now facing Christmas with the worry that they may not have a job in the new year.

In light of those events, what steps has the Government taken to support retailers and retail workers? Has the minister held meetings with retail employers and unions? Is the Government looking at specific policy and fiscal interventions, such as the further use of the non-domestic rates

regime for retail businesses in level 4 areas, which are unable to trade?

Jamie Hepburn: On engagement with retailers and representatives of their workforce, I assure Daniel Johnson that I meet regularly with the Scottish Retail Consortium, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Scottish Grocers Federation. For the workforce, of course, I also meet regularly with USDAW and the GMB to discuss those matters.

On the support that we are deploying through the framework, I remind Daniel Johnson that, at level 4, essential retail continues; non-essential retail can continue only with click-and-collect services. For businesses that have to close, we are providing grants of up to £3,000 every four weeks.

We will continue to consider what further support we can deploy, but those matters will also be the concerted focus of the retail strategy that I will take forward in due course, in the forming of which all the partners that I have mentioned will have a critical role.

Daniel Johnson: Although it is clear that many of the problems that face the retail industry existed before the pandemic, the pandemic has certainly accelerated processes that were under way. Many people say that the retail industry faces five to 10 years of change in five to 10 months.

There are businesses in level 4 areas that are simply unable to trade. Will the minister say what work the Government has undertaken to assess the economic impact on retail of level 4 restrictions? Will he commit to providing more detailed scientific information about the role that shopping might play in the transmission of the virus? Although large retailers are in the headlines, independent retailers who do not sell essential items and have no online presence are, in effect, locked out of trading at a time of the year on which they rely to keep themselves going throughout the rest of the year.

Jamie Hepburn: I recognise and understand the final point that Daniel Johnson made: this is an important time of year. None of us wants businesses to be closed for any longer than they have to be closed. However, public health is the paramount concern at the moment.

On the economic impact, that is something that the office of the chief economic adviser gathers information on. I will speak with that office to see what further detail we can provide.

On the scientific evidence, I will pick up the issue with relevant colleagues and see what other information we can provide.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): There has been a move towards online shopping,

which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Will the minister say more about support for small businesses on our high streets, especially as we approach small business Saturday this weekend?

Jamie Hepburn: As Mr Mason said, we are seeing a transfer of activity to online from in-store shopping. That was happening already, but Covid-19 has exacerbated the situation. Our retail strategy, which I mentioned in response to Daniel Johnson, has a role to play, as do other important initiatives that we are taking forward. I remind members that, since March, we have provided £22 million to towns and business improvement districts and that we are undertaking a review of town centres, which will report in due course.

The member is right to highlight that small business Saturday is coming up. That is a reminder of the importance of small businesses to the Scottish economy. Our Scotland loves local campaign is important in encouraging people safely to support their local businesses and economies, and I urge every member to get behind it and promote it.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): My thoughts are with the people who face losing their jobs. The news in that regard is further evidence of the hurricane that is hammering the Scottish retail sector. With that in mind, will the Scottish Government provide early assurance that it will not expect every shop to return to full business rates liability next April?

Jamie Hepburn: I observe that the news about Debenhams and Arcadia, which is disappointing, is not just impacting Scotland. This is not just a Scottish phenomenon; it is happening elsewhere.

We will continue to consider and try to roll out the measures that we need to deploy to support the retail sector. We will consider other fiscal measures that we might take and set those out in due course, as part of the usual budget process.

Scottish National Investment Bank

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a statement from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, Fiona Hyslop, on the Scottish National Investment Bank: mission-oriented investment in Scotland's future.

The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:00

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish National Investment Bank was launched by the Scottish Government on Monday 23 November and I am pleased to outline to Parliament how the missions that have been set for the bank will help to direct investment towards addressing the major challenges that Scotland faces.

In the months prior to launch, the bank secured state aid approval from the European Commission and advertised and recruited the board. It expects to have 60 staff members in place by the end of year 1, including all the senior executive team members.

The bank continues to develop its investment pipeline and will be funded with £75 million for investments for the remainder of the year and £200 million for next year.

The launch, which has been delivered on time despite the significant complications arising from the coronavirus pandemic, delivers on our Government's commitment to establish a national investment bank to provide the patient and growth capital that the Scottish economy needs for the future. It is the single biggest economic development in the lifetime of the Parliament and I thank MSPs for supporting it unanimously.

When we started the process three years ago, we could not have predicted how much we would need the bank today. With the economic shock that we face, and the kind of recovery that we need to make, the bank and its ability to offer patient capital will be more crucial than ever, as will its ability to work with our enterprise agencies and the private sector in supporting businesses to recover and grow in Scotland.

As legislated for in the Scottish National Investment Bank Act 2020, the bank will adopt a mission-oriented approach when providing finance. The missions have been set by the Scottish Government and address the grand challenges that Scotland faces—the issues that

we know that we must face to build a sustainable future for Scotland. That mission-oriented approach allows the bank to operate independently to crowd in investment, create and shape new markets and promote inclusive economic growth, while also offering an innovative approach to addressing key socioenvironmental challenges in Scotland.

The mission-oriented approach for the bank has been in development for a long time. Working with international experts Professor Mariana Mazzucato and Laurie Macfarlane at University College London's institute for innovation and public purpose, we developed "A mission-oriented framework for the Scottish National Investment Bank". That has helped translate the grand challenges into concrete missions that have a clear direction; are targeted, measurable and time bound; are ambitious but realistic; are cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral; and involve multiple bottom-up solutions.

Alongside the framework, the development of the bank's missions has been informed by stakeholder engagement, the illustrative missions in the implementation plan, responses from parliamentary procedures, Government policy priorities and the national performance framework. From the outset of the work to establish the bank, the missions have been a constant measure in ensuring that the bank provides the greatest benefit to Scotland and is aligned with the economic priorities of the Scottish Government and opportunities for Scotland.

It has been important to consult widely on the missions, because it has to feel like Scotland's bank, and as a result of that a more wide-reaching range of missions has been proposed and subsequently supported. They revolve around the themes of transitioning to a low carbon economy, promoting inclusive growth through placemaking and local regeneration, and responding to emerging demographic pressures. Those themes were further supported through broader engagement with stakeholders, while other policy priorities were considered throughout the development process of the bank's missions.

The Scottish Parliament has been instrumental not only in its unanimous support for the act that established the bank, but, more recently, in its support for the missions that were presented to it and the public in late August for final comment.

I am now pleased to announce that the final missions were communicated to the bank yesterday, on 1 December, through a letter addressed to its chief executive officer, Eilidh Mactaggart. Let me set them out in turn.

The primary mission of the bank will be a net zero mission to address the climate emergency through making investments in relation to

"Achieving a Just Transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2045",

and to

"Invest in rebalancing our economy towards leadership in sustainable technology, services and industries."

The net zero mission of the bank aligns with and supports the Government's policies to deliver a sustainable green economy, as outlined in our programme for government and the climate change plan. It will help to drive investment into innovative sectors and companies and tackle climate change, and it will offer patient capital to help facilitate the development of new technologies essential in addressing the climate emergency.

The second mission of the bank—its place mission—is focused on developing place-based opportunity throughout Scotland. To achieve that, the bank's mission is to make investments to support

"Extending equality of opportunity through improving places by 2040",

and to

"Invest in places and regeneration to reduce inequality, and improve opportunities and outcomes for people and communities."

That mission will allow for investment in the kinds of places that people want to live and work in—ones that are good for health and wellbeing and which involve the local community. The mission will help to support the good work that is being carried out by, for example, the empowering communities programme and the more homes Scotland approach. Place-based investment will reduce inequality and improve opportunities through increased availability of housing options, secure employment, education and commercial prospects.

The final mission of the bank—its people mission—seeks to address the demographic change that Scotland is experiencing now and will experience in the coming years. That is about not just demography and ageing populations, but helping our people adapt to a changing world. The mission asks the bank to make investments in line with

"Harnessing innovation to enable our people to flourish by 2040",

and to

"Invest in innovation and industries of the future for a healthier, more resilient and productive population."

That mission and the bank's investment in innovation is an opportunity for businesses and

organisations to increase productivity and to raise skills levels in the economy. Innovation is essential in achieving all the missions that are outlined for the bank, with new and developing technology at the heart of driving the response to climate change and the inequality of place-based opportunity.

The bank's inaugural investment of £12.5 million to M-Squared Lasers perfectly illustrates the mission-oriented basis of the bank in looking beyond financial returns and towards social and environmental returns through investment in the innovative companies of Scotland.

Those missions represent the directions in which the Scottish Government would like the bank to focus its investments in order to provide finance and act to catalyse private investment to achieve a step change in growth for the Scottish economy, by powering innovation and accelerating the move to a net zero emissions and a high-tech, connected, globally competitive and inclusive economy.

Those missions are not in place to constrain the bank's activity. Ultimately the bank will be required to invest in opportunities in line with its vision, objects, missions and ethical standards. Therefore, the missions should be viewed as part of a wider picture of the bank's governance, rather than in isolation.

The 2020 act requires that ministers lay before Parliament a statement describing how the consultation influenced the content of the document sent to the bank. That statement is in development and will be laid before Parliament later this month.

The bank will measure its performance against a balanced scorecard, as set out in the 2020 act. The balanced scorecard will capture the environmental, economic and social impact of the bank's investments, as well as its financial performance.

It is important to note that it will take time for the impact of the bank's activities to be evidenced. The long-term nature of the missions means that social, economic and environmental returns should not be expected shortly after the bank has been vested. The bank will be expected to deliver those impacts in the medium to long term.

Of course, those are the bank's first missions. The 2020 act requires the Government to review the bank's performance at least every five years, reporting back to Parliament and the public. The same consultation process will apply if the Government proposes to modify or end any of the bank's missions, or set new ones, to reflect changes.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a huge health and economic shock to Scotland. On the

economy, the Scottish Government set out a four-step plan to respond, reset, restart and recover. Although the initial economic shock of Covid-19 is expected to be shorter than the long-term nature of the bank's mission-oriented investment objectives, the bank is expected to play a key role in supporting Scotland's recovery by delivering patient and sustained investment. In that, the bank will work closely with established agencies, in particular Scottish Enterprise. There have already been constructive discussions between the two on their areas of focus and collaboration.

If anything, the immediate impacts of Covid-19 underline the need for the bank and support the adoption of a mission-oriented investment approach. The climate emergency, place-based opportunity and demographic change represent compelling challenges now more than ever.

The bank is uniquely placed to work towards addressing those challenges, through providing patient capital to support long-term economic growth in tandem with the business community and public sector partners. The bank's mission-oriented approach provides a unique opportunity to influence the direction of economic recovery in the long-term interests of the people of Scotland.

The missions for the Scottish National Investment Bank have been developed with broad stakeholder engagement across Scotland, civic organisations, the general public and colleagues in the Cabinet and Parliament, and in line with the legislation laid out in the Scottish National Investment Bank Act 2020. They help to form the basis of the relationship between the Scottish Government and the bank.

Once again, I thank members for their unanimous support in establishing this institution of our national economy and in helping us to set its direction.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will take questions on the issues that were raised in her statement, for which I will allow around 20 minutes. We are pushed for time, so please bear that in mind.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for her statement and for advance sight of it. I welcome the progress that has been made in establishing the Scottish National Investment Bank. With a serious economic recession looming and job losses already happening, it has never been more necessary.

The missions that the cabinet secretary set out in today's statement are comprehensive, and she said that they were not in place to constrain the bank's activities. Can she confirm that those missions will not restrict the ability of the bank to

invest in all projects that can deliver economic growth and provide jobs at this vital time?

I also ask the following two questions on the cabinet secretary's statement. First, the cabinet secretary has confirmed that the allocation of funding is £75 million in the current year and £200 million next year. Previously, it was indicated that the funding to the bank would be £400 million. Can she clarify the figures and the reason for the difference?

Secondly, the cabinet secretary mentioned Scottish Enterprise in her statement. Over recent years, the Government has slashed Scottish Enterprise's budget, and some of the functions that it performed are now effectively being taken over by the Scottish National Investment Bank. What on-going role does the Scottish Government see for Scottish Enterprise and the other enterprise agencies, and how will future funding reflect that?

Fiona Hyslop: I recognise the challenges that we face in our economy; some will be shorter term and some will be medium and longer term. In relation to Scottish Enterprise, the collaboration will be important, not least because of the issues that will be faced by our retail and other companies, which we heard about in a different context in the urgent question. Short-term working capital will be provided by Scottish Enterprise, not by the bank. However, in relation to that co-operation, it is important to note the opportunity to have high-growth innovative companies. We have already announced a significant number of developments via Scottish Enterprise investments during the recovery and I am looking forward to hearing tomorrow further announcements from Scottish Enterprise with regard to helping that development.

On Murdo Fraser's question about whether the bank will be strictly controlled by the missions, I have indicated that we will not constrain the bank but we want to contribute to the missions. The missions will not prohibit the bank from investing at commercial rates in high-growth innovative companies in different sectors other than the ones that are obvious from the missions.

On funding, the capitalisation figure of £2 billion still stands but, with regard to what was available for investment and what the bank wanted to or could invest in during this period, it was understood that £75 million would be appropriate at this point. However, if there is any further information, I can write to the member in that regard.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I also welcome the statement and the progress that has been made.

Is there not a need for Scotland to have an industrial strategy? We could measure the performance of the bank against the delivery of that strategy.

On meeting the needs of Scotland, one of the greatest needs in Scotland at this time is the need to build houses in the social rented sector. Will the bank be able to work with local authorities and make finances available to councils and social landlords in order to build houses? House building must be seen as a long-term investment, because it would create tens of thousands of apprenticeships and jobs.

Fiona Hyslop: Scotland has an industrial strategy. Even this year, as part of our recovery, there has been an increase of £20 million in the investment into the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland, which takes the total to £75 million. That will be a real driver for innovation and development.

I absolutely agree with Alex Rowley on housing. If we are looking at place-based approaches and we want to tackle inequalities and issues relating to low carbon, it is quite clear that housing provides an opportunity. He is quite right that aligning that with the opportunities to skill and train young people is really important.

We have seen the construction sector's recovery plan, and we are due to see the manufacturing sector's recovery plan shortly. With the added opportunity for investment that I have described, we can see some drivers for growth in jobs and innovation, particularly in our manufacturing sector. Our work on sustainable procurement and development will also help the manufacturing base of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to open questions. I will do my best to let everyone contribute.

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary confirm that the Scottish National Investment Bank is a bank for the whole of Scotland and that it will play a pivotal role in our transition to net zero emissions in Fife as well as in the rest of the country?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes, I can. It is important to identify the place-based mission as one of the Scottish National Investment Bank's missions that have been outlined today. That mission will support all of Scotland, including Fife, although I suspect that I will get approaches from all MSPs about their constituencies. I am sure that Eilidh Mactaggart, the chief executive officer of the bank, will want to engage with the committee and with other members at the appropriate time.

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): I welcome the bank's mission-focused approach,

especially the support for a green recovery. However, the bank is still investing public money and the public must be sure that they get good value from it, so what rate of return will the Government set for the bank?

Fiona Hyslop: It has been made clear that there will be commercial rates of return for the bank. It wants to operate in growth areas and to tackle some of the real challenges that we have, but I can confirm that the bank will offer commercial rates.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary's statement, which comes at a perfect time, given the economic burdens of Covid-19 and the impending effects of Brexit. How will the Scottish National Investment Bank boost regional economies across Scotland and the momentum that is created by the respective growth deals?

Fiona Hyslop: I welcome the Ayrshire growth deal, which has recently been taken forward. Again, that shows the opportunities for investment in key areas. One of the bank's jobs will be to align with other sources of investment. Clearly, there is a great deal of investment from the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments in the growth deals, and the bank can align with such public sector investment.

Importantly, the bank can also align—as it did with its first investment—in generating private investment, to ensure that we maximise opportunities. That is particularly important in relation to the exciting work that will happen through net zero activities. Alignment with some of the growth opportunities, particularly in relation to the space sector and others, will be really important. I am sure that the bank will also be interested in aligning with the opportunities in the Ayrshire growth deal, but I emphasise that the bank will operate independently of Government.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The predecessor to the Scottish National Investment Bank was the Scottish Investment Bank, which sat within Scottish Enterprise. I understand that it remains part of Scottish Enterprise. When will it transition to become part of the Scottish National Investment Bank, or is the cabinet secretary not concerned about a duplication of effort and resource?

Fiona Hyslop: It is important that we have alignment, not duplication. The Scottish Investment Bank will transition into the Scottish National Investment Bank at the appropriate time, but that needs to happen in a way that makes sense for organisations—particularly Scottish Enterprise, which has done a tremendous job in tackling some of the immediate priorities and

concerns during the economic crisis. The transition will happen at the appropriate time.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): There is obviously good news about vaccines today. However, the economy might take longer than us to recover from the Covid pandemic. Can the minister confirm that the bank will stick to its net zero mission despite the fact that there might be pressure on it to bail out existing industries?

Fiona Hyslop: That is an important question because of the pressures that all of us will come under as we consider the immediate crisis response while, at the same time, trying to identify recovery plans and set our course on them. We know—this is in our response to the advisory group on economic recovery—that digital and net zero are important pathways to recovery, and the bank needs to stay focused on that.

As I said, the bank will not be the source of short-term working capital for companies that are in distress; those will be supported in other ways.

Andy Wightman (Lothian) (Green): In the light of the place-based mission and the fact that an amendment to provide a shareholding for local government was rejected during the passage of the bill, and given that the German development bank is 20 per cent owned by German states and that, in Sweden, Kommuninvest—a local government investment agency—will lend more than £15 billion in 2020, what plans does the Scottish Government have to enhance the role of local government in long-term investment in the Scottish economy?

Fiona Hyslop: Enhancing the role of local government is key, as we have seen through the growth deals, in which decisions about where those major, multimillion-pound investments should go are driven by local government. The bank can align with that, as I said in my answer to Kenneth Gibson.

The Government certainly looks at different models when it is considering the SNIB, including German, Dutch and other examples. I know that Eilidh Mactaggart is interested in working with different local authorities on the place-based mission, and the Government's advisory group on missions will draw from a wide range of civic responsibilities, including local government.

We are also working very closely with local authorities to identify what their needs are, and the place-based approach—which the Scottish Enterprise has been involved in, as we seen in the Clyde mission—is a good example of what we can do on alignment with local government needs.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): It is difficult to disagree with the mission that has been set out for the bank, and we support the progress

that has been made. However, the ultimate test must surely be how many good-quality jobs it actually creates. Does the minister have an estimate?

Fiona Hyslop: I am not going to give a number, because Willie Rennie will then come back at a future date and ask why I have not met that target. It is a challenge. However, his point about good-quality jobs is important, because we have to play to Scotland's strengths. We have to focus on the key sectors that we have, and good-quality jobs will help with place-based renewal. The issue is how we spread those jobs and opportunities across the country, because it is attractive for them to be based not just in the central belt but in places such as Fife and other areas. It has to be about sustainable jobs, but those must be in the right areas, which is why alignment and the missions are really important.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I was delighted that M Squared Lasers, in Maryhill, secured the first investment from the SNIB. Can the cabinet secretary outline how the SNIB will work with Scottish Enterprise—which already offers grants to some companies in my constituency—to ensure that a mixture of grants and loans will be available?

Fiona Hyslop: I congratulate Bob Doris on being the MSP for the constituency that was the first location to receive investment from the SNIB.

Alignment is important, and Scottish Enterprise can pursue early-stage, high-growth opportunities to make businesses attractive to invest in at the next stage. That is part of the pipeline that we are talking about when we talk about alignment. It is important, especially at this time, that we seek opportunities to enable new businesses to develop, as well as supporting existing ones—I know that many existing businesses will be under pressure over the next period. If we are ambitious for Scotland, we will want to support those new-start and early-stage, high-growth companies. Scottish Enterprise has, and will continue to have, a key role in that, and I look forward to hearing further news of those developments shortly.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): When the legislation to create the bank was passed, there was widespread agreement that it should focus on the provision of long-term, patient capital. However, we now know that thousands of viable firms across Scotland will not survive the next six months without urgent short-term capital investment to see them through the pandemic. Does the cabinet secretary recognise the need not only for Scottish Enterprise but also for the bank to be actively involved in the response to Covid and to provide significant short-term investment capital from its own budget? The capital that is now

required is far in excess of what Scottish Enterprise can provide.

Fiona Hyslop: The bank will be involved in our recovery. There are opportunities for short-term investment that can help to deliver in a number of areas, particularly in transport, in the immediate creation of jobs and in supporting companies.

It is important to recognise, however, that the bank must focus on long-term, patient capital. We will therefore make provision and offer support. I have managed to secure additional capital investment for Scottish Enterprise, particularly in some of the areas that we have been talking about.

I say as gently as possible that we must also anticipate the disruption that we cannot deny is likely to come in January, February and March because of Brexit. It is important that we are in a position to support companies and supply chains during that period of disruption. As of now, we do not know what kind of deal there will be or whether there will be no deal. I am worried about that period. We are looking into an abyss, and we do not know where we will be.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary indicate whether the Scottish National Investment Bank will have a particular remit, through its place and people missions, to aid investment in local authority areas that struggle economically and with population decline?

Fiona Hyslop: That is one of the great challenges of our time. Inverclyde is an interesting area in that it combines deep-seated and long-standing poverty with demographic challenges.

I cannot and will not tell the bank where to go or what to invest in, but I would like the bank to suggest solutions that would tackle those multi-pronged issues. That is a challenge. I am sure that the bank will look at any investable propositions that come forward from Inverclyde.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions on the cabinet secretary's statement on the Scottish National Investment Bank: mission-oriented investment in Scotland's future. We will shortly move on to the next item of business. I remind members to observe the social distancing measures that are in place.

Burntisland Fabrications

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-23537, in the name of Alex Rowley, on Burntisland Fabrications. Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request-to-speak button now.

15:29

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): In speaking to this motion for the Scottish Labour Party, I want to make clear that Scotland can and should be a key player in Europe and the world when it comes to the green energy revolution over the coming decades. We should be setting out the opportunities for high-skill, high-wage jobs. Our young people should be guaranteed a bright future through high-quality education, skills and training that gives them a secure and prosperous future in a Scotland that leads the way when it comes to tackling the greatest threat to their future—climate change.

For that to happen, politicians and Government need to have the political will, the determination and the willingness to stand up for Scotland. Sadly, on all fronts, the Scottish National Party Government is failing. Nowhere is that failure more exposed than in the sorry tale of BiFab. The SNP in Parliament has made a career out of blaming anyone and everyone to avoid taking responsibility for its failures. True to form, it is now blaming the Canadians who formed a partnership with it to rescue the Scottish yards.

Let us look at the facts. In 2017, JV Driver, at the invitation of the Scottish ministers, advised the Scottish Government during its financial intervention to save BiFab. That progressed into an acquisition discussion between the Scottish ministers and JV Driver that occurred over the course of several months. The company has stated publicly that, in the final purchase discussions and agreements, it was always envisaged that the Scottish Government would be the primary financier of the business as it recovered from the Beatrice wind farm project and pursued new contracts.

Therefore I suggest that it is a red herring for the cabinet secretary to blame the company for a lack of investment. It is equally a red herring to blame the company for the lack of a long-term business plan.

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): In relation to the proposals that were set out in the pre-acquisition business plan, does the member understand and appreciate that that plan indicated that the shareholders and majority shareholders

would provide investment, working capital and assurances? Is he aware of the content of that business plan?

Alex Rowley: I am aware that, in evidence yesterday to the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, the chief executive was very clear about the agreement that was made between the Scottish Government and the company.

BiFab has stated that it was always JV Driver's intent to re-establish the business with a primary focus on United Kingdom domestic market renewable energy projects, and that that was openly discussed with the Scottish ministers and set out in the long-term business plan. That view correlates with the decision of the Scottish ministers to seek approval from the Finance and Constitution Committee, in November 2019, to provide a 100 per cent guarantee for the Neart na Gaoithe contract, including a 100 per cent guarantee in support of a performance bond from the Royal Bank of Scotland.

Yesterday, the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee heard from the chief executive officer of DF Barnes that, had it not been for Covid, work on the NnG contract would have been well under way by now. Due to the delay, the letter of intent to commence project activities was signed by Saipem and BiFab in mid-September. Then, to the shock of the workforce, the trade unions and the company, the Government announced that it was withdrawing from the guarantee. Yesterday, DF Barnes president Jason Fudge told the committee that the firm had been prepared to put up to 500 employees back to work on a contract for the turbine jackets for the NnG offshore wind farm project, when it emerged that ministers could no longer provide the necessary financial support.

The question is, what changed between the discussions and the approach to the finance committee in late 2019, and 2020?

The cabinet secretary said that the Government got legal advice that it would be in breach of state aid rules. The first point to be made about that is that we are out of the European Union on 31 December, so the state aid rules will not apply. It is convenient for the SNP to blame state aid while Governments across Europe seem to find a way of supporting their industries and workforces.

What of that legal opinion? Where did it come from and what did it say? Those seem like reasonable questions to ask. We are asking the Government to publish the legal advice. The GMB and Unite trade unions have sought and published their own legal opinions. As partners in BiFab, they have asked the Government to do likewise, but the cabinet secretary told them that they would have to seek a judicial review to get that information. That is not a good definition of

partnership working with the trade unions in Scotland.

BiFab and the trade unions have presented an option for working alongside Saipem in the Fife yards, and asked the Government to jointly present the option to Saipem and EDF, but the Government has not taken that up. That option is still on the table and would secure jobs in Scotland. We cannot sit back and allow the work of Scottish offshore renewables to go to countries in Asia, where the price differentials are primarily driven by low-cost labour, state-led investment, and subsidies, while this Government hides behind European state aid rules. To do that is to sell Scotland out to the lowest bidder.

In moving the motion today, I say that the youth of today and the youth of tomorrow will need the jobs, and the only way to get those jobs is for the Government to step up and find a solution, work with the trade unions, and work with the company.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that Scotland has the potential to lead Europe's green energy revolution over the coming decades; further believes that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and job losses, green jobs will be central to creating new employment and training opportunities across Scotland; considers that, with the support of the workforce and their trades unions, the maximum effort has to be made to secure wind farm contracts for Scottish manufacturing companies; notes that, in open competition, BiFab won a £30 million contract to build turbine jackets for the NnG North Sea wind farm, work that could have started in January 2021, but has been prevented from going ahead with this; condemns the Scottish Government's decision to withdraw the financial guarantee that was needed to enable this work to go ahead, thus risking Scotland's reputation as a new green investment hub, and further condemns the Scottish Government's failure to produce any legal opinion to justify its claim that support for BiFab was against the law; calls on it to act now to secure the future of the Burntisland Methil and Arnish yards, and the jobs that depend on them; further calls on it to talk to the workforce's representatives and to ask for the help of the UK Government through the joint working party to urgently negotiate with EDF and Saipem to find a solution that ensures that the NnG contract for eight wind turbine platforms is carried out in the yards, and, with Glasgow being the venue of the COP26 summit in December 2021, calls for a concrete plan to be published in January by the Scottish Government that ensures that future work on renewables comes to Scottish yards.

15:37

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture (Fiona Hyslop): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to today's debate on BiFab. I know that this will be a worrying time for BiFab's workers, and we continue to do everything in our power to support them.

The Scottish Government support for BiFab has been significant in that £37.4 million was

converted to a 32.4 per cent equity stake, which is the financial support that Alex Rowley referred to, and a loan facility of up to £15 million was provided. The Scottish Government has provided 100 per cent of the working capital for the business.

One of the main questions that has been asked of me is why the Scottish Government was able to support the company in late 2019 but cannot do so now. It is important to note that BiFab had a strong pipeline of work opportunities at the start of 2020, with the potential to secure the NnG and Seagreen contracts. The combined delays to the NnG contract award as a result of the pandemic, SSE's decision to award the Seagreen contract to companies in China and the middle east, compounded by JV Driver's continued lack of financial support for the business, greatly weakened BiFab's cash flow and balance sheet to the point at which we could no longer lawfully support the company financially.

It is a wing and a prayer to think that somehow the state aid problem will be solved in January. There will be a solution, but we have no idea what it will be. It must be understood that the Scotland Act 1998 specifically gives the Scottish ministers responsibilities that ministers in other places do not have. *[Interruption.]* I want to develop my point.

I have considered all legal options for continuing to financially support BiFab. My conclusion that the Scottish Government can no longer continue to support the business is based on a range of facts, including the current position of the business, its trading forecast, its prospects for future work, and the continued no-risk position of the majority shareholder. We have explored a range of alternatives, including state ownership, but have concluded that there is no legally compliant way for us to do that.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): BiFab has claimed that JV Driver offered on numerous occasions to transfer its shareholding in the company to the Scottish Government at zero cost. Is that true and, if so, why was that offer refused?

Fiona Hyslop: I have just made the point that we have looked at lots of different options, including state ownership, and we discussed the transfer of shares not only to ourselves but to third-party investment. However, that, too, was not legally state aid compliant. JV Driver said that it would provide us with flexibility, but it would provide no flexibility in relation to the legal constraints.

We have also explored the provision of financial support with the United Kingdom Government which, as the joint statement on 24 November made clear, considers that there is no legal or

commercial basis for it to support BiFab at this time. I recognise the interest in the legal position and have noted the calls for the relevant legal advice to be published, but, as I have previously explained, under the terms of the ministerial code it is not permissible for me to do so. *[Interruption.]* No, I cannot give way; I only have a few seconds left.

That position is shared by the Conservative UK Government, and members on the Conservative front bench may want to reflect on that in terms of publication of legal advice.

With Michael Gove, I agreed to form a joint UK and Scottish Government working group to ensure that all possible options are explored in relation to the supply chain. That is an important step. The UK policy landscape is one of the major barriers to strengthening our supply chain. The weaknesses in the UK Government's contract for difference mechanism work against Scotland and the Scottish supply chains, meaning that companies such as BiFab have limited chances of securing work. The contract for difference auction needs to ensure that project bids are not secured purely on the price per megawatt. The UK Government must consider the wider economy and our response to the climate emergency. Those are all points that have been made by industry to the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee.

We have left no stone unturned in our search for a solution to the challenges faced by the business and we are committed to working with all parties to deliver the best outcome for Scotland.

I move amendment S5M-23537.2, to leave out from “; considers” to end and insert:

“regrets that the board of directors and majority shareholders of BiFab are unable to invest in, or provide working capital or assurances for, the company; further regrets that the Scottish and UK governments are unable to provide further financial support that is state aid-compliant; encourages all parties, working with the STUC and trades unions, to seek opportunities to secure additional investment, working capital and assurances to support future work at the strategic sites currently operated by the business, making use of the recognised engineering skills of its workforce; agrees that the UK Government must use its current review of the Contract for Difference (CfD) mechanism to deliver radical changes to the CfD, which will ensure that future renewables developments support the domestic supply chain and, as a minimum, fulfil the 60% supply chain content target set in the current UK Offshore Wind Sector Deal; further agrees that, although currently a reserved matter, the Scottish Ministers should initiate consultation with stakeholders on potential ways to improve outcomes for Scotland and a secure and sustainable future for the Scottish renewable supply chain, and recognises that, given the failure of successive UK administrations to deliver an indigenous UK supply chain, these powers would be managed more effectively by the Scottish Parliament.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, cabinet secretary. Please note that, if you take an intervention while I have some time in hand, I will

give you the time back. I did that for you and also for Alex Rowley.

15:42

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome the debate, which has been brought to the chamber by Labour, given just how important a topic it is, not just because of the issues that it raises about BiFab but because of all the related matters regarding wider policy objectives and Government engagement. That is true not just in the context of the future of the economy in Fife, but also in terms of the 26th conference of the parties—COP26—and the opportunity that that affords for Scotland to lead the way when it comes to climate change and the green investment and job creation that must accompany it.

When Benny Higgins presented his report on economic recovery earlier in the year, he was adamant that Scotland, in its determination to deliver the triple targets of emissions reductions, the development of natural capital and green job creation, needs an investment-led recovery with good access to both capital and digital technologies. At the time, both he and Lord Smith of Kelvin were very clear about the need for much stronger relationships between industry and Government and for strengthened relationships between the Scottish and UK Governments. That demand is surely very much at the centre of this debate, because if we are to ensure that the green jobs are not just about wind turbines but about hydrogen technologies, electric buses, carbon capture and so on, we have to have Governments working together.

BiFab has, unquestionably, raised other issues, because it is quite clear that, until the joint communiqué of 24 November when the joint working party was established, Government has been failing the BiFab workforce. Let us be very clear that jobs at BiFab have long been under threat and it was deeply regrettable that both Governments concluded that nothing more could be done to support the company's finances. Although we know that BiFab has undoubtedly encountered issues of its own, especially with regard to outstanding payments and the resulting legal action taken by the German company EEW, the Scottish Government has lost £52.4 million in this debacle.

Fiona Hyslop: As in the terms of the Labour Party motion, will Liz Smith condemn the UK Government for not providing financial support for the business?

Liz Smith: No, I will not, because it is a matter of joint working, as I said earlier in my speech.

Scottish Renewables told the Scottish Parliament's Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee that

"Unfortunately, investments that could have been made over decades, which would have seen the UK being able to compete with European supply chain companies on things like fabrication, simply were not made"—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee*, 24 November 2020; c 33.]

and pointed out that in previous years Scotland had been very competitive against countries such as Belgium and Spain.

We know, too, that the SNP invested £3 million of taxpayers' money in a South Korean company that now has only one full-time member of staff in a factory at Machrihanish, and no orders.

We also know—I am sure that my colleague Murdo Fraser will say much more about this in responding to the debate—that Kate Forbes is not prepared to say how she will make £2.2 billion of the £8.2 billion boost for the Scottish budget part of the Scottish investment.

It is not as though the Scottish Government has been meeting its own climate change targets, as measured by several independent bodies such as the Energy Saving Trust, or meeting pledges on energy savings in new buildings and renewable heat targets. It has also abandoned its not-for-profit energy company. Consultants were paid thousands of pounds—

The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands (Paul Wheelhouse): Will the member take an intervention?

Liz Smith: No, I will not, if the minister does not mind.

Paul Wheelhouse: What has been said is incorrect.

Liz Smith: If I wish to correct the record, I will do so.

Consultants were paid thousands of pounds for a business case that was due in January 2019, and then delayed to April. In the latest programme for government, it was not mentioned at all—I think that I am correct in saying that.

The BiFab situation is deeply damaging, and Labour are right to bring this debate to the chamber. It raises significant concerns about consistency and coherence in green policy, as was highlighted by several witnesses at the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee and the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee.

I move amendment S5M-23537.1, to insert at end:

“, and further calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that these policy commitments on renewables are part of a coherent industrial strategy for the post-COVID-19 era.”

15:46

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Fifteen years ago, I visited the yards at Methil. At that time, they were largely empty of workers, but in the old office block there were dozens of pictures of the huge offshore oil and gas structures that were built at the yards. They showed the workers smiling, proud of their skills and the great contribution that they made to our nation. At the time, many of us saw a bright future. Yes, the yards needed considerable investment, but on the horizon there was the promise of a commercially viable offshore renewables sector, with work for generations to come.

That bright future has now arrived in the yards of Asia and the middle east, but it has not arrived at Methil, Burntisland or Arnish. The reality is that markets have consistently failed to deliver on the full jobs potential of Scottish renewables. From CS Wind to BiFab, Governments have been unable or unwilling to assemble a domestic supply chain with the right investment in the right places at the right time.

If the Government is serious about a green new deal, it will have to put public ownership of energy at the heart of its industrial strategy and deliver on that. It is clear that courting private investors is a lottery. It appears that DF Barnes was caught out by the way in which projects are procured in the UK, as it expected more certainty and conditionality in a market that it clearly did not fully understand. I do not know who is to blame for that. Is it the board of DF Barnes, the Scottish Government or both? The reality is that, once again, the workers at the yards have been massively let down. The current situation is that the company is now unable to realise the opportunities that are right in front of it.

I do not doubt the Scottish Government's desire to see BiFab flourish, but it is not acceptable for the Government, as a minority shareholder, to continually throw up its hands and say that it cannot do anything, when it has in the past had clear opportunities to take a majority stake in the company and take control in the boardroom.

Undoubtedly, the lack of conditionality in the CFD process continues to be a problem for BiFab and the rest of the UK renewables supply chain. The UK Government has clearly failed to create a jobs guarantee that would be in the public interest, and the CFD scheme is ultimately self-defeating. If its aim is to ensure the supply of energy to the consumer at the lowest cost, that has to be built on a strong Scottish supply chain that specialises

in delivering the next generation of solutions for Scottish waters, such as floating wind.

All the ingredients are there at BiFab, with its long history of offshore fabrication, to enable it to deliver in the challenging environment of the North Sea. Alongside CFD reform, the jobs guarantee must be delivered through Crown Estate Scotland leases. Supply chain statements from companies that are looking to bid for the next round of wind farms in Scottish waters are being produced now. They must be meaningful, so that BiFab and other companies can use them as strong bankable foundations for their business plans. They need to demonstrate that there is a clear future pipeline of work for industry based in Scotland, whether in fabrication, blade manufacture or operation and maintenance. There must be a clear picture of the supply chain and of where it will be located, and that must align with the supply chain plans that will be required in the future under CFDs.

The frustration of communities in Fife and the Western Isles is palpable. This is not the first time that they have been let down, but it must be the last. The promise of a green new deal cannot be just about words; it must put food on the tables of the workers, and it needs to do that fast.

15:50

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Five hundred workers were on the verge of filling up the BiFab yards to work on the NnG wind farm off the Fife coast. That would have provided a real-life connection between domestic electricity users and the massive turbines that they are ultimately paying for. It would have tied the economic wellbeing of industrial communities across Scotland with our efforts to combat climate change. It would have signalled to other companies and countries across the world that Scotland was matching the high rhetoric of Alex Salmond, Nicola Sturgeon and even Keith Brown, with delivery.

Everyone buying into the battle on climate change is essential if we are to succeed in it. Today, things have come to nothing. There will be 54 turbines for the NnG wind farm, but the Government cannot get organised to build even eight of them. At no point did the Scottish Government tell the Parliament that BiFab was on the edge of collapse. Where was the debate about the additional support that was supposedly required? For two years, the Government boasted that it had saved BiFab, but the truth is that a couple of hundred temporary jobs were created in the past couple of years.

If the reports that the Government may lose the more than £52 million that it invested in BiFab are accurate, that will mean that each of those jobs

has cost us £262,000—a quarter of a million pounds for every temporary job that has been created. If we had paid £50,000 a year to each of those workers to sit at home and do nothing for the next five years, we would still have money left over. It is an astonishing waste of money. What is even more wasteful is the failed opportunity to bring economic opportunities to hundreds of people across Scotland.

The Government's answer is to have yet another working group and to make a commitment to leave no stone unturned. The Government is expert at creating working groups, reviews and studies. If setting up working groups and turning over stones created jobs, we would have full employment in this country by now.

Who knew that when Alex Salmond talked about our being the Saudi Arabia of renewables, he meant that Scotland was going to be turned into an industrial desert? I feel sorry for Fiona Hyslop, who was handed the portfolio. Keith Brown is not even here today to answer for himself. He, Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond should be in their seats explaining why this has all gone wrong. They are the architects of this situation, and they are responsible for it. I find it staggering that the Scottish Government is pointing the finger at DF Barnes when it was the Scottish Government that recommended that company to the Parliament. The Government brought DF Barnes in; it is responsible for that company being in charge.

What should happen now? The Government should publish the legal advice on state aid without any further delay. The union has done that, and the Government should follow. The Government should immediately contact EDF and Saipem to ensure that the eight jackets can still be built here if we can get our act together and to ensure that we have an industrial plan by January to secure those jobs and even more.

The clock is ticking. From the Fife coast, I can see that the work on NnG has already started. The S7000, Saipem's semi-submersible crane vessel, is installing the casings for piles and is preparing the sea bed. The question is: can the Government get working too, or will it just create another working group?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now begin the open debate. Speeches should be of four minutes, although we have a little time in hand for interventions, which we can then make up.

15:54

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): It is just over three years since the workforce of BiFab marched down the Royal Mile to the Scottish Parliament to fight for their jobs and their community. The company was on the brink of

collapse and jobs were in the balance. Through no fault of their own—this was a hard-working, skilled and respected workforce—the company faced administration and the workers redundancy.

I recognise the role that the Scottish Government played in retrieving that situation and enabling that contract to be fulfilled. It did so through an investment of public money into the company and the bringing in of DF Barnes with investor JV Driver.

We face a situation wherein the company is again on the brink of collapse, and the Scottish Government appears to be falling short. The cabinet secretary said yesterday that she had “examined and exhausted” all options. This past Tuesday, the Scottish Government and the UK Government issued a joint statement that ruled out financial support for BiFab, effectively bringing to an end the prospect of up to 500 jobs from the NnG contract. The statement also said that the working group will

“explore options for the future of the sites”

where BiFab currently operates, which suggests to me that the Scottish Government thinks that BiFab is finished. The Scottish Government and the UK Government must take joint responsibility for cutting off that lifeline for the company.

Lord Davidson challenged the Scottish Government’s defence of state aid rules and said that the decision looked to be “irrational” and could be open to judicial review. At the very least, the decision would appear pre-emptive, as we are weeks away from leaving the European Union. There are questions to be answered over what has taken place over the past three years and other members have spoken about that.

Fiona Hyslop: Does the member recognise that the view of Neil Davidson QC was based on partial information? Would she like to tell me what terms of state aid rules will apply in January?

Claire Baker: The information is perhaps partial because the Scottish Government has not published what it is taking advice from.

What were the terms of the deal with DF Barnes? The company challenged the Scottish Government’s argument that it had failed to invest, saying that JV Driver had repeatedly offered shares to the Government at no cost, and that it was understood that the Scottish Government would be the primary financier. If the Scottish Government says differently, will it publish the details of the deal that was struck? Will the Scottish Government be honest about the meeting on 19 September and the advice that it gave to DF Barnes? Why has the Scottish Government stopped working closely with the trade unions? I cannot understand why the unions were sidelined

and why their members had to read about the decision to pull the plug on critical funding in the newspapers.

It is clear that contracts for difference need to be reformed. Overseas yards that deliver the work for a cheaper price undercut UK companies, which leads us to the ludicrous situation that the majority of the NnG contract is manufactured in Indonesia and shipped thousands of miles to the Fife coast. Let us not, however, use that as a way to deflect from Government failure in this case. The NnG contract for difference is a more advantageous deal than those that have been done more recently, and the eight jackets that are on offer for BiFab are slim pickings from what is a significant contract.

My key concern and that of the people in Fife is how to rescue the NnG contract. There are those who will argue that JV Driver should get out of the way and let someone else take over. I want clarity over whether that is a realistic option that will secure the NnG contract. In discussions yesterday, the cabinet secretary said that there would have to be a company involved in the tendering process with Saipem. Is there an option for providing that guarantee?

The NnG contract is vital for building the reputation of the company and to demonstrate that it can deliver. Without it, there is little to invest in, because the short to medium-term pipeline is virtually non-existent. BiFab is based in Methil and Burntisland in Fife, and we cannot underestimate the significance of the job for that area—the Levenmouth area is in the 5 per cent of most-deprived areas in the whole of Scotland and suffers from industrial decline and isolation.

The good news of the reopening of the Levenmouth rail link is a boost, but there is a desperate need of good employment and apprenticeship opportunities in the area, which the NnG contract can deliver. The BiFab yard at Burntisland is also important to the prosperity of the town. Three years ago, the First Minister said that the BiFab workers had

“every reason to be optimistic”

about the future. What optimism can the communities of Methil and Burntisland have today?

15:59

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this short debate on BiFab. At the outset, I say that as the MSP for Cowdenbeath constituency, I stand full square behind the BiFab workers who have demonstrated time and again that their skills are

second to none. I wish to recognise the important role that their trade unions have played.

It is clear that the BiFab workforce is angry. I quite understand its anger, because it has been let down by the neglectful disinterest of the majority shareholder and parent company, JV Driver. Indeed, JV Driver has completely failed to step up to the plate by refusing to provide either working capital or guarantees, notwithstanding—as we have heard this afternoon from the cabinet secretary—its commitment in the pre-acquisition business plan to do just that. I say to JV Driver, and to the board, that it is now time to step up or step out. If JV Driver will not act, it needs to make way for someone who can back up their words with real investment.

The other key problem is the UK Government's contract for difference auction rules, which represent a significant barrier to supporting the renewables domestic supply chain in Scotland. The UK Government's CFD rules facilitate a race to the bottom, due to the abject failure of the UK Government to have built any conditionality into the process. That key problem has long been identified by the Scottish Government and others, but calls for its reform have so far been ignored by the UK Government. That pivotal issue concerning the CFD regime clearly demonstrates the elephant in the room—that the power over energy policy lies not with this Parliament, but with Westminster. The Scottish Government has been unstinting in its efforts to support BiFab over the years, backed up with more than £51 million of investment to support Scottish workers, which is something that the Liberal Democrats do not seem keen on. It should be noted that the Scottish Government has had to operate with one hand tied behind its back. Of course, the Scottish Government did seek a wholesale transfer—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sorry, Ms Ewing, please sit down a moment.

In a very quiet chamber, barracking from either side means that I cannot hear the speech. So far, I have heard most of the speeches clearly, and I would like to hear Ms Ewing's, and anybody else's, as well.

Annabelle Ewing: During the 2014 Smith commission process, the Scottish Government did seek a wholesale transfer of energy policy to the Scottish Parliament; however, sadly, it must be recalled that the Labour Party made no proposals at all to the Smith commission for the comprehensive transfer of energy policy competences. For the sake of completeness, I point out that no such proposals were made by the Liberal Democrats or the Tories either.

Some may conclude that it is just a bit rich for the Labour Party—which has not supported the

transfer of energy policy to this Parliament and, as such, does not support the Scottish Parliament having the necessary powers to do the job—to point a finger, when it has been quite content over the past six years for the Scottish Government to operate with one hand tied behind its back. It is a perennial curiosity of the Labour Party's position that it would prefer that energy policy in Scotland be driven by the imperatives of Boris Johnson, Jacob Rees-Mogg et al, rather than by our Scottish Parliament, members of which are elected by the people of Scotland.

It is self-evident that, in energy-rich Scotland, there can be a bright future for the renewables sector in Fife and across the country. For the BiFab workers at this time, I know that the Scottish Government continues to explore all options that are open to it, and it continues to have discussions, in particular with Saipem. It is also self-evident that, to maximise the potential of our renewables sector, we simply cannot afford to see our workers being let down by a UK energy policy that does not work for, and has demonstrably worked against, Scotland.

At its heart, politics is about people, and it is about dignity.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please conclude, Ms Ewing.

Annabelle Ewing: Delivery can only be secured if there is the power to do so. Otherwise, it is just a lot of words.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: When I say that I want to hear things, I do not mean just for a moment. I want to hear the rest of the debate. Members reverted to type, which annoyed me. Mr Golden, I know that we will hear you in delicious silence.

16:04

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): The motion opens with a statement to which every one of us should be fully committed: Scotland should lead the way in building a green economy. Central to that is a just transition, as rebuilding from the pandemic must level up the entire country, especially in sectors that face decline.

The North Sea oil and gas sector is a prime example. As fossil fuel use drops, the sector will need support to protect jobs and to transfer valuable skills to low-carbon industries such as decommissioning and renewables. The UK Government has already committed to a north-east transition deal, so it would be sensible for the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to ensure the best chance of success.

Paul Wheelhouse: Does Maurice Golden recognise that, as a prelude to the UK Government developing its North Sea transition deal, the Scottish Government committed £62 million to the energy transition fund in July? Does he recognise that we have already played our part in meeting the industry's asks?

Maurice Golden: I welcome the support of both of Scotland's Governments. I will come on to the failures of the Scottish Government shortly, but I will first continue with the menu of working together.

A co-operative model has already been established with the announcement of a joint working group to consider the future of the BiFab site, as well as to boost the renewables supply chain in general in Scotland. The co-operative model must become the standard because, ultimately, it offers the best chance to create and save jobs. Saving jobs is the immediate priority, even as we look to create new low-carbon jobs in the years ahead.

The UK Government has launched a truly massive rescue effort. Nearly a million Scottish jobs have already been saved, and the UK Government's furlough scheme will now run until next year to ensure that those jobs stay protected.

Any co-operative model requires both sides to play a role, so it is time for the SNP to step up and produce a coherent industrial strategy—one that sets out clearly how the Scottish Government will create future green jobs and how old industries such as oil and gas will be transitioned to a net zero future.

The approach from the Scottish Government thus far has clearly not produced enough positive results. Alex Salmond promised that 28,000 jobs would be created by 2020, but fewer than 2,000 have been created, despite Scotland seeing an unheralded expansion of renewables. I believe that 28,000 jobs may have been created—it is just that they have not been created in Scotland as the SNP promised that they would be.

The same pattern is repeated over and over: promises are made and SNP politicians smile for the cameras, and then they disavow responsibility when it falls apart. Examples include the SNP's £100 million green jobs fund, which was a big announcement with zero detail; the not-for-profit energy company that was announced in 2017 with hundreds of thousands of pounds splurged on consultants, but which was not even mentioned in the latest programme for government; and the green ferries fiasco from the disgraced Derek Mackay, the results of which have been cost overruns that have climbed past £100 million and years of delay.

BiFab is the most recent sad example of the lack of a serious industrial strategy risking jobs. The SNP's clumsy handling of the matter has meant that workers face an uncertain future, the public looks set to lose more than £52 million and our green recovery takes a needless blow.

There is no shame in not having all the answers, but I urge the SNP to try something different: work with our UK Government partners to ensure that Scotland builds back better.

16:08

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): We are confronted with a multitude of crises, from Covid-19 and its effect on the economy and employment around the country to the climate and nature emergencies. A conscientious and strategic Government would be making substantial steps and investments to tackle all those crises in tandem.

I join my Labour colleagues in condemning the Scottish Government's decision to withdraw the financial guarantee to BiFab, and I add to the calls for the Government to produce the legal advice to justify its claim that its hands are tied. Are the cabinet secretary and the Scottish Government hiding behind the ministerial code? It is a significant and important matter.

Expert work has been done by the Scottish Trades Union Congress and its member unions, particularly the GMB and Unite the union, to put options on the table. We need the Scottish Government to exercise a little creativity and, on behalf of the people of Scotland, to be bold in the face of the risk that the BiFab workers face.

In opening for Scottish Labour, Alex Rowley outlined clearly the developments so far. When will the pattern of offshoring jobs end? When will our manufacturing base begin to flourish? Cabinet secretary, will it be now? Will the Scottish Government urgently negotiate with EDF and Saipem to find a solution that ensures that the work on the NnG contract—which is for only eight out of the large number of wind turbine platforms that will be built—is carried out in the BiFab yards? Will the Government commit to a proper industrial strategy that establishes a publicly owned energy company that can create jobs from day 1? That is what we urgently need rather than another working group, which the STUC aptly describes as “the thinnest of gruel”.

Sadly, we will be out of Europe only too soon. However, on state aid, surely it would be possible to think creatively and bravely, even if we remain aligned to that policy. Does the cabinet secretary agree that community and environmental externalities, including the carbon footprint of the transportation of content—sometimes halfway

across the world—need to be factored into human processes?

I am mindful of a speech that I made on BiFab in May 2019, in which I said that the issue was a test of the Scottish Government. Can anyone dispute that, 18 months on, it has been a resounding failure on the part of Government? The absolute disconnect between warm words from and tangible action by the Government is deeply frustrating. The cabinet secretary should be assured that the Parliament, stakeholders, affected workers and communities, and the broader public, are taking notice in this climate emergency.

Friends of the Earth states that the situation shatters the foundations of a just transition. It also comes a year before Glasgow hosts COP26—the 26th conference of the parties—in December 2021, in which just transition is supposedly one of the Government's main themes, along with people.

At last week's Scottish green energy awards, there was heartening work to be celebrated in the renewables sector, which aligns with the growth in energy generation. However, the number of low-carbon jobs is down since 2014. Would anyone believe it? That clearly proves that Scottish workers and affected communities need much more intervention in order to realise the supply chain opportunities.

BiFab and, in a different sector, Alexander Dennis Ltd, should be the proud signifiers of a bright future in green jobs, and it is painful that those companies and workers are struggling. I cannot emphasise enough that a just transition must be the ultimate driver. That counts for all sectors.

The just transition commission's lifespan is coming to a close, and the Government is yet to respond to some of its interim recommendations. Surely the cabinet secretary must commit to extending the commission and putting it on to a statutory and long-term basis. Its work is certainly not done; in fact, it has hardly started. As for the climate change plan update, that must be integral to connecting with a just transition obligation. I hope that the Government will commit to that today.

However, right now, surely the Government must think again for the sake of BiFab, its workers and their families and communities, and rescue the NnG contract. We would then have a symbol of the future that really counts for something.

16:13

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): As the MSP for the Kirkcaldy constituency, where two of

BiFab's yards are situated, I very much welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. The firm has been a major employer in my constituency, a significant contributor to the local economy in Fife and the beating heart of Scotland's green reindustrialisation.

One of my first engagements following my election to the Parliament in 2011 was visiting the BiFab yard in Methil to meet the management team and the workforce following the completion of wave energy developer Aquamarine Power's next generation Oyster 800 hydroelectric wave energy converter. That fantastic piece of engineering highlighted on a national stage the quality and skills of the workers that we have in Fife.

BiFab's apprenticeship training scheme ensured the continued provision of a highly skilled local workforce, providing training and skills to young people. Fife and wider Scotland cannot afford to lose that workforce. They are a valuable resource and they are suffering because Scottish renewables sector companies are being rendered powerless, as overseas yards can build at a greater scale and with prices far lower than Scottish firms can achieve.

I was not surprised to read the content of Labour's motion—the comments and options fit its narrative and conveniently overlook the harsh realities of the situation. The message is, "Let's all condemn and blame the Scottish Government for the problems being faced by BiFab," although the Scottish Government has fought tooth and nail to protect the future of the company. There is no mention of the failure of the majority shareholder, JV Driver, to make any investment or provision of working capital or assurances for the company.

In order to save BiFab from closure in 2017 and support the delivery of SSE's Beatrice offshore wind project, the Scottish Government invested £37.4 million through equity and loan facilities, and converted that into a 32.4 per cent equity stake in BiFab. An additional loan facility of £15 million was provided, to support working capital. That finance supported and ensured the completion of the Beatrice offshore wind farm, the Moray east pin piles and the FIRST Exploration and Petroleum Development Company contracts. In turn, that created more than 1,000 jobs across the three yards at Arnish, Burntisland and Methil.

Labour also fails to acknowledge in any way the problems that were highlighted in JV Driver's statement that

"a 'race-to-the-bottom' Contract for Difference (CfD) auction process ... created intense pricing pressure on BiFab's pursuits that no level of domestic investment could overcome".

That confirms that, without a change in UK Government policy, BiFab was never going to win the contracts.

Although it is obviously disappointing that SSE was unable to award the Seagreen contract to BiFab, it is extremely telling that neither has it been able to award the contract to any UK or European supplier. BiFab's bid was competitive over other UK and European bids, but the UK Government's damaging contracts for difference rules work against Scotland and Scottish supply chains, meaning that companies such as BiFab have limited chances of securing work. The reality is that BiFab was competitive with all European yards in its bid for the SSE Seagreen fabrication contract, but the work ultimately went to yards in the far east.

Given that relevant powers are reserved to the UK Government, the Scottish Government has no ability to change the CFD rules. That is clearly a failure of past and present UK Governments, and illustrates the unacceptably high price that Scotland has been forced to pay as part of the UK—[*Interruption.*]

No, thank you—I will not take an intervention.

JV Driver's lack of financial investment in the business, and the zero-risk position that it has adopted as a shareholder, are extremely disappointing. I strongly believe that, if JV Driver is not willing to invest in BiFab, to create jobs in the renewables sector and, more importantly, highly skilled local jobs that will benefit the local economy, the time has come for it to step aside as majority shareholder and to allow other interested parties to invest in the company.

BiFab and Fife have shown themselves to be strong players in offshore renewable energy technologies, with the workforce and expertise to be a major player in the global efforts to develop clean energy and reduce our carbon footprint. However, it is clear that the energy potential in Fife and places like it will be realised only in an independent Scotland, in which we would have the powers to insist on supply chain work as part of any subsidy regime. We are currently rich in expertise, technology and ambition. Scottish companies can no longer be left standing on the sidelines, watching as contracts are awarded overseas.

16:17

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome Labour's debate on BiFab and have much pleasure in participating in it. Scottish Conservatives recognise the need for more renewable energy, to help cut emissions as part of a more balanced mix of energy sources, but that

cannot come at the cost of thousands of jobs. Any transition on energy must be fair to the workers.

It seems to me rather ironic that, in order to tackle climate change, many elements of renewable energy developments such as offshore wind farms can be built halfway round the world and then transported back to Fife, with a significant impact on the environment. Transition is important, but it is important also that we cut our emissions and ensure that we do not have that issue. When a company in Scotland such as BiFab has the capabilities and the capacity to build parts of wind turbines and support local jobs, it seems completely mad to commission those parts from elsewhere in the world and locate them just 10 miles off the Fife coast.

As we have heard today and in the past, those contracts mean the very survival of BiFab yards, and many associated jobs are at risk. We have heard that an injection of public money for BiFab would breach state-aid rules. We have also been told that it is "not viable" due to the lack of contracts coming down the pipeline. We also know about the lack of willingness to put money into it. The Scottish Government has claimed that, if Scotland was independent, it could save BiFab. In reality, the SNP's objective of taking Scotland back into the EU means that it would be constrained by state-aid rules, which would not benefit the yard or the workforce.

During this saga, I have seen the broad campaign that has involved community groups, workers, trade union representatives, elected representatives and environmentalists, who have worked together to put pressure on the company and Governments. Their calls have fallen on deaf ears. It is a kick in the teeth for the local community.

The Scottish Government failed to ensure that promises were kept. Back in 2010, the then First Minister claimed that the offshore renewables industry could create 20,000 jobs in Scotland. That has not happened.

Liz Smith talked about the need for an investment-led recovery and green jobs. The Scottish Government has failed BiFab. Maurice Golden talked about the information and transition period that are needed to support the sector. What is needed is support for the community, the workforce and the sector, but the Scottish Government has failed, time and time again, to make that a reality.

I very much welcome this debate, but it is a disaster that it has had to take place in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. The policy of renewables support must be coherent, community led and achievable. The Scottish

Government has failed on every aspect of its support for the company.

16:21

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The impact of the BiFab situation on the Arnish fabrication yard and the wider community in Lewis, where I live, is only too obvious. The sense of disappointment is raw. As members pointed out, there is no legal route for the Scottish Government or the UK Government to provide further financial support to BiFab in the absence of a shareholder guarantee and investment from the majority shareholder, JV Driver.

All that gives my constituents an awful sense of déjà vu. The promise of inward investment and plentiful contracts, all heralding a bright future for Arnish, has been followed by a lack of corporate investment. It is ultimately the responsibility of JV Driver, as the majority shareholder, to provide that investment. I understand that company representatives failed to provide much detail in response to questions about that when they appeared before the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee yesterday.

However, there are questions for the UK Government to answer, too. For instance, we have heard that the bid for the Seagreen contract was competitive with all the other UK and European bids and included a significant Scottish supply chain component, which would have helped to drive Scotland's green recovery. Sadly, that was not to be, due to the built-in drive to the bottom that marks the UK contracts for difference scheme. As Claire Baker and other members said, until the UK Government amends the scheme and allows supply chain commitments to be a factor in the awarding of CFDs, rather than basing awards solely on price, it will always be an uphill struggle for Scottish yards to compete on anything like fair terms.

We need to be sure that all options are kept open, including the option of the Arnish yard being used by other companies. The action for Arnish campaign has made that point clearly. When the cabinet secretary sums up the debate, it would be good if she could give a view on whether BiFab has fulfilled all the lease requirements on the Arnish site and on whether the Government is open to the option of Highlands and Islands Enterprise leasing the yard to someone else who intends to utilise it.

For instance, a number of my constituents have suggested that Arnish could be a hub for constructing the hydrogen infrastructure that could help to decarbonise the transport sector in the islands. Arnish-built hydrogen infrastructure could also help to provide local grid stability, which

would avoid the current sorry situation whereby emergency funding was needed to keep local wind turbine-funded charities afloat when the SSE cable to the mainland broke recently.

Those may be only ideas, and the focus has to be on the options that will bring work in the here and now. However, all those ideas and the other imaginative options for Arnish hold out the prospect of good, skilled jobs in the islands, as well as obvious link-ups with Lews Castle College.

Arnish has the potential to be a vital training hub for skilled workers. I urge the Scottish Government to engage with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and fully explore all those options to allow Arnish to become productive again. I also ask the Scottish Government to continue its efforts to persuade the UK Government to embed meaningful supply-chain commitments in the CFD process, as that alone will allow yards such as Arnish to be the fully functioning part of our green recovery that they deserve to be.

16:25

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I have only a few minutes to wind up the debate, and I want to spend the little time that is available to me to deconstruct some of the arguments that we have heard from SNP speakers in their shameless attempts to shift the blame for what has gone wrong on to anyone else. As Alex Rowley said when he opened the debate, this is a Government that will not take responsibility for anything at all.

We have heard attempts to shift the blame in three different directions: to JV Driver; to the EU for its state aid rules; and to the UK Government in relation to contracts for difference. I will look at each of those in turn.

I will start with the involvement of JV Driver, because it seems to be the principal bogeyman being put forward by the SNP. The cabinet secretary expressed her concern at its lack of support, which led BiFab to respond on 27 November that it was "perplexed and disappointed" by what the Scottish Government was saying. According to BiFab, JV Driver had repeatedly offered to transfer its shares to the Scottish Government at no cost. That puts into context Annabelle Ewing's ludicrous demand that JV Driver step up or ship out. It has offered to ship out numerous times, and only the Scottish Government prevented it from doing so.

I will give way to Annabelle Ewing if she is brief.

Annabelle Ewing: I presume that Mr Fraser is not disputing the fact that JV Driver has failed to provide any working capital or guarantees. Will he take this opportunity to apologise for the impact of

the London Tory Government's contracts for difference regime, which has acted against our domestic supply chain?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Fraser, I do not want two people on their feet at the same time, charming though that may appear to be.

Murdo Fraser: I am sorry that Annabelle Ewing did not take the opportunity to apologise for her ludicrous remarks, given that we have been told that JV Driver offered to transfer its shares and the Scottish Government refused to take them on. That is no one's fault but the Scottish Government's. It is no wonder that BiFab said that the claims that JV Driver had broken its promises were "inaccurate" and "untruthful"—what a damning assessment of the Scottish Government.

We also had an attack on EU state aid rules from the Scottish Government, and we have heard about the legal advice. We know that the trade unions have a legal opinion from Neil Davidson QC on the issue. As has been pointed out, we will leave the EU in 29 days' time. If there was an issue with EU state aid rules, it may not apply in 29 days' time—we do not know. Surely we should show some ambition and leadership. As the STUC said in its briefing for the debate, other European countries manage such situations, so why cannot this Government? Is it so uniquely inept?

We also heard numerous SNP speakers criticise the UK's contracts for difference system—that must be their go-to argument for the debate. That system is a bid system; it is designed to reduce the cost of energy to the consumer. The same people who are complaining about it are the same people who, week after week, come to the chamber to complain about fuel poverty and the cost of energy and to say that the Government is not doing enough to keep energy costs down. Here is a system that is designed to reduce costs and make sure that large energy companies are not—[*Interruption.*] I have no time for an intervention, thank you. Here is a system that makes sure that they are not charging our constituents too much for their energy, but those members decry it.

Whatever the contracts for difference system says, planning is under the control of the Scottish Government. Scottish ministers granted planning consent for the wind farms through Marine Scotland. During the planning process, it could have installed conditions on local training and local supply, but it failed to do so. That is no one's fault but its own.

This is a modern-day Scottish scandal. A promise was given to workers in Fife and Lewis that they would benefit from jobs from a new generation of renewable energy projects, but those jobs are going elsewhere. That would have

been entirely avoidable, if the Scottish Government had been prepared to step up and help, but it failed to do so, and we have been let down as a result. Now, the Government needs to do what the motion says that it should do: it needs to step up, and it needs to sit down and work with the UK Government to see whether there is a way forward.

Today, the Scottish Parliament has to send a clear message to the SNP Government that it has failed the renewable energy sector, it has failed the workers in Fife and Lewis and it has failed Scotland. For that reason, we should support the motion in Alex Rowley's name.

16:30

Fiona Hyslop: The Scottish Government's position is clear. The issue is not a lack of willingness to support BiFab; it is simply that we cannot legally provide further support at this time, and we would not have been able to do so with state ownership. If Murdo Fraser had listened to my answer to his first intervention, he would know that. He also shows his ignorance of state aid restrictions on planning.

Points about Arnish and the opportunities there were well made by Alasdair Allan. I do not have enough time to go into that, but he made some valid points, on which I will engage directly with him.

We will work to ensure a positive future for the yards and the workforce. We also remain committed to developing the strength of our renewables supply chain in Scotland, and I have emphasised to both EDF and Saipem the priority that I place on the delivery of the eight jackets and the NnG contracts in Scotland. Alex Rowley raised that issue with me, and I say to him and Willie Rennie that I spoke to EDF on those points in September, and my officials have been in regular contact since. Further, on 10 November, I wrote to Saipem to reiterate the position that had already been shared with it by my officials.

I want to make a point about Labour's motion. BiFab is the contracting party with Saipem, with which the relevant contract and management knowledge, as well as the ability to make operational decisions, rests. The Scottish Government has in no way prevented BiFab's board from engaging directly with Saipem. We are not aware of BiFab or JV Driver having progressed any such discussions with Saipem.

Mark Ruskell's points were well made. He talked about DF Barnes and JV Driver perhaps expecting that there would be more certainty in the market and more conditionality. That gets to the heart of the issue. As the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee heard last week from Scottish

Renewables and EDF, the issue with contracts for difference is that, with those contracts offered to developers paying the lowest price, it would be difficult for developers to accept paying a premium to secure the economic and environmental benefits that industry wants to deliver.

Let us look at some of the differences in the cost. The Beatrice wind farm received a strike price before the first auction round of around £140 per megawatt hour. The cheapest project in the first auction round was under £114; in the second, it was £57. In the third auction round, Seagreen 1 received a contract of only £41 per megawatt hour. That represents a drive for low-cost tenders, and the UK is not using the powers that it has to impose the supply-chain conditionalities that Mark Ruskell referred to.

We will continue to press for radical changes to the contracts for difference system. I know that trade unions share the view that change is necessary. As Annabelle Ewing set out, Opposition members in the chamber want the jobs but not the powers to secure the jobs. The difference between the position in our amendment and their position is that we want the powers in Scotland to deliver the jobs and not be constrained by the ill-thought-out race to the bottom in global cheap labour costs that comes with Labour and the Conservatives continuing to support the Westminster Government's control of powers over contracts for difference policies.

There are challenges and issues. We want jobs for the workforce—we are committed to that—and I have set out a number of areas in which we have looked at all the possible options. We are in a difficult position, but members should be under no illusion: this Scottish Government wants the jobs in Scotland, we want the jobs in Fife and we want the jobs at Arnish.

16:34

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

We should all be committed to green jobs and a just transition, but the Scottish Government has failed to deliver either. BiFab is a stark example of that. With the three yards in Methil, Burntisland and Arnish, Scotland should have been leading the way with the just transition, but that has not happened.

We have conflicting information from the Scottish Government and DF Barnes. The Scottish Government says that it is not an active shareholder, but provided a guarantee that was required to bring home the contract for Neart na Gaoithe. It is unclear why, at the 11th hour, that guarantee was revoked. If the business plan was out of date, it should have been updated before now. If the guarantee was subject to work being

won, it should have remained in place to secure the contract. The Scottish Government says that JV Driver should have invested; DF Barnes says that it has. We are now involved in a blame game. Meanwhile, the contracts go elsewhere.

Alex Rowley said that the Scottish Government hides behind state aid rules, but in less than a month we will have left the EU and will no longer be subject to them. Meanwhile, Spanish yards that have benefited from some of the contracts continue in state ownership and enjoy state intervention.

On one hand, the Government says that it cannot invest unless a market economy investor would do the same, which begs the question why the Government invested in the first place, if there were market investors queuing to invest? Yet now, when we know—because the Scottish Government has told us—that other organisations want access to the yards, it withdraws the guarantee. That makes no sense.

Claire Baker pointed out that Lord Davidson disputes the Scottish Government's view. We need honesty and transparency on that. Will the Government publish its legal advice, or is it, as Claudia Beamish said, using the ministerial code to hide that advice?

I will take a moment to highlight the plight of Arnish, in my region. Although it is a smaller yard, it can employ proportionately more of the local population on Lewis and is therefore an economic driver. The yard is in good order and well equipped, due to investment from the public purse. It has facilities that are sought after, yet it lies empty. The terms of the lease require care and maintenance of the machinery, but it appears that that is not happening.

Therefore, DF Barnes and the Scottish Government, as a shareholder, are in breach of their lease agreement. Because of that, the lease must be terminated, the infrastructure protected and the yard made available to other organisations that could use the facility. I understand that there is interest in the yard that could bring jobs and wealth to our local economy.

Liz Smith and Mark Ruskell pointed out the similar position in Machrihanish, which is also in my region, where the CS Wind yard lies empty and turbines are sourced from abroad. Again, that yard has had public investment but is failing to bring jobs to our communities.

The same is true in Burntisland and Methil. If the Scottish Government and DF Barnes are a dead hand, they must transfer the yards to organisations that will bring green jobs and work to our Scottish yards.

It is clear from the debate that there is something wrong with how contracts are let. In Indonesia, a welder is paid £2.80 an hour, and our leases and taxpayers' money go to companies that use such terms to line their shareholders' pockets. No licence, planning permission or lease should be let without an obligation to provide local content, and without an obligation that the building be done by people who get the fair rate for the job, and whose safety and conditions are equivalent to those that we expect for our workforce in this country. That would not be illegal, because all bidders would be subject to the same rules, and it would promote our values.

The Scottish Government chooses to blame everyone else. It demands more powers but it is not using the powers that it has at hand to make a difference. That is not acceptable, and the Scottish Government needs to come clean. It needs to share its knowledge and legal advice in order to work with the Parliament and the trade unions to secure the future of our yards.

Business Support

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-23536, in the name of Richard Leonard, on business support.

16:41

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): We are regularly told by the First Minister that the best way to support jobs and businesses is to control the coronavirus, and that there is a direct correlation between public health and the public economy. There is; we know all too well that keeping the virus down will keep the economy open.

However, there is still a high transmission rate, there is the tragedy of the high death rate that we have witnessed, and there is the failure to test—which is perhaps the Government's biggest mistake—and the failure to isolate and quarantine. Those basic principles of public health and infectious disease control were ignored, so the First Minister is right: all of that does correspond with the high rate of business closures, the deeper crisis of economic failure and the higher level of job losses than were inevitable. That is what the Government has presided over. We face a 10 per cent crash in output, we expect unemployment to double, and our town and city centres are being hollowed out.

Do not get me wrong: I am not attributing the situation that faces small businesses and people with jobs in retail entirely to the pandemic. We cannot lose sight of the fact that we have been hearing for years warnings that our high streets and town centres are at risk. According to the Federation of Small Businesses, in its report "Transforming Towns: Delivering a Sustainable Future for Local Places", one in 10 town-centre properties across Scotland has been vacant since 2014.

This week, 25,000 jobs are at risk across the United Kingdom in big retailers the Arcadia Group and Debenhams. When such giants are crashing, and when we know that small independent businesses in high streets and town centres across the country are also facing the threat of closure, it is time for action.

Small business Saturday is this weekend, but it will have a hollow ring to it this year, because small businesses in level 4 areas, which serve more than 40 per cent of the Scottish population, are not open for business. In fact, too many of them are boarded up. The Scottish Retail Consortium has estimated that non-food shops will miss out on £270 million—more than a quarter of a billion pounds—in lost revenue over the three

weeks of restrictions across the 11 local authority areas that are currently in level 4.

That is why we say that the Scottish Government's strategic framework business fund does not go far enough. To some, it offers only a fraction of the losses; others, it does not reach at all. That is why we do not support the Scottish National Party's amendment, which would remove the call in our motion for more business support.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): If it were up to Richard Leonard and he was in charge of Scotland, where would he get additional funding from?

Richard Leonard: I will come to that in a minute. If Gillian Martin were to read out the motion, we would hear that there are £2.2 billion-worth of unallocated resources from Barnett consequentials that the Government can spend. It is right that public health is protected—of course it is right that lives are put before commerce—but there must also be proportionate mitigation for business.

When the £30 million discretionary fund was announced by the First Minister two weeks ago, it was to assist businesses that were falling through the gaps of existing support schemes—freelancers, businesses without premises, taxi drivers, people who had recently taken the plunge to start up a new business and businesses in supply chains. I have to report that I have been contacted by taxi drivers and other businesses that are hanging by a thread and which have been scouring local authority websites for information on how they can get help. However, they are being told that local authorities are waiting for Scottish Government guidance. Because there is no guidance, the funding is not yet open for applications. Because there is no confirmation date in sight, there is no support available—so, still they wait.

What about the £2.2 billion-worth of unallocated Barnett consequentials? What about all the small businesses that are now in dire straits and need action? What about all the working women and men whose jobs are at risk? The Government must outline to Parliament and the people how that funding will be allocated to save businesses and jobs.

We also want the Scottish Government to consider the long term and to work with businesses and trade unions on that.

We all know that we cannot go back to austerity, to a deep and long recession, to crisis and contraction or to business as usual. We cannot go back to an economy that is run in the interests of the powerful and most wealthy people.

Instead of small businesses, the middle class and the working people of this country falling further behind, they should get a decent standard of living and a better share of the wealth that they create. We need a vision of an economy that serves the people, rather than a vision in which people simply serve the economy.

We need an economy in which there is a rebalancing of power between big business and small business, between landlord and tenant, between men and women and between hirer and worker. We need that so that we give people meaningful work and decent pay, and so that we do not have more division and polarization.

We need an economy in which the politics of hope take over from the economics of despair, in which our Government listens to people's priorities, answers to businesses in need, understands the importance of job and community, hears the voice of working people and their trade unions loud and clear, and is prepared to act for the common good.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that 5 December 2020 is Small Business Saturday and that small businesses, including those in the hospitality sector, are an irreplaceable source of jobs and community across Scotland; believes that many of these businesses are at risk because of COVID-19 restrictions and a lack of financial support, and calls on the Scottish Government to urgently outline how it will allocate the remaining £2.2 billion of Barnett consequentials to provide this support and save businesses and jobs, and work with businesses and trade unions to devise a sustainable long-term plan to support small businesses.

16:48

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): Like many others around the chamber, I speak to businesses every day about the devastating impact of the public health crisis on their trade, operations and income. Much of the fragile optimism of the summer months, as we eased out of lockdown, turned to pessimism and despair as the virus resurged and additional measures were necessary to suppress the virus.

All of us have stories and examples of grief, loss and worry. However, business owners, employers and employees in many sectors have had the additional trauma and despair of staying afloat in impossible circumstances.

I want to say at the outset that I know business support—in the form of grants, non-domestic rates relief or advice and guidance—does not replace all the lost income and does not compensate for an open, thriving economy. That is why, through the strategic framework, we have sought to move away from a blanket approach to keep as many businesses and as much of the economy open as

possible, and it is why our objective is to get the economy trading as fully as possible by suppressing the virus.

As Richard Leonard rightly said, the health crisis and the economic crisis are interdependent. Managing the virus effectively enables the economy to stay open and businesses to trade. In turn, protecting the strengths of our wider economy will have long-term health benefits because ultimately a strong, fair trading economy and business base protects and creates jobs, reduces poverty and reduces wider health harms.

Today's announcement on the vaccine is a light at the end of the tunnel. The Scottish Government is ready to deploy the vaccine quickly and safely. I know that in many cases businesses are operating with hugely reduced trade, that reserves are almost depleted and that they have exhausted business support. However, there is hope.

I also take hope from the way that businesses—large and small—have been public spirited. I commend and thank Tesco for voluntarily choosing to refund the public finances for the support that it received through rates relief. Tesco has taken that decision in recognition of its resilience through the crisis. I know that that will not be possible for every business, but I encourage those that have been similarly resilient to follow Tesco's lead. We are looking at providing a means by which other businesses can follow suit. I can confirm that every penny returned to us will be invested in Scotland's recovery from Covid and will be used to support those who have been hardest hit by the pandemic—*[Interruption.]*

I have only four minutes in which to set out the Government's position. I will take as many interventions as members like in my closing comments.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we deployed every penny of business support as quickly as possible. We have invested £2.3 billion to support businesses and recovery. There was over £48 million to help businesses affected by restrictions in October and £972 million for non-domestic rates relief. Our small business and retail, hospitality and leisure grant funds were worth £1 billion. There was over £185 million of additional funding for the pivotal resilience scheme to support key anchor businesses and the hardship fund for businesses that did not pay non-domestic rates. There was also a package of sectoral support measures, for example for seafood and fisheries.

Since November, that support has changed. Our strategic framework is complemented by the business fund that is administered by local authorities, providing set grants of up to £3,000 every four weeks to eligible businesses that have been closed or directly impacted by restrictions.

That grant support is in place as tier levels are reviewed and applied locally

One of the difficulties of not having access to HM Revenue and Customs, or to a nationwide business tax, is that support for businesses that fall through the cracks must be deployed sector by sector. We will continue to announce funding for businesses that have fallen through the cracks. To that end, last month we announced another £45 million to support business, of which £30 million was for a new local authority discretionary fund and £15 million was for a scheme for the newly self-employed.

I often hear it said that we should copy English schemes. If we had copied the UK Government's approach, there would have been no hardship fund, no pivotal resilience fund and no newly self-employed fund. There would have been less generous recurring grants for businesses caught in the tiers and levels: the smallest businesses receive less in England and those outwith tier 2 that do not have to close by law receive substantially less, if anything.

I am in no doubt about the trials that businesses face right now, in my constituency and across the country. We have used every penny at our disposal to provide support and will continue to do so where we can. The reference to £2.2 billion in the Labour motion is ridiculous, as anyone with a calculator would know. I can assure members that all funding available to us is being, and will continue to be, used to support businesses.

Richard Leonard: SPICe.

Kate Forbes: I do not think that Richard Leonard understands what budget revisions are.

Above and beyond business support, through the strategic framework, we want to give businesses across Scotland as much certainty as possible. That certainty is just as important as financial support. We will take all the necessary steps to reduce the risk of transmission and to save lives. We will work with businesses to do all that. We will listen to them and understand their needs, concerns and views and we will ensure that the support that we can resource is in place for those businesses.

I move amendment S5M-23536.2, to leave out from “; believes that” to end and insert:

“and should be celebrated and supported; recognises that many businesses are at risk because of the wider economic impacts of COVID-19 despite more than £2.3 billion of financial support allocated by the Scottish Government, including the Strategic Framework Business Fund, the £15 million second phase of the Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund and the £30 million Local Authority Discretionary Fund; welcomes the use of Barnett consequential to provide this support and save businesses and jobs, alongside other forms of support from the UK Government such as the Coronavirus Job Retention

Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support; recognises the ongoing work with businesses, local government and trade unions to do everything possible to support and sustain businesses of all sizes in all sectors, and agrees that the finance secretary should provide additional detail to the Finance and Constitution Committee in December 2020 with an update on the allocation of consequential to date."

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that we have only four minutes for speeches.

16:53

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): We all want to get to bed early tonight, so we should keep to time.

The level of the UK Government intervention in response to the pandemic has been without parallel. The furlough scheme has helped save a million Scottish jobs and Barnett formula consequential have delivered an additional £8.2 billion of funding for Scotland.

Unfortunately for us all, the SNP has not been forthcoming with that money and is currently sitting on £2.2 billion of unallocated funding. The SNP Government has been told repeatedly by business leaders and sector bodies that it is not listening to the needs of business in its response to the pandemic, that its interventions have taken too long to get to businesses in need and that its support measures do not go far enough. The time for SNP inaction has to end. It is already too late for a number of Scottish businesses, but others can still be saved.

Now is the time to act. With the hope that a vaccination roll-out programme will begin any week now, we are starting to see a pathway out of this enduring nightmare, but Scotland's small businesses need to get through the pandemic to ensure that Scotland has any sort of economy left on the other side.

Today we learned that Tesco will repay £585 million of Covid-19 rates relief, and that means that about £50 million will go to the Scottish Government. We urge that that goes to independent retailers via grant payments. It is a small sum when we consider that the SNP is hoarding billions in cash that could be spent right now. The question is why. Why is the SNP putting the livelihoods of millions of Scots at risk when it has the means to do something about it? What other priority could it have for that money?

We know what that priority is. It is the one thing that trumps all others: the obsession with independence. It is independence, and independence at all costs. We heard again this week that the First Minister may push for an independence referendum next year. The SNP is sitting on that cash, as it sees it as a war chest in

the run-up to the election and the furtherance of its independence goal—[*Interruption.*]—If that is wrong, prove me wrong. Publish a plan.

Kate Forbes: Conservative members sit on the Finance and Constitution Committee, which scrutinises budget revisions; those have been made twice and will be made again in February. The member knows precisely where the money is going. He also knows that, since the last budget revision, there have been additional announcements; if he gets his calculator out and counts up, he will see where the money is going.

Maurice Golden: The Fraser of Allander institute has been clear that over £1 billion is unallocated. The Scottish Parliament information centre has said that £2.2 billion is unallocated. Businesses are desperate right now. We absolutely have to get that money to them to ensure that they survive. I am asking the cabinet secretary to publish her plan for spending the money—not next year, but now. I am asking her to show how she will use the money to protect jobs and save livelihoods. Publish a plan and give small businesses the confidence that they can make it through the winter and be able to survive until the green shoots of spring arrive. Publish a plan and show Scotland that something is more important to the SNP than independence.

The SNP's amendment says that the Government will provide

"an update on the allocation of consequential to date".

Scotland's small businesses do not need an update on allocations to date. They need the Scottish Government to spend the billions of pounds in unallocated funding that it has been hoarding. The livelihoods of millions of Scots depend on it.

We will support the Labour motion this afternoon.

I move amendment S5M-23536.1, after "financial support" to insert:

"; recognises research by the Federation of Small Businesses, which shows that one-fifth of Scotland's small businesses and self-employed people have had no help over the course of the COVID-19 crisis; agrees that the Scottish Government should establish a Coronavirus Business Restrictions Advisory Council to support Scottish jobs, as well as protect public health".

16:58

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I welcome the opportunity to debate this issue. The Labour motion acknowledges the critical role of small businesses, not only to our economy but to our communities and our society. It makes particular reference to the hospitality sector, and it recognises the risk that those businesses face and

the need for Government, businesses and unions to work together to develop a long-term recovery plan.

However, I am concerned with the way in which the issue of unallocated resources is presented. I think that we can all acknowledge that that money is not sitting idle, as some would misrepresent it. It is certainly not the case, as we have just heard suggested, that billions of pounds are being set aside for a secret plan for independence. I do not think that we should lean into that kind of nonsense. It is clear that no cabinet secretary, regardless of which party was in government, would be able to formally allocate all that money to specific budget lines at the moment, given the continued uncertainty.

The Government has to address certain important issues regarding consequential. The Government amendment corrects the unhelpful implication; it is a bit too self-congratulatory, which is not unusual for a Government amendment, but it acknowledges fairly the necessary actions that the UK Government is taking. Just two weeks ago, the cabinet secretary told the Finance and Constitution Committee that there were general areas that the so-far unallocated resource would be earmarked for. She listed maintaining transport networks, education, and payment for people who are self-isolating.

The recent announcement of the £500 payment to health and social care staff, a policy that I welcome, was not in that list, so less will be available from the unallocated resource for the priorities that were identified in evidence to the committee just a fortnight ago. The cabinet secretary has a responsibility to come forward with clear information on that point, as soon as possible.

There are some other issues that are missing from the Labour motion. I sought to raise those issues in an amendment, but it was not selected for debate. Business support must benefit the workforce, not just business owners. I am sure that Richard Leonard agrees with that principle.

Hospitality is one of the sectors that we are all concerned about, but it has a longstanding pattern of widespread poverty pay and exploitative employment practices from long before the pandemic. It also has a low level of unionisation, which is no surprise because low standards and lack of unionisation often go hand in hand. We should all therefore welcome the more than 11 per cent increase in Unite hospitality membership during the pandemic, as many more people see that the market will never protect their interests, the Government has failed to protect their interests, and so collective action can make the difference that they need to see in their lives. There are great examples of success in the

collective action that is being taken around the country, with some hospitality employers being forced into reversing damaging decisions.

There is also far more to be done, such as challenging the lack of any minimum income floor in the furlough scheme. Minimum wages in this country are too low already, with even the highest bands lying well below the living wage. Discrimination against younger workers is an accepted norm that the UK Government has deliberately exacerbated. The job retention scheme now expects people to live on far less than their normal poverty wages, so a minimum income floor would give those workers some desperately needed protection.

17:02

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I have worked closely with Kate Forbes on financial support for individuals and businesses, and I have to say that she is good at listening and responding. In fact, she listened so carefully to Richard Leonard and me when we proposed a bonus for health and social care workers that she found the money for it. I hope that that listening carries on today, because when she says that she has no money left, that means that she can find £180 million when the First Minister needs to make a speech to conference. I am therefore sure that she will forgive us if we are a little bit sceptical when she pleads poverty once again.

I am pleased that the Government has responded to concerns about the effectiveness of the self-isolation payments. I hope that the changes will result in a higher success rate than 24 per cent. I also hope that those who require to self-isolate in advance of a hospital appointment can claim from the fund in future.

The minister needs to work to simplify the business grant application process. It has become overly complex with short timescales, and the teams handling the claims are short-staffed. I know that councils are, in large part, responsible for that, but I hope that the cabinet secretary will work with local authorities to make those improvements.

My main requests today cover three areas. The first is the quite niche area of travel agents, outbound and inbound. That includes golf tourism, which is important to my constituency, attracting customers from the USA and all around the globe to play on the world's best golf courses. Also included are travel agents who send local people to far-flung parts of the world. Almost all their business disappeared overnight in March, but the companies were not able to furlough their staff because the staff had to dedicate their time to getting customers' money back for all the holidays

that had been cancelled. They have been running on empty for months. Despite getting some business rate grants earlier this year, many of them do not have shops or offices, and they have been losing money every single day while paying their staff.

I know that there have been discussions between ministers and the sector and I hope that the minister will update us on those in summing up.

Secondly, taxi drivers are another niche area, although Richard Leonard raised that issue as well. The new council discretionary fund is available only in level 4 areas, but in level 3 areas taxi drivers' work is significantly affected by the restrictions and they are struggling to keep afloat.

Kate Forbes: The discretionary funding is available to all local authorities, not just those in level 4.

Willie Rennie: That is excellent news. I am glad that that has changed as a result of my speech this afternoon—I will take all the credit for it. I hope that the taxi firms get the support that they require, because they are really struggling. I hope that we get similar movement on the next point that I am going to raise, which is probably the most substantial one.

It concerns tourism businesses that are affected by the restrictions within a council area and the travel restrictions between areas. Bed and breakfasts, guest houses and self-catering businesses in level 3 areas cannot accept bookings from anyone outside their council area and they are also restricted by the indoor visiting rule within their council area, yet they are not entitled to access the hardship or business closure funds.

Take Hawkswood estate in my constituency, which has self-catering properties that take up to 10 people. It will not find many families that can fill a property with 10 people, but it is in a level 3 area and cannot get financial support. It is struggling. I hope that we get some movement from the Government in that area as well, because such businesses are affected in multiple ways by multiple restrictions, and the Government is not there to support them when they need it.

I hope that the minister will be able to sum up on those areas, which are important for my constituency and many others, in her closing speech.

17:07

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): If people think that they understand the scale of the jobs crisis, they need to multiply it significantly. We are witnessing the beginning of a jobs collapse in what

we saw yesterday with the Arcadia group and Debenhams. It is really sad. It flows from the pandemic, but also from the decisions that the Government has made about lockdown restrictions. In listening to Kate Forbes earlier, I did not hear her acknowledge that for many people the situation will kill their businesses—many of those businesses will not be there after the restrictions end.

As Richard Leonard said, the support available for some of those businesses is totally inadequate; if it had been adequate, they would have had a chance of survival. We have locked down retail and hospitality at a time of year when their sales would have seen them through January. Meanwhile, their online competitors are largely unaffected. We need to understand that, because of the restrictions, thousands of businesses will lose out and thousands of jobs will be lost. Therefore, we need a jobs programme like no other, state intervention on a scale that we have never seen before and worker protections and support for businesses such as we have never seen before.

We need conditionality on a living wage on all jobs related to the public sector, but we also need to seek to protect workers in the private sector who do not have the protection of a trade union. There are deep inequalities in who is being supported through the pandemic in the job retention scheme. How many young people in the hospitality sector were dismissed without any protections, who were not in a union and have no security for their future? Many people were not furloughed and tens of thousands of self-employed workers did not qualify for the scheme.

There are far too many gaps and there needs to be an understanding that many people were left with absolutely nothing. I would like to know whether an audit has been done of the fallout from that and whether the Government thinks its plans are the right ones. We need an end to zero-hours contracts, but we also need a proper policy to end evictions so that people who are struggling with their job can have a home and some security until they can get back on their feet.

I want to talk about the young persons guarantee scheme. Every young person has apparently been offered an opportunity in education, jobs or training.

I do not understand why the Government is simply saying that it will help 10,000 people who are over the age of 25. That is not ambitious enough, which tells me that the Government does not understand the scale of the problem.

I welcome the new directorate that has been set up to run the scheme, but I ask the Government for a detailed report. We do not need government-

speak about agencies and money—we need to see that the scheme is having an impact on the ground. I do not know any young person, in my family or my community, who has been contacted or knows which website to go on.

We are now nine months down the line, and I do not know anybody who knows what to do if they do not have a job. I am sorry, but that is absolutely not good enough.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Pauline McNeill: I will, in a moment.

With regard to further education colleges, I have had no contact from them, with one exception. I do not know what they are doing. Without further education being involved in the scheme, we cannot offer young people the guarantee of skills and training that the minister announced. There is no joining up.

I will take an intervention from the cabinet secretary.

The Presiding Officer: Ms McNeill has only four minutes.

Fiona Hyslop: Yes—and the debate is on business support. I say to the member that there is a website—*[Interruption.]* It was launched in the chamber on 5 November, and every single member in the Parliament—not just me—should be promoting it.

Pauline McNeill: I did not mean to shout over the cabinet secretary, but that was my point: a website is not good enough. In my city of Glasgow, we are worried that there is no recognition of the problems. We do not have a plan for aviation or the return of the music sector, and we do not have a job creation scheme or an intervention to support jobs. We need Government ministers to start taking on that massive challenge, but so far it has been mostly talk.

17:11

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): The debate is very important, and it has provided the Scottish Government with an opportunity to highlight some of the support packages that it has introduced this year. However, it is clear that there is still more to do; I do not think that any member in the chamber would say that there is not.

I welcome all the support that has been introduced so far by both Governments, as I highlighted a few weeks ago in a similar debate. I will not be churlish and ignore the finance that has come from the UK Government. However, it is important to recognise that it has come not from the Treasury savings account but from the

Treasury credit card. Nevertheless, it was the right thing to do.

I touched on the furlough scheme in a previous debate. In general, it has been of huge assistance. However, as we know, there have been eight different versions of the furlough scheme announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, three of which have not been implemented. Although the extension of the scheme until March 2021 will help to prevent job losses, it has come too late for many businesses and workers in all our constituencies and regions.

Some businesses had already taken the difficult decision to make people redundant because of the unnecessary confusion caused by the UK Government and the expectation that the furlough scheme would be withdrawn. Some of those jobs and businesses may have been saved if the UK Government had stopped its London-knows-best approach and listened to others for once. It took six months of pressure from the Scottish Government and others to eventually get the chancellor to do a U-turn on the furlough scheme. I say to the chancellor and the Scottish Tories that it is clear that many businesses did not have six months to waste.

No one can deny that, with Covid-19, 2020 has been an unprecedented year. In addition, in just under four weeks' time, we are going to crash out of the European Union—the most successful trading bloc—against our will. As things stand, no deal has yet been reached, which adds even more uncertainty to the chaotic picture that we have been witnessing for months.

Business talks about certainty, and the pro-union side spoke all about it during the 2014 independence referendum. There is certainly no certainty now. There is no certainty about leaving the EU or about business success post Covid-19, unless we are talking about the supermarkets. I have been critical of Tesco in the past, but I welcome its announcement today, and I would like the other supermarkets to do the same. There has been no certainty from a London elite who care little for other parts of the four nations and who act only when decisions affect the south. The north-west of England can tell that story, too.

I have seen how the Scottish Government, with the limited financial powers of this Parliament, can assist businesses in my constituency. When Texas Instruments announced that it was going to close its Greenock plant and make nearly 300 people redundant, after many months and a huge effort by many people, the Scottish Government's investment of over £13.7 million, as part of a £47 million package of total investment, saved those jobs. Those jobs have remained, which is helping the small business sector in my community.

When Ferguson Marine in Port Glasgow was about to go under, the Scottish Government used its powers to save the yard and the 300 jobs in it. More jobs are being created, including apprenticeships, and they are helping the economy in my community.

With the full financial powers of independence, more of the business support that has been requested or demanded could be delivered—obviously undertaken in partnership with the business community. Acting swiftly—as compared with the dither and delay by the UK Government on the furlough scheme—would certainly help, and more certainty could be provided for the economy, as the Scottish Government could be responsive and would not need to wait for the Barnett consequential in order to do things. With independence, the Scottish Government can cut out the sophistry of the UK and get on with the job of governing for the business community and for the people of Scotland.

17:15

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): We have heard from around the chamber about some of the challenges that small businesses face. I welcome the opportunity to reflect on those challenges, particularly those in my region. As a Highlands and Islands MSP, I am keenly aware of the opportunities and the challenges that small businesses face. Compared with other parts of Scotland, we seem particularly entrepreneurial: small employers are considerably overrepresented in my region, and they are the backbone of our regional economy.

Much of that comes from necessity. This is not about national businesses or global chains reaching into our communities; it is about small businesses that are part of those communities, growing organically and working to create jobs and build livelihoods.

Seasonal employment around the tourist season remains significant in some parts of the region, offsetting losses from other times of the year and stretching out the impact of what might often be a restricted tourist season, so it is especially hard to see once-viable enterprises go to the wall or be under threat of doing so as the result of a virus that has been unprecedented in its impact on all our lives. Across Scotland, hundreds of desperate decisions have been made in offices, shops and pubs and over kitchen tables as business owners question whether they can continue or whether the pressure of their finances has become overwhelming.

For too many people, those decisions have already been made. Unfortunately, the limited data that we have on the impact of the pandemic on

rural Scotland will show us what has happened only after a significant delay, but we can see from around the Highlands and Islands the number of businesses that have shut up shop or that never reopened after the first lockdown—businesses that were unable to make the sums add up.

We know that delays in getting support to such businesses can be the difference between them carrying on or failing. We also know how co-dependent businesses can be in smaller communities. A local hotel can be the linchpin for a whole range of local suppliers, and an events business that has been shut down by restrictions may have been the driver of demand in the nearby hospitality sector.

Too often in the equations cooked up in St Andrew's house, that simple principle seems to have been forgotten. As the Federation of Small Businesses has made clear,

"Thousands of businesses which supply our retail and hospitality sectors are facing similar levels of hardship as those that have been hit directly."

One message that we have heard continually from many sectors is that support has come only when it was fought for. Equally, when one sector was granted a package of support, others were often left out or were simply treated as an afterthought.

In the Highlands and Islands, many of our small businesses are facing a hard winter. That is not to say that the support available has not been welcome, but in many cases there are real worries that—to quote the Scottish hospitality group—grants and other help will simply not "touch the sides" of the losses that businesses have suffered.

The main glint of light has been the furlough scheme, which has helped businesses across the UK, large and small, to keep staff on and has protected the best part of a million jobs here in Scotland. About £8.2 billion has come to Scotland to deal with the pandemic as a result of UK Government decisions—an unprecedented figure. As the Fraser of Allander institute has highlighted, however, the Scottish Government has held back key sums, failing to get them in a timely way to the businesses that need them.

We are now in the 10th month of Covid restrictions of varying levels of severity. It has been a long slog for many businesses and employees, with a reactive Scottish Government that has too often taken too long to step up and act. We now need an approach from the Scottish Government that looks beyond the next month and that avoids disproportionate impacts on small businesses or on certain regions in our country, with a vision that considers how we emerge, how we recover and how we rebuild after the pandemic.

17:19

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):

This is a time of year when we would normally be talking about small businesses in our respective constituencies and urging people to buy local, support our independent shops and cherish the diversity of offer on our high streets. In Aberdeenshire, those shops are thankfully still open, and those small businesses need our support more than ever. I make this plea to any of my constituents who are watching the debate to please get their Christmas presents, where possible, from the high streets of our market towns of Turriff, Inverurie, Ellon and Oldmeldrum; to support the struggling self-employed microbusinesses that have no Christmas fairs this year; to find their favourite local makers online where they continue to sell; to buy Christmas trees, wreaths and flowers directly from their local florists and garden centres; and to get their turkeys from our farm shops. This year of all years, doing that is more important than ever.

In Scotland, in contrast to other countries, the Government has had to make business support and public health decisions against the backdrop of other impactful decisions that were made in areas over which we do not have control. For the purpose of the debate, the most obvious one is the fiscal arrangement that we have as a devolved nation. The money that we have is the money that we have, and we cannot borrow any more.

With those constraints, the Scottish Government has still been able to deliver more than £2.3 billion-worth of support to a wider range of businesses than has been supported in other parts of the UK. That funding has helped those who have had to temporarily cease trading because of affected supply chains; it has provided grant support, which addresses the issues that the newly self-employed person faces because the UK Government has frankly ignored them; and it has given discretion and flexibility to councils to decide who is eligible. Throughout this period, I and my constituency office team have challenged a few decisions that the local authority has made regarding local businesses, and we have been able to get support to the latter when that flexibility has been a little bit wanting.

Is what we are doing enough? Of course it is not. The full green recovery will take so much more. To borrow 4 per cent of our gross domestic product, as Germany has done, to front load that recovery might be enough. That is what SNP members would like, and it would be immensely helpful if every MSP could get behind the Scottish Government in those calls for borrowing powers and more fiscal flexibility. I am an optimist—what can I say?

I would like to see a renewed focus on any remaining Covid business disruption support for the very small businesses that have fallen between cracks in eligibility—the hardest-hit people from the creative industries, for example, as well as businesses in the beauty and lifestyle, travel, tourism and events sectors, a high proportion of which are, incidentally, women-led. Many are sole traders who operate out of their homes, and we know that they have not had the benefit of furlough or support delivered through the rates system.

I have a plea for more help for those who have graduated from our colleges and universities this year. They do not need more training; they need opportunities. Many of those graduates were hoping to start their freelance careers in the sectors in which salaried secure jobs do not exist and have not existed for some time, such as the creative industries, and they need specific assistance.

I, too, welcome that Tesco is refunding the support that the Scottish Government gave it at the start of the pandemic. The cabinet secretary's immediate commitment to give that £60 million to those businesses and communities that have been hit hardest during Scotland's recovery from Covid is absolutely the right one. I hope that other large businesses that are now finding their feet will join Tesco in giving back, so that we can do what we can to redeploy those funds to the small businesses that are finding the situation that much harder.

17:23

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

I listened to the cabinet secretary's opening comments with an increasing sense of despair. In essence, she said that the assistance that was in place was in place, and that despite the increasing evidence that we are facing an absolutely catastrophic situation in terms of jobs, there would be no new money and no new schemes.

What she offered was a sympathetic ear and hope for the new year. As Pauline McNeill pointed out, however, businesses simply will not be here then, and hope will be insufficient. I thank goodness that I am not a retailer anymore. If I were, I would be sitting on thousands of pounds-worth of stock that I would have had to commit to back in August and September, with no possibility of selling it, which would leave me ruined. If the cabinet secretary can explain to me what she says to retailers in similar situations, especially in level 4 areas, I would be interested in her answer.

Kate Forbes: I will make two points. First, as I said in my speech, we will continue to make every penny that we have available to retailers and

others who need it most. There will be more announcements of business support.

My second point is that the fastest way to support businesses is to get the economy back open and trading. Any form of business support is just a sticking plaster, and does not compensate for lost income.

Daniel Johnson: Quite simply, SPICe and the Fraser of Allander institute say that that is not correct. The Scottish Government has not spent every penny that is available to it. With regard to controlling the virus, I am afraid that that confidence has gone. Other countries have managed to keep those sections of the economy open through testing and tracing, and this Government has simply failed. The consequences will be lost businesses and lost jobs.

I am proud that, in my constituency, there is a richness of independent retail and hospitality businesses. It is with a sense of incredulity that those businesses hear that they are non-essential. Edinburgh is a city that thrives on tourism and its diversity of independent businesses. Those businesses are not non-essential—they are absolutely critical to the functioning of Edinburgh's economy. Hospitality in level 3 and 4 areas is completely shut down, and those businesses feel that their Government's responses to date have been crude and without detail and rationale.

As many members will have been, I have been having extensive Zoom calls with groups of businesses, particularly hospitality businesses, in my constituency. They have been doing a lot of work. We have been in discussion with businesses that represent 450 premises across Edinburgh, and they are clear that 5,000 of their jobs in the city have already been lost, and 3,000 more jobs will go if the current restrictions stay in place.

The businesses are also clear that the assistance that has been provided to date is completely insufficient. Collectively, there has been £650,000 of assistance, but that is only £1,500 per business. That is it. That amount does not even cover part of a day's trading at this time of year. It is a drop in the ocean compared to the hundreds of thousands of pounds-worth of losses that those businesses will be making.

I have still not had a response from the First Minister to my letter in which I set out very reasonable suggestions, such as the alteration of trading windows, limited alterations to the sale of alcoholic drinks, restricted seating times and improved safety standards. Those modest measures could improve the ability of the businesses to continue to trade.

The reality is that the restrictions would be difficult to manage at any time of year, but this time of year is utterly critical. Businesses, whether

they are in retail or hospitality, are utterly dependent on the next few weeks to make the money that they need to survive through the rest of the year. The economic impact of the situation is simply not being recognised. Those businesses need more than hope—they need help.

17:28

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

I thank the Labour Party for securing the debate, given the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic in which we find ourselves. The motion mentions small business Saturday, which, in normal times, is a roaring success. Scottish Conservatives are hugely supportive of businesses in Scotland, and, in my constituency of Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, I would normally be out supporting them on the high street.

The extent of the value of business is hard to measure. It is not only the economic output that matters, but the impact that the businesses have on society by combating loneliness, providing local knowledge, being advocates for the high street and for Scotland, and creating job opportunities to give people a step up on the ladder.

Right now, many businesses will be wondering how they will survive this winter. Due to levels restrictions, they are losing out on normal Christmas trade, particularly businesses in the service sector, which rely on people and the trade of physical goods and services and which support more than 500,000 jobs in Scotland.

It is true that there is a fine balance to be struck between managing public health and the economy, but the SNP's excuses are not acceptable. I am ashamed that Kate Forbes is sitting on that money and, in an intervention, telling members that she will spend it. When will she spend the money?

Kate Forbes rose—

Rachael Hamilton: I will not take an intervention. Kate Forbes can deal with that point in her closing speech.

On the hospitality sector, senior figures from the licensed trade, law and businesses in Edinburgh have accused the SNP Government of shameful inconsistency in protecting the economy of cities around Scotland. Roddy Dunlop QC, the dean of the Faculty of Advocates, has called out the inconsistency between Scotland's cities and described it as "unbelievable". He has demanded an explanation, which businesses deserve.

We know from FSB research that one fifth of Scotland's small businesses and self-employed people have had no help over the course of the crisis, as many members in the chamber have mentioned. That is totally unacceptable, and the buck stops with the SNP Government. Maurice Golden highlighted the fact that the Government is sitting on £2.2 billion of Barnett consequential that should, rightfully, be in the hands of businesses around Scotland, which are on their knees.

The Fraser of Allander institute revealed that the Government is hoarding more than £1 billion at Holyrood instead of using it to protect jobs and support businesses. More than anything, that precious funding should be used wisely on grants and loans to support job retention, which is crucial as we continue to weather the storm. I thank our lucky stars that Scotland is part of a union that has the might of the furlough scheme, and many members whose constituents have benefited from the scheme should be shouting from the rafters about that. *[Interruption.]* No—I will not take an intervention.

I welcome the points that are raised in the Labour motion on protecting jobs and the need for greater support for businesses. The Conservatives will support the motion, given the urgency of the situation in which we find ourselves.

The UK Conservative Government has stepped up to the mark for businesses around Scotland, providing certainty to the tune of £9.5 billion and extending the schemes that have protected jobs across every part of our country. However, the Scottish finance secretary, Kate Forbes, complains ad infinitum that it is not enough. She stashes the cash and fails to redistribute it to businesses that desperately need it. Businesses do not have votes; people have votes. Could those squirreled-away pennies magically reappear in the spring to fund the list of ministerial announcements that were splashed at the SNP conference over the weekend? We will soon see.

SNP members spend their time talking about a four-day week and independence—Stuart McMillan banged on about independence in his speech—but it is the Conservatives who are working to protect the jobs of hard-working people and businesses around our United Kingdom.

I urge members to vote for our amendment, which recognises that we need a coronavirus business restrictions advisory council. I urge the SNP Government to take its fingers out of its ears and to listen and pay attention to businesses instead of cooking up an ideological and damaging referendum.

17:33

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): The Covid-19 pandemic has brought profound challenges to businesses and communities around the world. Small businesses contribute enormously to our economy and provide countless jobs in our communities, but they are economically vulnerable. To address the new challenges, the response must be innovative, flexible and adaptive, which is what the Scottish Government's response has been, including through the design of schemes that are not available in England, as the cabinet secretary outlined.

The fiscal powers of the Scottish Government are constrained. As long ago as late March, David Phillips of the Institute of Fiscal Studies said:

"as it stands, the funding arrangements for devolved Governments may not be appropriate for the task in hand. This is because they have limited reserves, constrained borrowing powers, and the funding flowing to them as a result of the Barnett formula may not reflect the challenges that they face",

including not having powers to borrow, which sums up the problem. The Scottish Government is bound by law to produce a balanced budget and cannot respond quickly to emerging needs by borrowing. Scotland should not be refused the fiscal flexibility that is needed to prevent the healthcare crisis from spiralling into an economic crisis. I think that we all agree that, sadly, that process is already well under way.

I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to spending all £8.2 billion of the Covid Barnett consequential on supporting our response to Covid-19, and I welcome its reprioritisation of significant sums to combat the virus. However, the UK Government's 2020 spending review puts barriers in Scotland's way. It offers only limited information on the 2021-22 Scottish budget envelope, as it covers only one year. That makes it impossible to plan with any certainty. We experienced a similar scenario earlier this year, when the UK Government's budget was not announced until March. The delay created serious difficulties in our budget setting and scrutiny processes.

Now more than ever, the UK Government must give the Scottish Government the powers that are needed to respond to the challenges of the pandemic. If we are to build back better, we need in our hands the economic tools for the job.

Within those restrictions, the Scottish Government has done well in designing the strategic framework business fund, which provides grants to help businesses that face closure or restrictions to trading. I particularly welcome the £30 million discretionary fund to assist businesses in areas such as my region, which, although they are in level 2, are affected by restrictions

elsewhere—whether that is related to travel or because they operate in both Scotland and England—which stop their customers coming or affect their supply chains.

However, I am concerned that, on an operational level, some local authorities do not seem to be rolling out the discretionary fund quickly enough. I would appreciate it if the cabinet secretary could provide her understanding of how many councils have gone live with that excellent fund that the Scottish Government provides.

For the Scottish economy to bounce back in a way that is fair and equal, we need to support small business. In order to do that to the best of our ability, the Scottish Government needs full financial powers, so that we are no longer held back by UK budgetary decisions.

17:36

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The virus has affected us all, but, although some have kept their health, they have lost their livelihoods.

There are more than 125,000 Scots looking for work. For many, the jobs simply are not there. It has been a devastating year for businesses, including small businesses and shops that are local employers. One example is LAH Travel in West Kilbride, which has completely lost its market. It is not alone. More than 8,000 travel jobs in Scotland have been lost or are at risk. Huge retailers such as the Arcadia Group and Debenhams employ thousands of people and they have been added to the long list of economic victims of this horrible virus.

We know that things are bad when the Government's chief economist says that the jobs that we have lost during the pandemic might not return until at least 2023. I think that he is being overly optimistic.

Yesterday, I took part in a debate in the chamber about the mental health of young people. Youth unemployment now sits at around 14.5 per cent: it has nearly doubled since the start of the pandemic. That should be of huge concern to all of us.

We have already had a debate today about what happens when the Government does not get it right. Yes, Governments try to soften the blow, but let us face it—when Governments legislate to shut down businesses, ban travel and restrict people from leaving their homes, that comes at a cost to finances, physical and mental health and employment. I know that we are not alone; we are not unique. Parliaments all over the world are probably having debates just like this one.

I know from speaking to businesses in my region that the support that they get from the

Government means so much to them. It has a direct effect on their ability to employ staff and stay open during these tough months. The furlough scheme, as much as it has been berated in the chamber today, is a direct intervention that does not come naturally to Governments but that has undoubtedly saved hundreds of thousands of jobs in Scotland. It has delivered, but no Government can afford to pay people to sit at home forever, because we have to build a resilient health and social care system and we have to properly fund public services. We need to get businesses back open, working, paying tax and employing people.

The UK chancellor promised from day 1 that he was prepared to do whatever it took to support Scotland and every part of the UK as much as possible throughout the crisis. I believe that he has lived up to that promise.

I do not often share an economic view of the world with Richard Leonard, but he is right to bring the debate to the chamber, because the lack of support that so many of our businesses need should cause us sleepless nights, because we shut those businesses down. They followed the rules, and we often gave them just a few days' notice, under the premise of the public health emergency. As Daniel Johnson correctly pointed out, we said that they were not essential, but they are. Every job is essential to those who work in a business that is being closed.

Time and again, there have been gaping holes in what has been offered in support, compared to what is needed in support and what has actually been delivered in support. Following months of warnings about an existential crisis for outdoor education centres, only last month did they finally get some money.

We must be clear. If the finance secretary is sitting on Barnett consequentials—and there is debate about whether she is or is not—she must get that money to where it is needed. If, as she claims, there is no money left in the pot, the question is, where is it?

Every penny must be accounted for. Every penny that is due to Scottish businesses must go to them. Any money that is spent in the Scottish economy must go to the economy. Businesses need that support. They need it now. They need cash in the bank. The head-in-the-sand approach to the economic crisis that we face is not sustainable.

I support the amendment in the name of Maurice Golden.

17:40

Kate Forbes: I have never been in opposition, but I would have thought that it would be easier to

secure results for constituents if members dealt in fact. It does them no favours to pretend that the full £2.2 billion is unspent.

However, I will start with a point about transparency. In this unprecedented year, I accept that there is a need for additional information. That is one of the reasons why we had the extra budget revision in May, and why I offered, exceptionally, to set out more information to the Finance and Constitution Committee in a December update, which will happen in the coming days. When it comes to business support, my commitment is to keeping that committee updated, as far as possible, in order to aid its scrutiny.

People who work with the budget, including those who sit on that committee, will know that the UK Government's guarantee has been very helpful for planning ahead, but it also means that there is less transparency on what generated the available consequentials, and that funding can be given unexpectedly to the Scottish Government by the UK Government. That allows us to go further when it comes to business support, as well as covering things such as vaccines and the continuation of the transport system.

Some—not many—members raised very constructive ideas about specific sectors and businesses. Gillian Martin talked about being an advocate for the businesses in her constituency—as she has been, and as other members have been who have raised specific points with me which we have tried to resolve. To repay the warm words that Willie Rennie bestowed on me, I say that he, too, has been very constructive in raising specific issues that can sometimes—not always—be resolved.

The discretionary funding is of course a partnership with local authorities. As members are always quick to remind me, when we do things in partnership there is a role for local government in coming to an agreement. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has agreed, internally, the distribution, and we have been agreeing the guidance with it. That guidance, as I am sure everybody would accept, needs to strike a balance between clarity, to make sure that we support the sectors that we have mentioned, such as taxi drivers, and discretion, reflecting for example the fact that businesses in the Western Isles may have different needs to those in the middle of Edinburgh.

On Willie Rennie's other point, I hope that we can announce additional sectoral support for some of the businesses that he mentioned, including travel agents in particular. Work is going on specifically with the travel agents, to ensure that we capture them all.

Maurice Golden said that business support does not go far enough. I agree. If all members agree on one thing, it is that the need far outstrips the funds available. However, we must be realistic. The funding in Scotland has gone further than the UK policies that generated the consequentials. I am not content just with being slightly better than England. We need to make sure that we tailor our support to the businesses that need it.

Some members talked about long-term recovery. Our primary focus is very much on the immediate response to the economic crisis and businesses in distress, but there are questions about long-term recovery, the future of town centres, reskilling and retraining.

Jamie Halcro Johnston said that we need to look beyond the next month. I agree, which is why I make a plea, when it comes to the budget situation. The future is uncertain, so we must use our funding not just to help businesses now, but to ensure that, in the middle of February, there is funding so that businesses can get the recurring grants.

Jamie Greene: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Kate Forbes: Yes, I will.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary has about 10 seconds left.

Kate Forbes: Oh!

Jamie Greene: I will be quick, then. How much extra money has Covid cost the Scottish Government and where has the money come from?

Kate Forbes: As we set out, the vast majority came from the UK Government in the form of consequentials, with an element of reprioritisation, the details of which are in the budget revisions that are regularly published.

I must come to a close, Presiding Officer. The future is uncertain. We will continue to work with business organisations—this morning, I met the FSB. I am always happy to speak to any member about businesses in their constituency, to ensure that we provide as much support as possible to get them through these extremely challenging times.

17:45

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Let me get right to the nub of the debate. The Scottish Government has received £8.2 billion in Barnett consequentials since the start of the pandemic, and according to the Scottish Parliament information centre, which is independent of any Government and political party, £2.2 billion remains to be formally allocated.

Let us take the cabinet secretary at face value. By my reckoning, more than half of that figure is currently unallocated and unspent, while businesses are going to the wall and jobs are being lost. There does not appear to be, on the part of the Government, any sense of urgency about getting the money out to where it can make the most difference. Let me repeat that businesses are going to the wall now. Jobs are being lost now—not next month or next year, but now.

Small business Saturday is this weekend, as members said. It is an initiative that Labour encouraged when it was in Government and it is embraced by us all. It encourages us to support local small businesses in our communities, not just now but all year round. In a spirit of consensus, I also commend the Scotland loves local campaign, because all efforts to protect our high streets and small businesses are welcome.

However, there will be no shopping in my area on Saturday. There will be no going out to restaurants, no looking for Christmas presents at my local shops and no retail on offer, other than supermarkets and takeaways. My high street is a ghost town, as is the case in the 11 local authority areas that are in level 4 of the framework. In other words, we are in lockdown.

I recognise that there is a public health crisis, but we need to minimise the economic crisis, which is having a huge impact on jobs and livelihoods. That means putting support in place now and over the next few months, to sustain businesses until the vaccine is in play and restrictions can be properly lifted.

I made those points in the debate a few weeks ago and I make no apology for repeating them. The hotel support fund, for example, which had £14 million in it, was oversubscribed. Only 30 per cent of applicants got an award. Small, family-run hotels—some are in my area—have received no support at all and are on the brink of closing. Many have furloughed staff and some have had to lay off staff completely. Many are struggling to stay afloat and see no future, despite news about the vaccine.

The coronavirus restrictions fund and hardship fund were allocated some £48 million between them. How much has been spent? I deal with more and more companies in my area that have been rejected. Some were not eligible, because the criteria were too tight. Hotels were rejected. Small businesses in the local supply chain were rejected. People without business bank accounts were rejected. Bed and breakfasts were rejected. The list goes on. Despite our questions, we have still not been told how much was spent and how much is left over. The coronavirus restrictions fund closed on 3 November, four weeks ago, so there

should be no excuse for not providing the information.

I will give a couple of examples. A small business that supplies local hotels and restaurants with hygiene supplies did not get a grant and was told that it was not eligible for hardship funds because it does not trade in perishable goods. However, there is a local craft brewer that will need to get rid of its cask ales because the pubs are shut. That business's product is perishable, but it is clearly not perishable enough, because it did not get help. It will have to throw its beer away—many of my colleagues will regard that action as criminal—but we are talking about people's livelihoods.

Now we have the strategic framework business fund, but the criteria have not substantially changed. How many businesses will be eligible to apply? How many have already applied and been rejected, and how much has been set aside? I have asked the Scottish Government time after time, but no figure has been provided. Grants in those categories are paid four weeks in arrears when the need is immediate. What about the discretionary fund? £30 million for supply-chain companies and people such as taxi drivers is incredibly welcome, but the fund is not yet open and there seems to be no date in sight.

There are more than 350,000 small businesses in Scotland that employ 1.2 million people. They account for 99.3 per cent of all private sector businesses. They need our help not next month or next year—they need it now.

I will finish where I started. The Scottish Government has £2.2 billion that has not been formally allocated and more than half of that is not spent, while businesses are going to the wall. It needs to get the money out.

Urgent Question

17:50

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is an urgent question on Covid-19 vaccine delivery from Donald Cameron. Before calling Mr Cameron, I will comment on the remarks that were made at the Scottish Government's briefing today in relation to the authorisation of a Covid-19 vaccine. The news of that authorisation is welcome and is a significant matter, but I reiterate to all members that my expectation is that announcements on such significant matters should be made to Parliament in the first instance. It is not a matter for applause.

Covid-19 Vaccine Roll-out

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the roll-out of Covid-19 vaccines following the approval of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): Before answering the question, it would be helpful for me to outline the timeline of events this morning. As we know, this is the news that we have been hoping for since March, so, as the Presiding Officer said, it is good and important news. Last night, there was a four-nations meeting between Scottish ministers and Mr Hancock—

The Presiding Officer: Mr FitzPatrick, before you go on, I point out that you are here to answer the urgent question from Mr Cameron, so I hope that you are not making a remark about my comments from the chair. Please answer Mr Cameron's question.

Joe FitzPatrick: My point was to lay out when the announcement was made rather than the suggestion that has been made.

The Presiding Officer: Mr FitzPatrick, it sounds to me that you are questioning my ruling and I would rather that you answered Mr Cameron's question.

Joe FitzPatrick: I will try to include some of that content. The announcement by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency this morning, the publication of the final recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, which met this morning, and the four-nations ministerial call this morning at 6.30 am that followed a call from Matt Hancock last night, were followed up by an announcement to the stock exchange at 7.07 am. At that meeting at 6.30 am, the four ministers—members will be aware that we have agreed that

we will always take a four-nations approach—agreed that vaccinations with the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine will start on Tuesday 8 December. As proposed to business managers this morning and subject to the Parliament's agreement at decision time—

The Presiding Officer: Mr FitzPatrick, please stop. Sit down, please. You are here to answer an urgent question from a member, not to address comments from the chair or any other matter. Please address the question that Mr Cameron asked you and do not address your remarks to my comments.

Joe FitzPatrick: Following all the things that happened this morning, vaccinations with the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine will start in Scotland on Tuesday 8 December. As proposed to business managers this morning and subject to Parliament's agreement at decision time, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport will provide Parliament with further details on the matter in a statement tomorrow.

Donald Cameron: This is a truly breakthrough moment and offers hope of a return to normality at the end of a long and difficult year but, given the significance of the news, it is deeply disappointing that the Scottish Government refused a request to the First Minister to give an urgent statement to Parliament today. In the absence of such a statement, will the minister agree to publish, today, the full vaccine delivery plan that was reviewed at Cabinet yesterday? If not, when will we see it?

Joe FitzPatrick: I have tried to outline the timelines. As I understand it, the Scottish Government's business manager spoke to other business managers this morning and offered a statement tomorrow, which I hope will be agreed to by Parliament. That will be the point at which it will be possible to discuss all the detail.

A team of people is continuing to work on the detail to ensure that the vaccine is rolled out in Scotland on Tuesday 8 December in a safe and appropriate way. An extensive publication came out from the MHRA this morning, as well as extensive documentation from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. All that detail is being looked at to ensure that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport can give as detailed a statement as possible tomorrow, if Parliament agrees to that, and respond to questions in as much detail as possible.

Donald Cameron: I understand that there are still uncertainties, but vulnerable people and their families need answers as soon as possible. People across Scotland are desperate to know who will be able to access the Covid vaccine first, particularly those with relatives in care homes, where more than 2,000 Scottish people have,

tragically, lost their lives. Can the minister confirm today that Scotland will implement the recommendations of the JCVI, which prioritise care home residents and staff?

Joe FitzPatrick: The recommendations of the JCVI were one of the things that were being discussed this morning at 6.30. Of course, the Scottish Government, like the Governments of the other nations in these islands, will be following the advice of the JCVI. That is important.

The paper that was published this morning is a pretty extensive document, and there is a lot of detail in there, but if members look at it, they will see that the JCVI believes that, when we vaccinate all the groups that it recommends be vaccinated first, that will protect 99 per cent of the people most likely to die. It is a significant piece of work and it is important that, across all four nations, we follow the advice of the JCVI.

I want to say to Mr Cameron that this piece of work is a project that has been taken forward on a four-nations basis and in a very collaborative way. Mr Hancock, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport and the health ministers in Wales and Northern Ireland have been working closely and collaboratively to ensure that we can deliver the vaccine as quickly and safely as the advice and the supply allows.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): The Scottish Government has previously set out that 23 ultra-low-temperature freezers have been purchased to store the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. In tomorrow's statement, will the Government advise whether that approach will help to ensure that access to the vaccine is possible regardless of where someone lives?

Joe FitzPatrick: Obviously, the cabinet secretary will give more detail tomorrow. However, the member is right. The characteristics of the vaccine bring particular challenges in relation to transportation and ultra-low-temperature storage. Those issues are dealt with in some of the advice that was published this morning by the MHRA. Some of the detail that has to be looked at carefully is about the transportation.

We have ensured that there are 23 ultra-low-temperature freezers located throughout Scotland, including three in the Highlands, to account for geography. However, again, we are awaiting final clarification from the MHRA on the extent to which we can pack down and transport the vaccine once it is defrosted, as, clearly, there are some communities that will be unable to travel to the vaccination centres. Board plans are looking to take all that into account, in all of its complexity.

I should just explain the challenge in terms of the packing down. The vaccine will be supplied to the four nations in packs of 997 doses, each of

which has to be diluted into batches of five and then used to vaccinate the population. The piece of the puzzle on which we still need to get final answers from the MHRA is whether those 997 doses can be packed down into smaller packages. That is relevant to all the nations, but it is most important for our rural areas, particularly if we cannot transport the vaccine once it has been unpacked.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): This is a victory for science and we applaud everyone who was involved in the vaccine development, including the volunteers who made the trials possible.

It is fantastic news that people in Scotland will start to get the vaccine in just six days' time, so the details absolutely matter, because we need to get this right and hit the ground running.

Almost two weeks ago, I asked the cabinet secretary a number of questions, and she promised to write back to me. I do not yet have the answers and I am not sure who is in charge of the vaccine programme; perhaps the minister will advise. Can he tell us tonight what proportion of the 2,000 vaccinators and support staff that the cabinet secretary said will be required by the end of January will be vaccinators? We still do not know. Given that general practitioners will play a crucial role, what support will be in place to make sure that they can still see patients on a timely basis? What additional support is in place for primary care to ensure that people can see their GPs on a timely basis? Lastly, how many national health service and social care staff does the minister think will have had both doses by the end of January?

The Presiding Officer: Ms Lennon, that is several questions.

Monica Lennon: I have asked a lot of those questions before—

Joe FitzPatrick: I am sorry; I did not quite get that. I think that the last question was about the proportion of health and social care staff.

Monica Lennon: I am sorry—your colleagues were being so noisy.

The Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Joe FitzPatrick: The point about health and social care staff. If we look at the advice of the JCVI as it stands, two or three groups are the absolute priority for the first wave: the front-line health and social care staff who have direct, patient-facing roles; people who live in elderly care homes; and people who are over 80.

We are still reliant on the supply of the vaccine but, assuming that it comes in in the way we expect, we hope that that first wave of the most

vulnerable groups will be vaccinated by February—certainly by the end of February. We still do not have absolute clarity on the supply chain of the vaccine coming in, so that is a challenge but, within the advice from the JCVI, the groups that Monica Lennon talked about are an absolute priority, so it is important that we get it to them.

I appreciate the tone of the member's question, because we have a very important role to encourage that group and other vulnerable groups to come forward and get the vaccine. The evidence is really good on the vaccine's ability to protect individuals, including those most vulnerable people. We still do not know whether it gives herd immunity to protect other people, which means that we might make different choices in the future, but all the advice now is that the vaccine is very good at protecting that vulnerable group.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): It is certainly a good day, but it shows what the Government thinks of this Parliament that it sends the minister to deliver that wholly unconvincing and inadequate explanation this afternoon. Does the minister know why those who were on the shielding list are not prioritised for the vaccine?

Joe FitzPatrick: Those who were on the shielding list are prioritised for the vaccine; they are just not in the very first wave. However, I encourage Willie Rennie to look at the JCVI advice, which goes through a range of individuals. As I said, the first wave starts with those who are over 80, those who live in care homes, and health and care workers and then goes down the age groups, with the exception of very vulnerable 16 to 64-year-olds, who are included in that phase. That group might have been a very late addition, but 16 to 64-year-old vulnerable people are definitely within the priority groups. That is important, because, according to the JCVI, including those people and everyone above the age of 50 accounts for 99 per cent of the likely deaths. Therefore, it is important that we follow the JCVI advice.

On Willie Rennie's point about respect for Parliament, I go back to the point that the announcement was made by the MHRA this morning. We have always taken a four-nations approach. Matt Hancock made several announcements about the date on television this morning. There was also a briefing from the JCVI at 10 am this morning, so the suggestion that we have made the announcement in some other way is bizarre.

I hope that members appreciate the huge amount of work that is going into ensuring that the programme in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK is effective and safe. It is a massive collaborative effort across the four nations, and all the folk who

are involved in bringing together the programme to ensure that vaccination can start next Tuesday should be congratulated by us all.

Business Motions

18:05

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-23573, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to tomorrow's business.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business on Thursday 3 December—

after

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
Finance

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery

delete

5.05 pm Decision Time

insert

5.35 pm Decision Time—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item is consideration of business motion S5M-23551, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 8 December 2020

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions

followed by Ministerial Statement: COVID-19

followed by Ministerial Statement: Brexit Readiness

followed by Finance and Constitution Committee Debate: Parliament's Evolving Scrutiny Function

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

6.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 9 December 2020

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform;
Rural Economy and Tourism

followed by

Ministerial Statement: Coronavirus Legislation

followed by

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by

Business Motions

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by

Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.40 pm

Decision Time

followed by

Members' Business

Thursday 10 December 2020

12.20 pm

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

12.20 pm

First Minister's Questions

2.30 pm

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm

Portfolio Questions:
Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity

followed by

Stage 3 Proceedings: Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Bill

followed by

Stage 1 Debate: Scottish General Election (Coronavirus) Bill

followed by

Financial Resolution: Scottish General Election (Coronavirus) Bill

followed by

Business Motions

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

6.35 pm

Decision Time

Tuesday 15 December 2020

2.00 pm

Time for Reflection

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by

Topical Questions

followed by

Ministerial Statement: COVID-19

followed by

Stage 1 Debate: Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

followed by

Financial Resolution: Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

followed by

Committee Announcements

followed by

Business Motions

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

6.00 pm

Decision Time

followed by

Members' Business

Wednesday 16 December 2020

2.00 pm

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm

Portfolio Questions:
Justice and the Law Officers;
Constitution, Europe and External Affairs

followed by

Scottish Government Business

followed by

Business Motions

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by

Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.10 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 17 December 2020
 12.20 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 12.20 pm First Minister's Questions
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Economy, Fair Work and Culture
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Redress for Survivors
 (Historical Child Abuse in Care)
 (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.35 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 7 December 2020, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item is consideration of business motions S5M-23552 and S5M-23553, on the stage 1 timetable for two bills, and business motion S5M-23554, on the stage 2 timetable for a bill.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Culpable Homicide (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 29 January 2021.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 29 January 2021.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Defamation and Malicious Publication (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 5 February 2021.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-23563, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Valuation (Postponement of Revaluation) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Order 2020 [draft] be approved.—[*Kate Forbes*]

The Presiding Officer: Liam Kerr wishes to speak against the motion.

18:07

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I rise to speak against the order, and I urge MSPs to vote against it at decision time. The order concerns the business rates that our shops, enterprises, hospitality businesses, restaurants and so on pay each month. Periodically, there is an assessment of the rates that each should pay, and the order seeks to move the date on which the next assessment will be made. If the motion to approve the order is passed today, instead of business rates being reassessed and a different figure being paid from April 2022, the reassessment will be pushed back, with the rates changing from April 2023.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Liam Kerr: I will make a little progress and then I will come back to Ms Boyack.

I understand why the change is being proposed. The minister will tell us that the Government's concern is that, if we were to reassess the figures any earlier, the result would not be truly reflective of conditions in the market, due to the coronavirus pandemic. I expect that the minister will also tell us that pushing back the revaluation will allow current and post-Covid trading to be assessed, and it will allow time for the vaccine to do its thing, people to get back on the high street and sales to stabilise.

I get that, but that does not work when set against the principles that the minister will claim to be working to. It does not work because the whole point of the Barclay review of rates was to design a rates system that directly responds to changing market conditions. These are the changing market conditions, so any delay to the revaluation, as per the order, runs counter to the flagship recommendation for more frequent, not less frequent, assessments.

Furthermore, members will be aware that the Scottish Government recently introduced legislation to further constrain appeals on the grounds of material change in circumstances,

which will only really work in a context in which there are more regular revaluations. If the order to push back the next reassessment is approved today, after we have removed those crucial grounds of appeal, it will be the perfect storm for many businesses. In other words, the order will bring in a one-size-fits-all solution that does not fit all—it certainly does not fit the north-east.

Sarah Boyack: Does Mr Kerr agree that, although the majority of Scottish businesses support a delay to the tone date, the evidence that the Local Government and Communities Committee took showed that many business groups do not support the tone date that is in front of us tonight? It is disappointing that the Scottish National Party Government was not prepared to bring forward the alternative tone date that many would prefer, especially given the lack of a robust economic assessment that would enable us to take a good decision.

Liam Kerr: Yes, I agree with that. I can see from the record that many business groups did not support the proposal in the order. I will shortly speak specifically about one such group, and about a solution that might be of interest.

The last revaluation was several years ago. The north-east was accordingly assessed against trading conditions as they stood at that time. That reassessment completely failed to take into account the impact of the oil downturn and its effect on the north-east economy. As a result, business rates bills were based on rateable values that failed to reflect the reality of trading in the north-east when they came into force in 2017.

North-east businesses have been paying eye-watering rates ever since. This is their chance—at last—to be reassessed against realistic trading conditions and the market in the north-east as it is, and not as the central belt thinks that it is. Businesses in the north-east cannot wait any longer. One needs only to walk down Aberdeen's Union Street to see the impact of the crippling and inaccurate rates on that great city.

MSPs need not feel pressured into voting for the order. There is a solution, and it is in the Scottish Government's own paper as option 2. That solution, which I suspect Sarah Boyack was referring to, is endorsed by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, and is that the Government should carry on with the 2022 revaluation, but introduce a valuation date of 1 April 2021. Revaluing rates as early as possible to align rateable values with current market conditions, in the light of Covid-19 and the most recent restrictions, would be a fairer and vastly more sensible step to aid economic recovery than delaying the revaluation.

For years, the conditions against which the north-east was assessed have not existed. For years, the north-east has paid crippling business rates that have had dramatic—sometimes terminal—impacts on our high streets and jobs. That must not continue for one minute longer than necessary.

The solution is clear: MSPs should vote against the order, send it back so that the committee can reconsider option 2, and deliver a fair deal for the north-east. MSPs can back the north-east and its people by doing so at decision time.

18:10

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance (Kate Forbes): Contrary to Liam Kerr's point, the Barclay review's primary concern was to provide stability and minimise the impact of economic shocks. It would be irresponsible for the Scottish Government to proceed with a 2022 revaluation based on information as at April 2020, which was only a month into lockdown.

This is not a political decision, which is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the Scottish, Welsh and United Kingdom Governments have all taken the same decision.

The delay was also requested by Ruth Davidson in the chamber on 1 September—the day that the proposal to do exactly that was announced in the programme for government. I see that the Conservatives now want to do a U-turn on Ruth Davidson's request.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary acknowledge that the tone date in Scotland is different from the tone date in Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom?

Kate Forbes: Yes, and I celebrate that, because it minimises the time for the market to be considerably different at the point on which the revaluations are based. A one-year tone date—which was recommended by the Barclay review—was chosen precisely to minimise the shocks. We should therefore be proud to be able to deliver that in this country.

The equivalent delay in England was described by Luke Hall, the UK local government minister, who I believe is a Conservative, as "important" and "common sense". Similarly, Labour MP Kate Hollern said that it is

"a common-sense response to the virus".—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 20 September 2020; vol 681, c 371.]

The chamber should know that there is no political or financial benefit from the delay. On the contrary, annulling the order would ensure that the system would revert to a 2022 revaluation with a tone date of 1 April 2020, increasing uncertainty for business, locking them into new revaluations

that likely would not reflect the full impact of the pandemic and risking the Government's ability to fund a programme of business support because of the risk to public finances.

Liam Kerr said that we should reflect market conditions. Information as at 1 April 2020 would not reflect market conditions, and the big fear and concern—based on the evidence that we have received—is that information as at April 2021 would not reflect market conditions either.

As Sarah Boyack rightly said, the business community agreed universally that the status quo is not an option, and annulling the order would force us back to the status quo.

Scottish businesses also agree overwhelmingly that their top priority is to have certainty about the future of reliefs. That discussion should be held in advance of next year's budget and is different from a discussion about locking businesses into revaluation values.

In his statement last week, the chancellor systematically failed to provide the devolved Administrations with any clarity about the future of non-domestic rates reliefs. Instead of posturing over the date of the revaluation, we should unite to call on the chancellor to provide certainty now, rather than making us wait until March, only a month before the beginning of the next financial year.

The order is based on an understanding of the risks to businesses. That is, in turn, based on the most robust and verifiable evidence and data that we have. It is the same "common-sense" approach adopted in Wales under Labour and in England under the Conservatives. I call on Parliament not to agree to the proposal to annul—not for the sake of Government, but for the sake of businesses in every constituency, which have been through the most challenging of years.

The Presiding Officer: The vote on that SSI will be taken at decision time.

The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-23557, on approval of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2020.

I call Graeme Dey to speak to and move the motion.

18:16

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): In keeping with the Covid scrutiny protocol that was agreed between the Government and the Parliament, I should outline the purpose of this Scottish statutory instrument, which is to modify some of the

restrictions and requirements for the different levels and to set out changes to the levels that apply to some areas of Scotland.

The regulations give effect to the First Minister's announcement of 10 November and came into force on 13 November.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/374) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The decision on that SSI will also be taken at decision time.

The next item of business is consideration of six Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S5M-23561, S5M-23558, S5M-23560 and S5M-23562, on approval of SSIs; motion S5M-23555, on acting conveners; and motion S5M-23556, on committee membership.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Parliament (Elections etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Order 2020 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 23) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/378) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the International Organisations (Immunities and Privileges) (Scotland) Revocation Order 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the UEFA European Championship (Trading and Advertising) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament, under rule 12.1A.6, agrees that the time period specified in motion S5M-21129 be further varied to 7 December 2020.

That the Parliament agrees that Rhoda Grant be appointed to replace James Kelly as a member of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing.

Decision Time

18:17

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that amendment S5M-23537.2, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, which seeks to amend motion S5M-23537, in the name of Alex Rowley, on BiFab, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. I will suspend proceedings briefly to allow members to access the voting app.

18:17

Meeting suspended.

18:23

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, colleagues. We will go straight to the vote on amendment S5M-23537.2, which will be a one-minute division.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app showed an error message that suggests that my vote was not counted.

The Presiding Officer: I assure Mr Allan that his vote was counted.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)

Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Ind)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the vote on amendment S5M-23537.2, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, which seeks to amend motion S5M-23537, in the name of Alex Rowley, on BiFab, is: For 60, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-23537.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S5M-23537, in the name of Alex Rowley, on BiFab, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I have the weirdest screen ever on my phone, so I think that my vote might not have been counted. I would have abstained.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote was counted, Mr Stewart.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: I will add your vote to the voting roll.

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am sorry to say that the app on my phone would not allow me to vote. I would have abstained.

The Presiding Officer: I will make sure that your vote is added to the voting roll.

For

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

Against

Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)

Abstentions

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)

Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 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)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the vote on amendment S5M-23537.1, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S5M-23537, in the name of Alex Rowley, on BiFab, is: For 61, Against 2, Abstentions 58.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-23537, in the name of Alex Rowley, on BiFab, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No

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

For

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S5M-23537, in the name of Alex Rowley, as amended, on BiFab, is: For 61, Against 60, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that Scotland has the potential to lead Europe's green energy revolution over the coming decades; further believes that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and job losses, green jobs will be central to creating new employment and training opportunities across Scotland; considers that, with the support of the workforce and their trades unions, the maximum effort has to be made to secure wind farm contracts for Scottish manufacturing companies; notes that, in open competition, BiFab won a £30 million contract to build turbine jackets for the NnG North Sea wind farm, work that could have started in January 2021, but has been prevented from going ahead with this; condemns the Scottish Government's decision to withdraw the financial guarantee that was needed to enable this work to go ahead, thus risking Scotland's reputation as a new green investment hub, and further condemns the Scottish Government's failure to produce any legal opinion to justify its claim that support for BiFab was against the law; calls on it to act now to secure the future of the Burntisland Methil and Arnish yards, and the jobs that depend on them; further calls on it to talk to the workforce's representatives and to ask for the help of the UK Government through the joint working party to urgently negotiate with EDF and Saipem to find a solution that ensures that the NnG contract for eight wind turbine platforms is carried out in the yards, and, with Glasgow being the venue of the COP26 summit in December 2021, calls for a concrete plan to be published in January by the Scottish Government that ensures that future work on renewables comes to Scottish yards, and further calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that these policy commitments on renewables are part of a coherent industrial strategy for the post-COVID-19 era.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Kate Forbes is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Maurice Golden will fall.

The question is, that amendment S5M-23536.2, in the name of Kate Forbes, which seeks to amend motion S5M-23536, in the name of Richard Leonard, on business support, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 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)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Ind)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S5M-23536.2, in the name of Kate Forbes, which seeks to amend motion S5M-23536, in the name of Richard Leonard, on business support, is: For 65, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The amendment in the name of Maurice Golden is pre-empted. Therefore, the next question is, that motion S5M-23536, in the name of Richard Leonard, on business support, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)

Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 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)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 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)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Abstention

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S5M-23536, in the name of Richard Leonard, as amended, is: For 96, Against 23, Abstentions 1.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes that 5 December 2020 is Small Business Saturday and that small businesses, including those in the hospitality sector, are an irreplaceable source of jobs and community across Scotland and should be celebrated and supported; recognises that many businesses are at risk because of the wider economic impacts of COVID-19 despite more than £2.3 billion of financial support allocated by the Scottish Government, including the Strategic Framework Business Fund, the £15 million second phase of the Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund and the £30 million Local Authority Discretionary Fund; welcomes the use of Barnett consequential to provide this support and save businesses and jobs, alongside other forms of support from the UK Government such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support; recognises the ongoing work with businesses, local government and trade unions to do everything possible to

support and sustain businesses of all sizes in all sectors, and agrees that the finance secretary should provide additional detail to the Finance and Constitution Committee in December 2020 with an update on the allocation of consequential to date.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-23563, in the name of Graeme Dey, on approval of the draft Valuation (Postponement of Revaluation) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Order 2020, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 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)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Ind)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)

Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

masks and observe social distancing and the one-way systems around the building when they leave the chamber.

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S5M-23563, in the name of Graeme Dey, on the draft Valuation (Postponement of Revaluation) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Order 2020, is: For 65, Against 34, Abstentions 22.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Valuation (Postponement of Revaluation) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Order 2020 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-23557, in the name of Graeme Dey, on approval of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2020, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/374) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: If no member objects, I propose to ask a single question on six Parliamentary Bureau motions.

There being no objections, the question is, that motions S5M-23561, S5M-23558, S5M-23560, S5M-23562, S5M-23555 and S5M-23556, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Parliament (Elections etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Order 2020 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 23) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/378) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the International Organisations (Immunities and Privileges) (Scotland) Revocation Order 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the UEFA European Championship (Trading and Advertising) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament, under rule 12.1A.6, agrees that the time period specified in motion S5M-21129 be further varied to 7 December 2020.

That the Parliament agrees that Rhoda Grant be appointed to replace James Kelly as a member of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. We will move shortly to members' business; there will be a short pause while members change seats. I encourage all members to wear their

International Whole Grain Day

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-23347, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, on recognising the importance of whole grains on international whole grain day. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament acknowledges International Whole Grain Day, which takes place on 19 November 2020; notes that whole grain consumption has a positive impact on nutrition, wellbeing, sustainability and has a proven role in reducing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and cancer; understands that, according to the Scottish Government, current fibre intakes in Scotland are sitting at an average of 16 grams per day and would have to nearly double to meet the recommended dietary guideline of 30 grams per day; believes that wholegrain foods have an important part to play in helping people achieve the 30g goal for daily fibre intake; notes calls for public awareness campaigns on the benefits of whole grains, the need for an agreed definition on what should be considered whole grain foods, and for front of pack labelling schemes to recognise fibre, and considers Whole Grain Day an excellent opportunity to encourage healthier eating habits and create dialogue around how eating habits can improve lives.

18:41

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): International whole grain day takes place on 19 November each year. Yes, we are a wee bit late with our debate—but it is still an important topic. The annual celebration seeks to raise awareness of the health and environmental benefits of whole grain. This year is only its second in existence, so it is my great pleasure to bring the topic to Parliament, I think for the first time. I thank colleagues from all political parties for their support.

I am very happy to celebrate whole grains. In fact, I regularly do, whether it is with a warm bowl of oats, which I have every single morning of my life, a crisp slice of wholegrain toast, which I have a little less regularly, and even some tasty wholegrain pasta, which might be my tea tonight.

As colleagues know, it is not hard for me to find something that I can be enthusiastic about eating—but in moderation, of course, in order to contain my circumference within appropriate bounds. Is not the point that whole grains have an important role to play in keeping us all healthy?

What is whole grain and how does it contribute to keeping us healthy? It is a grain that has not been refined—it is the entire seed of the plant. Thus intact, perhaps as nature intended, it maintains a richer nutrient profile and contains higher levels of fibre, which is particularly good for

the bowels—if that is a permitted word in the debate, Presiding Officer.

The potential health impacts are significant. The World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations identify low intake of whole grains as the leading dietary risk factor in the majority of WHO regions. Therefore, it is particularly worrying that Scotland's consumption of whole grains remains low.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Stewart Stevenson: He certainly will, and with great pleasure.

Elaine Smith: Will Stewart Stevenson join with me in assuring people who are listening to the debate that they can also have gluten-free wholegrain products?

Stewart Stevenson: Elaine Smith is absolutely correct. I know how important gluten-free food is for many people. In my previous professional life, I worked with a number of people for whom it was important, and one of my current staff members must eat gluten-free food. The member has made an important point.

The WHO talks about eating 25g to 29g of dietary fibre daily. Doing so can lead to a 15 per cent to 30 per cent decrease in cardiovascular-related mortality, incidence of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and colorectal cancer. However, the potential health benefits go significantly beyond that. Wholegrain carbohydrates tend to be released more slowly, which makes them a great source of fuel and promotes satiety after eating, which means that one feels full for longer, which prevents one from snacking. That all helps to promote healthier eating and healthier living. What is more, grains currently account for almost 50 per cent of all the calories that are consumed globally. Therefore, consuming whole grains would involve a shift only in how we consume, not in what we consume.

In a wider context, our eating habits can play a role in our healthcare system. Improving our eating habits can lead to major relief for the system, which proves—as is often the case—that many preventative measures are in our own hands, through our diet.

Exercising regularly, eating healthily and other factors can help us to reduce stress, which is particularly important at the moment, when we are more socially isolated, and therefore under more mental pressure.

Whole grains can also help with sustainability, because wholegrain foods save water. Whole grains provide more food, produce less waste, and support better land use and healthier soil. They are healthy for us all, and for the planet.

There are answers to the question of how we can encourage people to eat more whole grains. A great example of how to do so is Denmark. My Danish nephew is headmaster of a school there, so I know that its Government has worked with industry and health organisations to promote whole grains. Those partners developed a scientific recommendation for the average daily intake of whole grains, as well as a new wholegrain food logo to signal products to consumers, which also guarantees the quality of products that are so marked.

Consumer awareness campaigns, with the involvement of athletes and celebrities, have made a significant contribution. The average wholegrain intake in Denmark has increased from 36g to 82g per day, and 50 per cent of the public meet the recommended intake, compared with 11 years ago, when only 6 per cent did so. Denmark is a country that is not dissimilar to our own, so it can be done. In Denmark, in 2009, 150 products carried the logo—today, more than 1,000 products do so. Seventy-one per cent of the Danish population recognise what the logo means, and 53 per cent look for the logo when making purchases. Other countries can teach us things that we might copy.

As part of reducing pressure on our health service, we need to innovate. Whole grains are one contributor to how we might do so, and the debate is a chance to consider how we might enhance their value. We should think about developing an accepted definition of wholegrain foods that would apply in Scotland, and we should consider our quantitative intake recommendations, public health campaigns, labelling and how we encourage people to choose whole grains.

It is worth saying that, hundreds of years ago, students would go to university with a sack of oats over their shoulder. The oats fed the student for an entire term—they did not eat anything else, because they could not afford to—and kept them going for that entire term without any great difficulty.

Presiding Officer, whole grains are where it's at.

18:49

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I declare an interest as a partner in the farming business of J Halcro-Johnston and Sons.

I am probably the last person who should lecture anyone about the benefits of whole grains, but the debate is important. This is not the first time that dietary issues have been raised in the chamber. They have been raised with some justification; Scotland's diet has been a key focus

of public health efforts since before the creation of the Parliament.

There is a role for Government and, particularly, for public health bodies in encouraging positive change in what we, as a society, eat. We know all too well the health outcomes of poor diet and the problems that it, along with other issues, has caused in Scotland. One significant element is the gap that exists between Scotland's life expectancy and healthy life figures, and those in other parts of the United Kingdom.

There can be little doubt that diet and nutrition remain key challenges for our national health service and healthcare authorities, with poor nutrition causing a wide range of avoidable problems for the medical profession to fix, but progress can and must be made. That is not to ignore the significant interventions that have been made in the past. There have been many that we can look to build on, and others that we can continue to learn from.

When we speak about whole grains, my mind, in my role as my party's economy spokesman, turns to Scotland's more than 400,000 hectares of cereal crops, which are a key part of our agricultural sector. On our own doorstep, we can see production of a range of wholegrain foods and other sources of fibre, including fruit, vegetables, peas and beans. I mention that because people are increasingly interested in the farm-to-fork journey of their food. While meat, milk, fruit and vegetables might immediately come to mind when we are discussing locally sourced produce, it is worth considering the broader range of what we grow domestically at high quality and, potentially, with reduced food mileage.

I touched on the role of public health bodies in improving Scotland's relationship with food. Raising fibre intake has formed a key part of the Scottish dietary goals that are promoted by Food Standards Scotland. In turn, those goals are informed by the impressive scientific advisory committee on nutrition—a body that works with health authorities across the UK. Properly, those are the kinds of goals that should flow down through public bodies and inform a range of Government work around diet.

Issues include the clarity and accessibility of dietary advice. A key problem facing public health bodies has been the vast mix of information on nutrition that is available. To many people, it can feel like a flood of apparently contradictory messages and worries that can cloud the basic messages that are so important. It is therefore important that the Government works with bodies such as the British Heart Foundation and diabetes charities that have taken significant steps in championing consumption of whole grains.

Nowhere are those messages more important than when we are dealing with children and young people. As a former shadow minister for education, I have seen some of the efforts that have been made to improve nutrition in educational settings. In many schools, the process has started in their own kitchens, and real changes have been made in the food that they offer; gone are the fizzy drinks and bleached white bread of the past. We must hope for nothing less than a generational shift. Getting habits right early can make a significant difference to a young person's health outcomes, whereas getting things wrong can have an effect that lingers long into adulthood. We have also heard about the effect of poor nutrition on education itself; it is no secret that a balanced diet helps pupils to learn.

The evidence shows that whole grains are an important part of a healthy diet. There is still much more to be done to promote wholegrain foods, whether through public health bodies, in schools, or as a part of broader food strategy.

I welcome Stewart Stevenson's recognition of the wholegrain food sector. It should rightly feature strongly in the Scottish Government's nutritional advice and campaigns, and it is right that the importance of fibre intake be widely recognised.

18:53

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and congratulate my friend and colleague Stewart Stevenson on securing it. Whole grains have been a dietary staple for the bulk of the world's populations since the dawn of human civilisation. The history of whole grains is really interesting to read about but, in the interests of time, I cannae go intae it in too much detail right now.

I will, however, add a wee historical piece about whole grains. The New Abbey corn mill in Dumfries and Galloway has a colourful history when it comes to whole grains. The three-storey, whitewashed mill building was built towards the end of the 18th century by the Stewarts of nearby Shambellie house. However, it is thought that the site dates to much earlier than that, perhaps to as early as the late 13th century, when Cistercian monks established the monastery Dulce Cor, or Sweetheart abbey, at the far end of the village. The mill is known locally as the Monk's mill, and it provided whole grain to the surrounding townships of Dumfries, Annan and Kirkcudbright. It can still be viewed in working order today and, as always, I encourage everyone to come and see what Dumfries and Galloway has to offer, when it is safe to do so.

In Scotland, 459,400 hectares of cereals and oilseeds were grown in 2018. That consisted of

mostly spring and winter barley. We also grow a large amount of wheat, oats and oilseed rape as well as a smaller amount of rye. More than 12 per cent of the UK's cereal is grown in Scotland. As well as providing nourishment for millennia, whole grains play their part in public health. Scotland's dietary fibre intake is currently below the recommended daily amount despite the proven health benefits of whole grains. The evidence shows that whole grains lower the risk of being overweight or obese and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, stroke and bowel cancer.

In particular, I want to mention oats, which we are very familiar with here in Scotland. In his poem "The Cotter's Saturday Night", Robert Burns talked about

"The halesome parritch, chief o Scotia's food".

Oats are among the healthiest greens on earth. As Elaine Smith pointed out during Stewart Stevenson's speech, oats are gluten free. Oats are loaded with important vitamins and minerals and are rich in antioxidants including avenanthramides, which can help to lower blood pressure by increasing the production of nitric oxide; that gas molecule helps dilate blood vessels and leads to better blood flow. Oats contain large amounts of beta glucan, which is a type of soluble fibre. Beta glucan partially dissolves in water and forms a thick gel-like solution in the gut. The health benefits of beta glucan fibre include reduced low-density lipoprotein and total cholesterol levels, reduced blood sugar and insulin response, increased feeling of fullness and increased growth of good bacteria in the digestive tract. Our grannies were right: we should be eating our parritch every morning.

Although the evidence clearly shows the health benefits of whole grain, there is currently no official advice on the amount of whole grains that we should eat. Experts recommend consuming at least three servings of whole grains every day. It is easy to eat whole grains. We can choose wholegrain bread, wholegrain rice and wholegrain pasta. We can switch from white flour to whole grain and here in Scotland we can also choose excellent oatmeal. Parritch oats, oat bars and popcorn are all excellent wholegrain snacks. Before today, I had less knowledge about whole grains. I now know more about bulgur, rice, corn, oats, farro, teff, sorghum, quinoa, buckwheat and spelt. Can the minister outline whether the Government has any plans to consider advice on daily intake of whole grains for the people of Scotland?

18:57

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank Stewart Stevenson for lodging this motion on an important matter of public health. The old adage that you are what you eat is very true. For example, my personal health and interest in thyroid disorders has shown me that a gluten-free diet can make a big difference to general health and wellbeing and, as we have heard, many whole grains are gluten free, with others available as gluten-free products. Reinforcing the message that a healthy diet is important to all of us is particularly pertinent given that this year has been one of ill health for many people.

Colleagues may know that I am currently working on introducing a right to food bill, which seeks to enshrine the right to food in Scots law. The proposal would seek to place duties on the Government to ensure that, now and into the future, food is accessible to people financially and geographically and that it is adequate in terms of nutrition, safety and cultural appropriateness. The awareness raising around international whole grain day, marked on 19 November, seems to be very much part of the growing recognition that we must join up the campaign against food insecurity with a campaign against malnutrition and for making nutritious food affordable and available to all.

In its 2020 “State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report”, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN stated:

“It is unacceptable that, in a world that produces enough food to feed its entire population, more than 1.5 billion people cannot afford a diet that meets the required levels of essential nutrients and over 3 billion people cannot even afford the cheapest healthy diet. People without access to healthy diets live in all regions of the world; thus, we are facing a global problem that affects us all.”

Sadly, it notes in the same report that, five years after the world committed to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, we are still off track for achieving that objective by 2030.

Backing up the importance of the wholegrain content in what we eat, the FAO suggests that consuming 50g of whole grains per day is associated with a

“19 to 24 per cent reduction in all-cause mortality amongst adults”.

That is a huge impact, which certainly must be highlighted.

However, perhaps even more importantly, across the 21 different regions included in the study, low wholegrain intake was identified as the

“greatest risk factor for death and loss of disability-adjusted life years, with intakes less than 50 grams risking 3 million deaths.”

Those are stark figures.

One obstacle to wholegrain consumption is a lack of consistency around the definition of wholegrain foods, even across the EU, where—surprisingly—there is no clear legislation regarding labelling. Stewart Stevenson identified that as an important issue in his opening speech.

The most recent dietary guidelines provided by the WHO and other international food and nutrition authorities recommend that half our daily intake of grains should come from whole grains, a point that Emma Harper made earlier. However—what are whole grains, what are their health benefits, and where can they be found? Stewart Stevenson enlightened us on those questions in his usual inimitable way. I also must admit that, when researching for this speech, I discovered that popcorn is a wholegrain food, which Emma Harper mentioned in passing. More than that, it is a high-quality carbohydrate source that, consumed naturally, is not only low in calories and cholesterol but a good source of fibre and essential vitamins, including folate, niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, pantothenic acid and vitamins B6, A, E and K.

Emma Harper: The member mentioned popcorn. I am curious as to whether she prefers hers with salt or butter?

Elaine Smith: That is a very unfair question, but I would probably have to go with butter. Given the content of the debate, we maybe need to rethink that.

One serving of popcorn in fact contains about 8 per cent of the daily iron requirement, with lesser amounts of calcium, copper, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. While I was writing that, I thought, “I am beginning to sound like Stewart Stevenson”. [Laughter.]

Of course, a big obstacle to nutritious food is affordability. We need to look at food systems, support our small-scale producers to get their foods to market at low cost, support our farmers to respect the environment, and ensure that nobody is denied a healthy diet because of high prices. Jamie Halcro Johnston touched on those issues. The challenge is even greater because the most vulnerable groups are those most impacted by the economic consequences of the pandemic. During the pandemic, many new food aid networks have grown and existing ones have expanded, and they deserve our thanks.

As part of the consultation on my proposed right to food bill, I was privileged to hear about many projects that are tackling hunger and malnutrition and taking an innovative approach to food supply. There is no doubt that increasing the consumption of whole grains can play its part on our road towards becoming a good food nation, improving nutrition, and tackling our ill health record. I look forward to hearing how the minister might help

with that and, once again, I thank Stewart Stevenson.

19:03

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): I thank Stewart Stevenson for the opportunity that we have had to mark the recent international whole grain day which, as he said, was established last year to raise awareness of whole grains and their role in healthy sustainable diets. We have also had the opportunity to debate improving Scotland's diet, including by increasing the consumption of fibre.

As wholegrain foods contribute to fibre intake, they form an important part of working towards our dietary goals for fibre. I enjoyed the contributions from across the chamber. Elaine Smith talked, among other things, about the benefits of popcorn. I use an almost dry fryer to make my popcorn and I pop it with chillies so that I do not need to add salt or butter. It is therefore really healthy and really tasty.

Emma Harper and Stewart Stevenson talked about the benefits of porridge. Emma talked in great detail about the benefits of oats in general, and she also mentioned barley, which is a bit of an enigma. Although most grains have most of their fibre only on the outside, meaning that it is important that we have them in as unrefined and as whole a form as possible, barley has its fibre all the way through. Therefore, even the most processed pearl barley—although it is clearly not as good as pot or other less-refined barleys—has a high proportion of fibre throughout. It is a very underrated grain. Many people think that barley is just for putting in soup or maybe strew, but I encourage anyone who is looking to get a bit of variety into their diet to consider trying barley—preferably pot barley, as it has a bit more fibre—as a substitute for rice. It is very tasty, and it is easy to cook, as it does not stick together. It therefore has loads of benefits as well as being a very healthy Scottish grain.

My ambition is a Scotland where we all eat well, have a healthy weight and are physically active. As part of that, we have set an ambition to halve childhood obesity by 2030 and to significantly reduce diet-related health inequalities. Our 2018 diet and healthy weight delivery plan sets out a broad range of decisive actions to help realise our vision. I am in no doubt about the scale of the challenge.

At a population level, poor diet is measured by the extent to which we as a nation are meeting Scotland's dietary goals. Those goals provide the basis for a healthy, balanced diet that can reduce diet-related conditions—including type 2 diabetes,

cardiovascular disease and cancers—and improve dental health.

In its 2020 update to the situation report "The Scottish Diet—It needs to change", Food Standards Scotland makes clear that we are consistently failing to meet our dietary goals. As Stewart Stevenson set out, we are also far from meeting our goal on fibre. The current average fibre intake is around 16g per day, so there is much to be done to meet the fibre intake goal of 30g a day.

Emma Harper asked about advice on eating whole grains. Our "Eatwell Guide" shows the type of diet that we need to have in order for Scotland to meet its dietary goals. The guide recommends that people choose high-fibre, wholegrain varieties of starchy foods wherever possible.

As Stewart Stevenson pointed out, although whole grains usefully contribute to a healthy diet, it is also important to consider the overall balance of the diet. We should not increase whole grains at the expense of increased sugar and salt intakes. If we want to have salt on our popcorn, we therefore need to ensure that we are getting that balance right. Other components of a healthy, balanced diet—such as fruit and vegetables—also contribute to our intake of fibre and other micronutrients.

Stewart Stevenson also talked about what the Danish Government has done in this area. As members would expect, I have several pages of detail on what Denmark has done, all of which is informing our work. I will talk about some of the actions that we are taking to improve fibre intake in Scotland. Jamie Halcro Johnston talked about nutrition in education, and our school food and drink regulations have been revised to reflect the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, including its recommendation on fibre. The revised school food and drink regulations are intended to be implemented next April, and include a number of food-based standards that have been developed to increase fibre intake. For example, new standards have been created for breakfast cereals and bread that stipulate that, when provided, those products must have a minimum fibre content of 3g per 100g. We all know that the easiest way to achieve that is to use whole grains in their constitution.

Mr Halcro Johnston also talked about nutritional information and labelling. A four-nations consultation paper was published in July this year that asked a range of questions, including whether front-of-pack nutrition labels should reflect the latest dietary advice on fibre. That is a good example of how we can work together with the other Administrations across the UK. The

consultation recently closed, and we will continue to work together in considering our next steps.

Our principal means of raising awareness of healthier eating among families is through the Parent Club. Our parental audience marketing strategy joins up all the Scottish Government communications for parents and families, and it encourages healthier eating and exercise in a way that highlights the immediate benefits for parents as well as children by providing ideas and tips for common daily parenting challenges.

Increasing fibre intake is very important for the weight management standards and education elements of our type 2 diabetes prevention programmes.

One more positive aspect of the changed behaviours resulting from the Covid-19 lockdown has been more cooking at home. I am keen to retain such positive changes, so we have agreed to allocate an additional £30,000 this financial year under the healthy living programme for our cooking at home campaign. The healthy living programme is administered by the Scottish Grocers Federation in supporting independent retailers to offer healthier choices. We all know that members of the Scottish Grocers Federation tend to be situated in the more deprived parts of our communities—it is a very important partnership.

I absolutely recognise that there is much more for us to do. I hope that I have shown that we are taking a number of actions, although there is much more to do in order to meet our dietary goals, including in relation to fibre intake, which is far too low, as we have discussed. I welcome the opportunity that the debate has provided for us to discuss the issue in general but also for me to lay out some of the actions that the Scottish Government is taking to improve Scotland's diet in relation to fibre and more generally.

I again thank Stewart Stevenson for lodging the motion and other members for their contributions this evening.

Meeting closed at 19:11.

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

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