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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 3 February 2021

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 12:30]

First Minister's Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. We begin with First Minister's question time but, before we turn to the questions, the First Minister will update us with a short statement on Covid.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Before I give an update on today's statistics, I will take this opportunity to express my sadness at the death yesterday of Captain Sir Tom Moore. During the toughest of times, he inspired millions of people and, of course, he also raised millions of pounds for the national health service. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all of us when I say that our thoughts and condolences are with his family and friends.

A total of 978 new cases were reported yesterday, which is 5.1 per cent of all the tests that were carried out. The total number of cases, therefore, now stands at 182,269. There are currently 1,871 people in hospital, which represents a decrease of 63 since yesterday, and 128 people are in intensive care, which is 12 fewer than yesterday. However, I regret to report that, in the past 24 hours, a further 88 deaths were registered of patients who first tested positive in the previous 28 days, and the total number of people who have died under that daily measurement is now 6,269.

National Records of Scotland has just published its weekly update, which includes cases where Covid is a suspected or contributory cause of death, and today's update shows that, by Sunday, the total number of registered deaths linked to Covid under the wider definition was 8,347. Some 440 of those deaths were registered last week, which is 12 fewer than in the previous week. Of those deaths, 301 occurred in hospitals, 97 in care homes, 38 at home or in other non-institutional settings and four in other institutions. Yet again, I send my condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one during the pandemic.

I can also report that, as of 8.30 this morning, 649,262 people had received their first dose of vaccine. That is an increase of 38,484 since the figure that was reported yesterday. That is the highest daily total so far and is 59 per cent up on the same day last week.

As I said yesterday, the total figure includes 98 per cent of residents in older people's care homes who have not just been offered the vaccine but have been vaccinated with the first dose. In addition, 87 per cent of people aged over 80 living in the community have also now had the first dose. That figure is based on our original estimate of the number of over-80s but, as I said yesterday, work that is being done with health boards to refine that estimate suggests that that percentage might now be higher. I can report that, as of this morning, 20 per cent of people aged 75 to 79 have also had the first dose.

I thank everyone who is working across the country to get people vaccinated as quickly as possible, and also the public for the quite extraordinary uptake so far.

Finally, there is one other issue that I want to draw briefly to Parliament's attention. The independent review of adult social care has just published its report, and I thank the chair, Derek Feeley, and the advisory panel of experts for their work over the past five months. I also thank everyone who took the time to share their experiences. Today's final report covers all aspects of adult social care services and, among its 53 recommendations, it calls for the creation of a national care service. The Government will respond to its recommendations in due course, and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport has requested a parliamentary debate on the report later this month. The pandemic has shown us more starkly than ever before just how much our care services matter, and the review's report provides us with a basis for significantly improving those services and, of course, is a vital first step towards the creation of a national care service.

I will conclude with a reiteration of the key ask of all of us right now: please stay at home, except for essential purposes. Staying at home remains essential to getting and keeping the virus under control as we vaccinate more and more people. The sacrifices that are being asked of everyone are hard, but they are working, so please stick with it. Remember FACTS when you are out but, unless it is essential to be out of your home, stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

The Presiding Officer: The First Minister will now take questions. Members who wish to ask a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button early.

Vaccination Programme

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): I associate myself and my party with the sentiments that the First Minister expressed regarding the death of Captain Sir Tom Moore. The word "hero" is overused, but he definitely was one, and our thoughts are with his family.

The Government has finally accepted that Scotland's vaccine roll-out is lagging behind the rest of the United Kingdom's and that the pace needs to be picked up. Yesterday, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, Jeane Freeman, told Parliament that we need to vaccinate faster in Scotland than we have been doing.

It is in all our interests that the programme works well, so let us focus on what the First Minister is going to do to accelerate it. For consecutive weeks, numbers of vaccinations have dropped substantially on Sundays, which is at risk of becoming a consistent pattern. A seven-day service was promised, and will be essential if we are to meet targets. Has the First Minister identified what the problem is on Sundays, and can she tell Parliament what has been done since last Sunday to make sure that the situation improves this coming weekend?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I will come on to seven-day working in a second. I say first that, as I set out yesterday, the Scottish Government approach deliberately concentrated on vaccinating the most clinically vulnerable groups first, and on achieving the highest possible uptake in those groups. Ninety-eight per cent of older residents in care homes have now been vaccinated with their first dose, as have 87 per cent—although we think that the figure is probably now above 90 per cent—of over-80s who live in the community. That is really important, because that is how to make the quickest impact on reducing serious illness and the number of people who are dying.

On the radio this morning, I heard Michael Gove not being able, or willing, to give a figure for how many residents in care homes in England have been vaccinated, as opposed to having been offered the vaccine. That is a deliberate choice that the UK Government has made. It is a legitimate choice to focus first on overall numbers, but if that is at the expense of uptake in the groups that are most clinically vulnerable, it is not a choice that I would want the Scottish Government to make.

However, as we see in the figures yesterday and today, we are accelerating the programme for younger age groups in the wider community. The figure that I reported yesterday was 55 per cent higher than that for the previous Monday. The figure that I am reporting today, which is the figure for yesterday—Tuesday—is 59 per cent higher than the figure for Tuesday last week was. Our figure yesterday was proportionally 28 per cent higher than the figure for vaccinations that were done yesterday in England. Therefore, we can already see acceleration; it is our job to make sure that that continues.

The health secretary and the vaccination team have been working to ensure that capacity is fully utilised every day of the week, including Sundays. This afternoon, I will meet the chief executives of health boards to hear from them the steps that they have taken to ensure that the overall pace is accelerating in the wider community, and that there is consistent performance seven days a week.

The vaccination programme is going well because of the efforts of people across the country, but also because of the public's willingness to come forward in huge numbers to be vaccinated. I am very grateful to them for that.

Ruth Davidson: We have also heard from the health secretary that there is evidence that some parts of the country are getting the vaccine faster than others. A month ago, we raised concerns that a postcode lottery was possible, unless local data was published to help to identify and address problems as soon as they emerge.

Currently, the data that is being published by health boards varies wildly; some boards update weekly, some update in arrears, some appear not to publish at all and others update their websites every few days. There is a simple way to help to restore public confidence that the speed of roll-out will eventually catch up in every part of the country. Four weeks on, will the First Minister now commit to publishing daily breakdowns for each health board area?

The First Minister: Yes, we will do that when we can ensure that it can be done robustly. If I am getting it wrong, I will be the first to concede that, but I think that I can say without fear of contradiction that the Scottish Government already publishes daily data that is much more detailed than that which is published in other parts of the UK. I can stand here and give the figures, not weekly but daily, for how many people in our care homes, in the over-80s group and in the 75 to 79 age group have been vaccinated. We will continue to develop that, as the vaccination programme works down through the age groups.

I will go back to a point that I made earlier; I make it only because UK Government ministers have been critical of the Scottish Government. Michael Gove could not, or would not, give the equivalent figures on how many older people in care homes in England have been vaccinated. It is important to know how many people have been offered a vaccination, but I suggest that it is much, much, much more important to know how many people have been given the vaccination. We already publish daily information on different groups of the population; information with such detail is not being published elsewhere.

We will, as we have always said we would, provide much more granular breakdowns, including geographic breakdowns, when we are in a position to ensure that the data is robust for publication.

Ruth Davidson: I thank the First Minister for agreeing to publish daily the data by health board area, which I asked for four weeks ago. That will help us to track exactly where the hold-ups are in the country.

Looking at the issue nationally, I think that the whole country will have been delighted that more mass vaccination centres have begun to operate this week. The Scottish Government's vaccination plan, which was published three weeks ago, states that six mass vaccination sites will be

"capable of administering in excess of 20,000 vaccinations per week each".

People understand that it will take time to get up to that level. It is projected that the event complex Aberdeen—TECA—will administer 6,000 vaccinations this week. When are all six sites due to hit the target of 20,000 per week? Does the First Minister believe that the six mass vaccination centres, along with the community vaccination sites, are enough, or is there an opportunity to provide more, as we attempt to speed up the programme?

The First Minister: First, I note that I have not just agreed to publish daily figures on the regional breakdown. Perhaps Ruth Davidson did not hear me or was not paying attention, but I have been saying all along that we will publish more figures daily, when we are able to do so robustly. I have also said—I do not think that this is unreasonable—that we will ensure that, overall, we do not put too great a burden on people to collect and publish data, so that they can get on with the job of vaccinating people, which is the most important thing of all.

On mass vaccination centres, there are a number of centres across the country, in addition to the Edinburgh international conference centre and TECA, which have come on stream this week, and NHS Louisa Jordan, which has been operating for a couple of weeks. Given the geographies of towns and villages in our country, those centres are not all at the scale of TECA and the EICC, but they are vaccinating people daily. We will open bigger centres as and when supply allows such throughput.

The vaccination programme is flowing well. We have been candid and have always said that we would, as we reached the uptake figures in the most clinically vulnerable groups, accelerate progress in the wider groups. Let us focus on the numbers that I have given over the past two days. Yesterday's figure was a record high; it was 55 per

cent higher than the figure for the corresponding day in the previous week and 28 per cent higher, proportionally, than the figure for vaccinations that were carried out in England. Today's figure is another record high; it is 59 per cent higher than the figure for the corresponding day last week. I do not yet know England's figure for today.

We are on track to vaccinate everybody in the over-70s group and everybody in the clinically extremely vulnerable group by the middle of February. We have, by any objective standard, exceeded what anybody thought would be decent uptake among the over-80s. We set the target of achieving it this Friday, but we have probably already reached more than 90 per cent of over-80s in the community.

The programme is going well; it is going well because of the huge efforts of the health secretary and the team in Government with which she works, and of vaccinators the length and breadth of the country.

Ruth Davidson: I thank the First Minister for that answer, but it would be good to hear when the six sites are projected to reach 20,000 vaccinations per week, as was promised.

Yesterday, I asked the First Minister whether she would accept further help from the armed forces, which has been offered to aid Scotland's Covid response. She did not answer, but as she sat down she suggested that she would cover the issue later, but did not do so. Since then, the Secretary of State for Scotland has written to offer the support of the UK Government and UK health bodies, so I ask the First Minister again: will she accept further military assistance—[*Interruption.*] I am not quite sure why that is getting such a derisive response from members in a seated position—[*Interruption.*] I think that the people of Scotland would like to hear whether the First Minister will accept further military assistance and the mutual aid that the UK Government has offered, in order to catch Scotland's vaccination programme up with those of the other parts of the UK.

The First Minister: The really good progress that has been made in our vaccination programme seems, for some reason that I cannot understand, to be irritating Ruth Davidson today. I would have thought that it would be great news for the country.

We are already drawing on assistance from the armed forces, as we have been doing throughout the pandemic. There was a period last year when representatives of our armed forces were based in St Andrew's house with the rest of the team, and I am hugely grateful to them.

However, I point out that help that the armed forces give Scotland, whether it is on vaccines or—as was the case earlier—on personal

protective equipment and the logistics associated with setting up NHS Louisa Jordan, is not a favour from the Secretary of State for Scotland. They are our armed forces, too, which the people of Scotland pay for through taxes, so let us forget the suggestion that the UK Government is somehow doing Scotland a favour. We will continue to draw, as appropriate, on the help of the armed forces. Again, I take the opportunity, as I did a moment ago, to thank them.

The vaccination programme is making good progress, and my job and the job of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport is to ensure that that continues. Of course, we will continue, as we draw on lessons from elsewhere in the UK—which we have never shied away from doing—to share our experience of having lower infection rates and making good progress in suppressing the infection. We will continue to work with others to ensure that, collectively, we get through the pandemic as safely and quickly as possible.

Vaccination (Over-70s)

2. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I, too, send my condolences to the family of Captain Sir Tom Moore and to all those families who have lost loved ones.

Progress with the vaccination programme is always welcome, but some people in earlier priority groups are being left waiting for their first dose while vaccinations proceed for over-65s in places such as Glasgow, Dumfries and Galloway, and Lothian. One example is Kate, who lives in Fife and is 96. She lives in her own home and has carers in four times a day, but she has not received a vaccination invite. Her family do not live close by and she is unable to contact the general practitioner herself because she has dementia.

Also in Fife are Margaret and Bill. Both are over 70 and Margaret has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, but they, too, have yet to receive a vaccination invite. Their GP has no information, as the practice is not administering the current tranche of vaccines.

Last Friday, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport said that all over-70s would have their appointment by the end of the week. When that did not happen, people started to worry. Can the First Minister explain what has gone wrong to leave people such as Kate, Margaret and Bill in the dark?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Nothing is going wrong. I will say two things. Any MSP on any side of the chamber who has individual cases of people not getting a letter should pass those on.

Perhaps Jackie Baillie might want to turn her mobile phone off while I answer her question.

MSPs should pass those details on, and we will look into them. Anyone who is in a priority group and who is worried about not having had an appointment yet can contact the vaccination helpline. I think that the information has already been given to all MSPs, but I repeat it for the benefit of people watching. If anyone is worried about their appointment or not having had their letter yet, they can phone the helpline on 0800 030 8013.

The letters for the 70-plus age group and those in the clinically extremely vulnerable group will go out by the end of this week. Most will already have had them or will be getting them as we speak. All of that group will be vaccinated with the first dose by the middle of February.

I wondered how long it would take for MSPs in the Opposition parties to start to criticise this. In order to vaccinate faster, some health boards are grouping those in the 65 to 69-year-old age group in with the over-70s. They are not waiting to vaccinate them sequentially—they are doing them all as one group. There will therefore be cases in which somebody in that age group is vaccinated a few days before somebody in the older age group, but the over-70s will all be done by the target date, and we are on track to meet that.

Jackie Baillie: It is not a criticism. It is about the lack of information that is causing confusion out in our local communities. I will not be alone. My inbox is full of similar cases to the ones in Fife that I described. Those examples are not one-offs but part of a growing postcode lottery in vaccine roll-out that is slowing Scotland's recovery from Covid.

The weekly Public Health Scotland figures show huge variation across the country in the proportion of the population receiving the vaccine. Some parts of mainland Scotland, such as Moray and Angus, have vaccination levels of more than 10 and 13 per cent, but areas where the virus levels have been persistently high, such as Glasgow, Ayrshire and Lanarkshire, have only reached levels between 6 and 8 per cent. Meanwhile, Edinburgh is lagging far behind, with only 5 per cent of its population receiving a first dose.

The figures published today have had the percentages removed, so we cannot easily monitor progress. Whether that is a deliberate lack of transparency or a genuine error, it is not acceptable that people are penalised by their postcode when it comes to vaccination. What is the First Minister doing to fix that?

The First Minister: People are not being penalised because of where they live. There will be differences in speed because of geographies and how different health boards are organising the programme to take account of the differences between urban and rural areas and the different

sizes of communities, but all health boards are making progress. As I think I said earlier, I will be meeting the chief executives of all health boards this afternoon to make sure that they all have plans in place to allow them to make fast but steady progress through the programme, which is a matter of daily monitoring.

On transparency, as I said to Ruth Davidson, we are publishing more daily information with greater breakdowns than any other part of the United Kingdom is and we will continue to supplement that as we go along. I readily say, as I did yesterday, that I welcome the scrutiny and pressure from Parliament on vaccination, because it is important that we go as fast as we can to protect as many people as possible.

On information, we set up the helpline for which I gave the number a moment ago so that there is a point of contact. I get lots of emails about vaccination, as I am sure other members do. We address any concerns in those but, increasingly, the emails that I get each day are from people who say, "I have had my vaccination and I am really pleased about it."

There is lots to do and there are lots of people yet to vaccinate, both in the 70 to 80 age group and as we get into the younger age groups. However, we can see from the figures for this week that, having achieved high uptake rates in the most vulnerable groups, the programme is accelerating through the other groups as well. We will keep an absolute focus on making sure that that continues.

Jackie Baillie: I welcome the acceleration of the programme, but people across Scotland expect to be treated equally, not to have their chance to have a vaccination determined by where they live. It is becoming harder to work out how the Scottish Government measures success in the vaccination programme. Our roll-out is much slower than those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The First Minister says, rightly, that it is not a competition between nations, but it is a race against the virus and we are not going fast enough.

The First Minister says that we are following the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation priority list, but in different parts of the country there is a postcode lottery. That is not the fault the vaccinators. They are doing a tremendous job. However, general practitioners tell me that they are simply not getting enough supply and that supplies are erratic.

Even by the First Minister's own promises, we are falling behind. First, it was 1 million vaccinations by the end of January, but there have been fewer than 600,000. Then it was all adults over 18 by spring; now it is for just the over-50s by

May. We were told that the vaccination programme was ramping up, but on Sunday we recorded our lowest daily rate so far. For the First Minister to meet her next promise of vaccinating all over-70s and the clinically vulnerable by 15 February, our daily rate needs to increase immediately to at least 40,000. Does the First Minister expect her latest target to be met, or will it be her latest broken promise?

The First Minister: Yes, I expect the target to be met, because the target that we have been working to for the past couple of weeks for the over-80s has been exceeded, not just met, by the target date. It is interesting. I have said before and say again that I welcome the scrutiny, but Opposition parties could occasionally try to hide the fact that they are obviously deeply irritated at the fact that the programme has been accelerating. It is perfectly legitimate to mention Sunday, but today we have reported the highest total of vaccinations in the whole programme so far and there is not a lot of mention of that.

Jackie Baillie asked me how we measure success in the programme. Here is one indicator: 98 per cent of the most clinically vulnerable people in the whole country—older people in care homes—have already been vaccinated in Scotland. In addition, 90 per cent or thereabouts of the next most vulnerable group—the over-80s—have already been vaccinated with the first dose of the vaccine. I cannot tell Jackie Baillie what the figures are in England for those groups because, to the best of my knowledge, they are not being published on a daily basis and Michael Gove could not tell us what they were when he was interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland this morning.

That is a measure of success. Why is it a measure of success? We had good news yesterday in the early indications about the impact of the Oxford vaccine on transmission, but what we know most about the vaccines right now is that they have a positive impact on suppressing the illness and death figures. Why does it matter that we have such a high uptake among those elderly groups? Because it is the people in those groups who are most likely to become seriously ill and die. The way we have done the vaccination is the way to save the maximum number of lives most quickly, which I think is very important, and now we are accelerating progress in the other groups.

Jackie Baillie talked about things that the health secretary said in November. Yes, she said those things in November, but in November we did not even have an authorised vaccine for use, so we were estimating. However, we are now working on actual supplies and predictions of supplies to get the vaccine into the arms of as many people as quickly as possible. Vaccinators across the country and the team in the Government working

on vaccination are doing an excellent job, and we should all back them 100 per cent to get on with it

Vaccination (Vulnerable Teachers)

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): We all know how important it is that we prioritise the needs of children and young people but do so as safely as possible for them, school staff and the wider community. Yesterday's announcement posed significant challenges for school staff. Yesterday, the First Minister said of senior pupils who will be physically present in schools to complete coursework:

"Initially ... it is intended that there will be no more than around 5 to 8 per cent of a secondary school roll physically present at any one time".—[*Official Report*, 2 February 2021; c 15.]

We now know that that is in addition to the vulnerable young people and those from families of key workers who are already attending school. That will make adequate social distancing difficult or impossible. Occupational priority groups for the vaccine programme will be considered only in the next phase. The Greens have long said that we want school staff to be included in the programme, but that is still some time away.

The First Minister is no doubt aware that many teachers continue to be extremely concerned at the prospect of a return to in-person teaching. Will she at least give them an assurance that vulnerable teachers will not be expected to return to class before they are vaccinated?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes. I would expect local authorities, which are the employers of teachers, to make sure that they put the safety of vulnerable teachers at the top of their agenda. We will not compromise the safety of teachers, other school staff or young people in schools. All the steps that we are taking to get children back to school—I make no apology for doing that, as I think that it is important to get children back to school as quickly as possible—and all the decisions that we have taken so far and will continue to take are informed by the advice of our expert advisers after looking at the data on the state of the epidemic and the scientific information. We make careful and cautious decisions.

What I announced yesterday for senior-phase pupils in secondary schools is important because, without that access for some of those pupils to in-school, face-to-face practical learning, there will be a question mark over the certification of their national qualifications. That would not be fair to the young people concerned, so we must avoid it.

Taking what we set out yesterday regarding a maximum of 5 to 8 per cent and combining that with the young people who already have access to school premises, we are talking about in the

region of 11 to 12 per cent of the school roll in mainly large secondary schools being present. That is a reasonably cautious way to approach getting older pupils back to school.

We continue to listen to teachers and I understand their concerns. That is why we set out the plans for twice-weekly testing for school staff as well as senior-phase pupils, as I spoke about yesterday, and why we will continue to look at all possible ways to ensure that schooling is as safe as possible. However, we know the increasing impact that being out of school is having on our young people, which is why getting them back as quickly as possible is such a priority.

Patrick Harvie: I think that we all recognise the difficulty of making decisions in this area, but teaching unions continued to urge caution yesterday in reaction to the First Minister's announcements.

Teachers will face workload challenges because of dealing with a mix of pupils in school and pupils staying at home, with unpredictable numbers needing to self-isolate—as well as teachers' additional workload for test and trace. Teachers cannot reasonably be expected to teach some pupils in person and others online at the same time, so they need to know what arrangements will be put in place. That challenge is exacerbated by unequal access to home learning among pupils for whom digital access is a challenge and among pupils who have had issues with accessing resources.

How many children and young people still do not have access to remote learning because they do not have a laptop or other device, or because they have an insufficient broadband connection?

The First Minister: We work with local authorities on an on-going basis, as I said in response to a question yesterday, to ensure that they are identifying them—and we are helping them to fill those gaps. We did a data analysis at an earlier stage of the pandemic, which showed, from memory, that about 70,000 families across the country did not have that access. We have therefore made funding available to make 70,000 devices and internet connections available. We will continue with local authorities to ensure that any young person or family who does not have that is catered for.

On the overall thrust of the question, I genuinely recognise how difficult the situation is for teachers; that is why we have funded 1,400 extra teachers to help with the workload issues. That is why, not long ago, the Deputy First Minister announced an additional £45 million for local authorities, enabling them to provide resources to help further, as they see fit.

I have huge sympathy on the difficulties that teachers face, just as I do for people who are working in other roles during this pandemic, but all of us have a duty to operate and take decisions to get through the pandemic in a way that prioritises the health, wellbeing and development of our young people, which have been hugely impacted. In the midst of the pandemic, I do not think that there is a greater priority than getting young people back into face-to-face education in schools and operating normally with their peer group and their friends. That is why the Scottish Government will do everything that we can to accelerate that as fast as safety—I emphasise that point—allows.

Vaccinators (Recruitment and Training)

4. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): This is from someone who wants to be a vaccinator:

"I am currently entering week five of the recruitment process, with a possible induction start date for the 10th of February subject to Occupational Health clearance, with further online training required."

He has been a senior registered professional in the national health service for 30 years, but he is still required to go through the extensive NHS recruitment process all over again. He asks:

"why did the recruitment process only really get going in December when it was clear that mass vaccination was on its way by late Summer?"

I want to know why it is taking six weeks to get experienced NHS staff ready to vaccinate. Why did the process start so late? Are those some of the reasons why we are still so far behind the rest of the United Kingdom on the vaccine roll-out?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The answers, in order, are no, no and no. Right now we have more than 9,000 vaccinators registered on the national vaccination management tool. We are working towards having the capacity, by the end of this month, to do 400,000 doses a week. That requires a daily workforce of around 1,700 whole-time equivalent vaccinators and 970 support staff, so we have already identified and registered the numbers that we need in order to deliver the programme at the scale that we need.

On the process that people have to go through, as with people who are asking questions about their vaccination appointment, if there are cases that any member wishes us to look into, we are happy to do that. I am obviously not a clinician, and I am not saying that it is the most complicated clinical process known to us, but equally it is not something that should be treated lightly.

There is a process to go through, which varies depending on whether someone has previous vaccination experience. Some people will have done flu vaccinations every year, so their training requirements will be much less; others might have

lots of clinical experience but might never have vaccinated someone before. From the point of view of safety, it is right that we train people appropriately. We have taken steps, as have health boards, to streamline the training process as much as possible—we do not want unnecessary bureaucracy—but if we did not do so and there were then patient safety incidents because we had people carrying out vaccinations who had not gone through the right processes, I have a sneaky suspicion that one of the first people who would be up here criticising us for that might just be Willie Rennie.

Willie Rennie: Dearie me. That it is taking six weeks to register an NHS professional does not sound like progress to me, especially when they have had 30 years' experience in senior positions.

Pennywell all care centre has been designated as a vaccination hub, because it is located in the middle of one of Scotland's most deprived communities. Scottish Liberal Democrats have learned from local general practitioners that appointments there have been given to people from elsewhere but that people from Muirhouse who can see the building from their living-room front window are being sent to Edinburgh international conference centre, which is two bus journeys away. That makes no sense to those doctors, who think that such an approach is bound to have an impact on the uptake of the vaccine. The First Minister knows that that is also happening elsewhere. What on earth is going on with the appointments system?

The First Minister: Even if I do not always respond in a way that suggests that I think so, Willie Rennie often asks very legitimate questions. However, I have to say that I am not sure about those ones. I will take him through them.

Let us talk first about the training of vaccinators. For someone with previous vaccination experience the process takes about three and a half hours. There will be people with lots of clinical experience who do not have previous experience of vaccinating, for whom the process will, rightly, take longer. Willie Rennie's proposition seems to be founded on the idea that because the process is supposedly so long and bureaucratic, we do not have enough people to do it. We have 9,000 people already registered on the vaccination management tool. As we reach the capacity for giving 400,000 doses a week, we will require about 1,700 people. We have lots of people registered, and there is absolutely no suggestion that a lack of vaccinators is an issue in the delivery of the programme.

I turn to the geographical issue. I do not pretend to know in detail every part of the geography of Scotland, but I stress that we must prioritise. We cannot have GPs carrying out the whole

programme. Given its scale, if we were to ask them to do so they would not have time to see patients for any other reason, which would not be good or sensible. We are therefore trying to prioritise GPs' time. Health boards will be taking different approaches to that, based on their experiences and their geographies. However, the position is largely that older and more vulnerable people will be seen by GPs whereas younger, fitter people will be asked to go to the bigger vaccination centres. Therefore sometimes people will be asked to go to a centre that is further away than their own GP practice. However, that is so that we can get through more people more quickly, which I thought was what everyone here wanted right now.

Lastly, Willie Rennie said that all that must be having an impact on uptake. We have record-high uptake figures right now. We have vaccinated 98 per cent of people in care homes, which admittedly represents a different model. However, if someone had told me just a few weeks ago that we would now be at the stage of having vaccinated 90 per cent of over-80s—that we would have even got close to such an uptake figure—I would have struggled to believe it. The evidence does not say that anything that we are doing is depressing uptake; on the contrary, so far the uptake for the programme has been brilliant. That is a real tribute to the people in our communities who want to come forward to help in our collective national effort to beat Covid.

Pandemic (Cost of Lost Schooling)

5. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the Institute for Fiscal Studies report that was published on 1 February, which suggests that the cost of lost schooling in Scotland due to the pandemic is at least £2.8 billion. (S5F-04784)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As I have mentioned both today and yesterday, we know that Covid is having a negative impact on the attainment gap and is affecting the learning of all children and young people. That is why, as part of our pandemic response, we have invested significantly in teachers and support staff as well as in measures to extend digital inclusion and improve remote learning. We also continue to target additional support at those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the draft budget for next year, more than £127 million in pupil equity funding will go towards supporting them, and a further £30 million is being invested to support schools to cope with the on-going effects of Covid.

Covid will have both an immediate and a long-term impact on education, so we will always be

looking for opportunities to do more to support the learning of children and young people. Ultimately, that is why we are so determined to give priority to the return of schools and why I was pleased to announce the start of a phased, albeit very gradual, return to full-time schooling later this month.

Kenneth Gibson: In recent years, much progress has been made in raising attainment, particularly among pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. That progress has inevitably been undermined by necessary restrictions that have been undertaken in response to the pandemic. The income lost to an individual over a lifetime could run into tens of thousands of pounds.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has suggested that the large-scale use of tuition in the summer holidays and extended hours could partially make up for lost classroom time. Will the Scottish Government explore all feasible options for ensuring that our pupils can catch up on their lost education, so that, by the time they leave school, any educational disadvantage suffered due to the pandemic is minimised?

The First Minister: Yes, we absolutely will. We are doing and will continue to do everything that we can to ensure that the impact on children's education is minimised, and we will consider taking action beyond that which is being taken right now.

As I said a moment ago, since the start of the pandemic, we have funded the recruitment of 1,400 extra teachers and more than 200 support staff—that will be helping already. We have already invested to address digital exclusion, and, as I also said a moment ago, we have announced a further £45 million to be used flexibly by local authorities for digital devices, internet connectivity, staffing, family support or whatever they think is most appropriate and necessary. The draft budget will also involve money being invested to mitigate the impacts of Covid on learning, particularly for groups from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Echocardiograms

6. Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to ensure that patients have timely access to echocardiograms. (S5F-04777)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We recognise the importance of timely access to diagnostics, including echocardiograms for people with heart disease. We have supported the heart failure hub to define and implement diagnostic pathways. That support includes increasing access to a test that can help to rule out heart failure in patients who might be suffering from breathlessness, which reduces the need for an

echocardiogram and means that patients who need one can be seen sooner. All health boards now have access to that test.

We are in the process of refreshing the heart disease improvement plan, which we expect to publish this spring. In that plan, we will ensure that the equitable access to diagnostic tests, treatment and care for people with heart disease remains a priority.

Brian Whittle: The recent British Heart Foundation draft heart disease plan for Scotland released data, which was gathered through freedom of information requests, that showed significant variation across Scotland in access to echocardiograms. It also highlighted that the Scottish Government's investment of £1 million since 2014 in the delivery of the current heart disease improvement plan should be seen against the £4.8 billion cost of heart disease to the national health service in Scotland over the same period. Does the First Minister agree that that equates to chronic underinvestment in heart disease prevention, and will she commit the Scottish Government to adequately investing in the prevention and treatment of heart disease?

The First Minister: Yes, we will continue to do that to the best of our ability. I very much welcome the publication of the British Heart Foundation's strategy document. We will work with it as we develop the refreshed plan, making sure, as I said, that equitable access to diagnostics is a key priority as that plan is developed.

However, as I said in my initial answer, I think that it is important to recognise that there is already a real focus on prevention, which is why, as an alternative to somebody requiring an echocardiogram, the test to rule out heart failure that I talked about is so important. Prevention and early intervention—across all conditions—remain very important, so we will continue to work to ensure that accessibility is as equitable as people have a right to expect.

Covid-19 Vaccine Passport

7. David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what assessment the Scottish Government has made of introducing an internationally recognised, digital Covid-19 vaccine passport. (S5F-04776)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): One of the practical challenges at this stage of a certification approach is that we are still learning about the vaccines' effect on things such as transmission of the virus. That challenge has been recognised by the World Health Organization although, as I referred to a few moments ago, we had good news yesterday about early indications of the impact of the Oxford vaccine on

transmission. However, there is still much to be learned about that.

We will continue to engage in international developments, including on the subject of vaccine certification. Those discussions are led at a global level by the WHO and will include consideration of technical details, ethical and equality issues, which are important, and privacy standards. The outcome of those discussions will guide our future work in the area.

David Stewart: The recovery phase of the pandemic will see a weakened global economy, with our domestic tourism industry in freefall. An internationally recognised digital passport could contain details of vaccination history and the results of Covid-19 tests, which could be accessed through a QR reader. Does the First Minister agree that the United Kingdom's presidency of the G7 is an opportunity to lead on that issue, and that it is an idea whose time has come?

The First Minister: I believe that there is an opportunity to lead on the discussion. Is it an idea whose time has come? Right now, I am not sure that we are at that stage, because I do not think that we know and understand enough about the impact of the vaccines to know exactly what certification would be certifying. The whole world has to learn more about that before we can take final decisions. In the fullness of time, certification might have a role. We all know that, for travel to certain parts of the world, people already require certification of vaccination for some diseases, so it is not some new and unknown idea. However, it requires a level of understanding that no country has right now.

I hope that, in the not-too-distant future, we will have a much greater level of understanding and that those discussions can continue in a more meaningful way. We have an opportunity to be in a leadership position in that.

The Presiding Officer: We move to supplementary questions.

Hospital and Care Home Visits (Restrictions)

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): Given the good progress on vaccinating the priority groups, which include not just the over-80s and those in care homes but, in the weeks ahead, groups such as unpaid carers, when will the Scottish Government be able to review and, I hope, ease the significant restrictions that have been placed on hospital and care home visits for family members, so that they can visit their loved ones? Can the First Minister say a little more about when that might happen and what it might look like?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): None of us wants the very severe restrictions on people's

ability to visit loved ones in care homes or hospitals to be in place for a minute longer than is necessary. The impact of the restrictions has been severe and distressing, and the situation has affected the mental wellbeing of care home residents and the people who love them. We all want to get to a position of normality as soon as possible, but it has to be done safely. Given the level at which the virus is circulating, and particularly the impact of the new variant that is circulating widely in Scotland and the fear about other new variants, we have to be cautious.

The reason for focusing on care homes first was to ensure that we gave maximum protection to that most vulnerable group and the staff members who work closely with them. I hope that the vaccine will allow us to get back to greater normality there, sooner rather than later. However, to go back to my answer to the previous question, there are still unanswered questions about the impact of the vaccine on transmission, so we have to continue to be cautious. That is why I will not put a date on it. However, I absolutely assure everybody who is watching and who is desperately missing a loved one in a care home that we will get you back to visiting as normally as possible just as quickly as it is deemed safe to do so.

Vaccination Programme

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I have been contacted by a constituent from my Highlands and Islands region who, instead of being offered the vaccine at the local general practitioner surgery in Keith, has been told to travel to Dufftown over dangerous and snowy roads. I have a constituent in their late 90s who, until his family contacted the national health service, had no news of his vaccination date and, as of Monday afternoon, was still to hear about that, after having been told that he will be vaccinated at home, despite the fact that he is willing and able to attend his local GP surgery. GPs in my region are frustrated at being told that they cannot vaccinate people who they would choose to vaccinate and that supplies are limited and their use is restricted. Do those examples of the inflexibility of the system and how it impacts on some of our most vulnerable cause the First Minister concern? If so, what can she do about it?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): In any big-scale programme, there will always be people who perhaps get missed and do not get an appointment letter, or who do not get an appointment where it is convenient, and the system will try to be as flexible as possible. As a constituency MSP, I get emails from constituents about such matters—I have had some in the past couple of weeks—and I try to get on and fix things for my constituents as quickly as possible. We will

make the system as flexible as possible for people.

I did not necessarily think that the Conservatives would move so quickly from saying that not enough people are being vaccinated to complaining about where people are being vaccinated. We are getting through the process as quickly as possible.

I know that there will be people—such people email me, too—who say, “I want to be vaccinated closer to home because of my particular circumstances.” That is perfectly legitimate. I again give the number for the helpline, although people can obviously contact their MSP. The helpline number is 0800 030 8013. That helpline is there should anyone need advice on any aspect of their vaccination. We will try to be as flexible as possible.

Covid-19 (South African Variant)

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Can the First Minister confirm that, in the five cases of the South African variant that have been identified in Scotland, which have been linked to travel, the people concerned have been given the necessary support to isolate and are actually isolating, and that all those who have been in contact with those individuals are doing the same to prevent further spread? It would be good to get that assurance.

Can the First Minister also confirm that airport testing will be part of the solution as we move forward, as having a system that identifies the virus in travellers seems a sensible approach?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I can give that assurance on the five cases of the South African variant that have been identified so far in Scotland—I stress “so far”. As they all have connections with international travel, at this stage we have no evidence in Scotland of community transmission of that variant. All the individuals concerned are being treated with the utmost caution, with all the correct protocols around isolation and contact tracing in place. It is extremely important that we try to stop that variant becoming one that circulates in the community.

I am sure that testing will have a role to play in relation to international travel as we move forward but, right now, the key message is this: do not travel unless it is essential to do so. That is the most important thing that we can do to minimise the risk of new variants coming into the country. I often get asked about mistakes and what I wish that we could redo, and not being tougher on international travel last summer is one of the things that I wish I could turn the clock back and do differently. I am not prepared to allow us to make that mistake again. Do not travel right now unless it is essential.

I am sure that many of us are desperate to get away on holiday to warmer climates, but if we want to have greater normality domestically, to see our loved ones and to do the things that we all like doing, I am afraid that, at the moment, summer holidays—and holidays—may be the price that we have to pay for that. Therefore, my overriding message is: please do not travel right now.

High Streets and Town Centres (Support)

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley)

(SNP): What action is the Scottish Government taking to address the serious challenges that our local high streets face in the current climate and to support regeneration of our town centres as we move out of the pandemic?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): That is a really important question, because there are significant challenges for town centres as a result of the pandemic. As we know, many of our town centres were facing challenges anyway, as shopping patterns were changing. We have published the independent review of the town centre action plan, and we will continue to increase the support that we give to town centres to respond to the challenges that they face.

The review will be supported by an additional £25 million a year, as was announced in the budget, which is part of an overall five-year £275 million place-based investment programme that will build on previous investment to stimulate economic activity for regeneration in our towns and make sure that town centres, other, small settlements and business improvement districts get the support that they need to face up to those challenges.

City Centres (Store Closures)

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Willie Coffey asked a good question, and I would like to press the First Minister on a specific point. Last week, Aberdeen city centre was hit by the closure of Debenhams after more than 35 years in the city. Another department store building—that of BHS—remains empty five years after it closed, and Arcadia has shut several stores in the city.

What is the First Minister doing to proactively help councils to find occupiers for empty buildings, to ensure that great cities such as Aberdeen do not come to resemble ghost towns?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am going to resist the temptation to assume responsibility for filling individual shop units in every town and city. *[Interruption.]* It is an important question and I do not mean to minimise it. We work with councils to support them through funding. Of course, this is not just about not

wanting it to be my or the Scottish Government's responsibility; local economic development teams in local councils are best placed to know how to recruit—*[Interruption.]*

Presiding Officer, I am struggling to hear with all the chatting that is going on.

The Presiding Officer: If I may say so, First Minister, the trouble was caused by the Deputy First Minister heckling members on the Labour benches. I encourage all members to behave themselves in this situation.

The First Minister: I will speak to him later, Presiding Officer. *[Laughter.]* I apologise—I have completely lost my train of thought, which probably means that I should sit down.

On the issue of town centres and working with local authorities through the action plan and the funding, the point that I was making was that it is right and proper—and probably most effective—for the local authority economic development teams to focus on who they are trying to recruit and who it is best to target for investment in their areas.

Windfall Tax (Retail Corporations)

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Green): While we see growing numbers of empty shop units across Scotland, retail giants such as Amazon and the supermarkets have seen vastly increased profits over the past year and have actually benefited from the Covid restrictions. Does the First Minister support a windfall tax on those corporations, to help to fund the recovery package for our high streets? Have discussions been held with the United Kingdom Government about that?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Discussions are held with the UK Government on all sorts of things. I have not personally had that discussion, but I am sure that there have been discussions of that nature.

I am open minded on any way in which we can make sure that those who have benefited the most from the situation that we have been living through do more to share the burden with those who have really suffered. That is why I welcomed the fact that some of the main supermarkets gave back to Government the money that they had saved from business rates relief, which is allowing us to extend the business rates relief for some really hard-hit sectors for an extra three months.

As a principle, those with the broadest shoulders should bear the biggest burden. We will continue to have those discussions, although we all have a part to play during these times in trying as far as we can to support local businesses and our high streets and give our custom to those who need it most.

Benefit Cap

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): What is the First Minister's response to the figures that reveal that the number of Scottish households who are affected by the benefit cap has nearly doubled during the pandemic?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): As many people are, I am deeply concerned about the benefit cap. It is just one of the pre-existing failures in the United Kingdom welfare system that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The continuation of the cap during the crisis makes neither economic nor moral sense. The benefit cap hits families with children the hardest, and 97 per cent of capped households have children in them.

At a time when we have seen the number of people who rely on benefits rise, and when economic forecasts are of increasing unemployment and fewer vacancies, all Governments—this is certainly a responsibility that the Scottish Government takes seriously—need to support families, and not to penalise them. We have called on the UK Government to scrap the benefit cap and will continue to do everything that we can to encourage it to do so.

Galloway (National Park)

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Back in November 2018, in response to a question from me, the First Minister said that she appreciated arguments that I had put forward calling for a national park to be established in Galloway. She stated:

"We want to give full consideration to the proposal, and I am happy to ask the relevant minister to engage with the member and others who have an interest on how we can take the matter forward properly."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 2018; c 16.]

Sadly, however, no progress has been made. In light of the biodiversity and climate change emergency and the economic crisis that we face, and given the recognised benefits that national park status can bring, will the First Minister commit today to a feasibility study on the creation of a new national park in Galloway?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): For reasons that I hope Finlay Carson will understand, I am not going to commit to that today. Obviously, I need to consider the question and the proposition that he asks me to commit to, and I will certainly do that.

I remember the question that he asked me previously, although I would not have been able to say that it was in November 2018. I am sure that, for many of us, that seems an eternity ago, given what we have been through in the past year. However, the issue remains as important as it was

then. I undertake to look at where things are in relation to the creation of a national park in Galloway, and to look specifically at the question of a feasibility study. I or the relevant minister will write to Finlay Carson when I have had a chance to do that.

Drugs Policy

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): This week, the state of Oregon decriminalised personal possession of all drugs. It will still, rightly, prosecute dealers, but it will now offer users a range of public health options to help to address drug use and addiction. That is in complete contrast to the lack of options available here. Does the First Minister accept that the war on drugs has been a disastrous failure, that we will never arrest our way to a drugs-free society, and that we now need a cross-party initiative, supported by experts in the field, to consider how we can introduce a similarly humane and effective drugs policy here?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): In principle, my answer is yes. A couple of weeks ago, I set out the approach that we will take with the new dedicated Minister for Drugs Policy. We need to do things differently and better, and we absolutely need to reduce drastically the number of people in Scotland who lose their lives through drug addiction. We have committed significant extra resources to that and are open minded about different ways of working.

As, I am sure, Neil Findlay recognises, there are significant constraints. Decriminalising drugs is not something that the Scottish Parliament could do within the powers that we currently have. Therefore, for as long as we do not have those powers, we need to engage the United Kingdom Government in the discussions. The work will be led by Angela Constance, and we absolutely want consensus on how we might do things better. I absolutely agree that we should not seek to criminalise or arrest our way out of a drugs crisis. It is a public health crisis and should be treated as such.

Self-isolation Support Grant

Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP): Does the First Minister agree that it is important that we break down financial barriers to self-isolation? I welcome the extension of the £500 self-isolation support grant to people who earn less than the living wage. How many people will benefit from extension of the criteria, and how will the Scottish Government ensure that people are aware of the support that they are entitled to receive?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): That is an important question. Yesterday, we announced changes to the self-isolation support grant. We will

extend eligibility to everyone who earns the real living wage or less, to people who are in receipt of council-tax reduction because of low income, and to those who meet eligibility criteria and have caring responsibilities for someone over 16 who is asked to self-isolate. We have also lengthened the period during which people can apply for the grant to within 28 days of their being told to self-isolate.

The changes will further help to remove financial barriers to people self-isolating, and they will significantly increase the number of people who are eligible for the grant. We estimate that around an additional 200,000 people will be eligible as a result of the changes that I have announced. We will continue to look for ways in which to go further, in terms of both financial and practical support.

Making sure that people are aware of the changes is important, so the changes will be accompanied by national and local media campaigns to raise public awareness of the support that is available.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The First Minister said earlier that people can contact the helpline if they have questions about their vaccinations. People are emailing me right now to say that they are trying but are not getting answers about appointments. Margaret from Fife, whom I referenced earlier, has just phoned the helpline. She was told that a letter will be sent soon, but nobody knows when. David from Glasgow was told that they could not tell him anything. Arthur from East Renfrewshire, who has cancer, has been given no information about his appointment.

The Government needs a better solution for offering answers to people who are concerned about being missed or overlooked in the vaccination programme.

The Presiding Officer: That does not qualify as a point of order. It is a point of information; I am sure that it will have been noted by the Government and members.

That concludes First Minister's question time. I suspend Parliament until 2.30. I advise members to be careful when leaving the chamber: wear your masks, follow the one-way systems and observe social distancing.

13:33

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Brexit

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Lewis Macdonald): I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus. I ask members to take care to observe those measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber, and to use only the aisles and walkways to access their seats and when moving around the chamber.

The next item of business is a statement by Michael Russell, who will provide a Brexit update. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs (Michael Russell): A month has passed since the United Kingdom Government's trade and co-operation agreement with the European Union came into effect, on 1 January. As the arrangements bed in, it is important to look at what has happened and to try to discern what are, in the words of the UK Government, "teething troubles" and what has arisen from the fact that the UK has made itself, deliberately and permanently, a third country with a more distant, more expensive and less advantageous trading arrangement with its former EU partners. It is right that I report on the steps that the Scottish Government has taken to mitigate the effects of the short-term and longer-term problems.

To be absolutely fair, I say that some initial problems were inevitable, in the light of the scale and nature of the change in the relationship and the very short notice that was provided—in fact, no notice was given at all—in terms of detail, given that the agreement was concluded only seven days before it was due to come into effect, and at least one of those days was a holiday.

The incontrovertible fact is that Scotland has now been forcibly removed from the world's best integrated and most successful single market, which is worth £16 billion in exports from Scottish companies. Moreover, that has been done in the depths of a global pandemic in which jobs are being badly hit and our economy is in a severe recession.

It is an incontrovertible fact that four weeks into the new trading arrangements the problems for businesses are not diminishing, but are multiplying and spreading across different sectors of the economy. It is a fact that exporters are struggling with new customs controls, rules of origin and non-tariff barriers. They are experiencing additional

costs, and stock is being delayed—and sometimes even spoiled—at logistics hubs in Scotland and at UK and EU ports. In reality, those who are endeavouring to do business are, in essence, having to live test extraordinarily complex, costly and time-consuming new procedures that have been rushed into place.

It is a fact that, since 1 January, there have been significantly reduced freight flows on the short straits and on the Irish routes. At the weekend, the Irish Government announced that although direct transportation to the EU from Ireland is up by 100 per cent, traffic on the Irish Sea routes is down by 50 per cent. However, even with reduced volumes, disruption at our borders continues.

Last Friday, the Confederation of British Industry, British Chambers of Commerce, Make UK, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors released a joint statement setting out

“the substantial difficulties faced by firms adapting to the new customs processes, the sizeable obstacles to moving goods through the Dover-Calais route and the shortage of informed advice”.

They warned that grace periods that have been agreed with the EU will expire over the next two months, at a time when cross-border traffic is due to grow, and that unless measures are put in place to smooth customs procedures, the situation will deteriorate further. Indeed, as has been reported by Politico, according to the UK Government's own reasonable worst-case scenario, 142,000 tons of perishable goods including food, feed and drink could be wasted over the next six months because of Brexit border disruption.

However, in contrast to those informed views, the UK Government, in its desperation to present Brexit as a success, is playing down the impacts of the end of the transition period. The lack of significant disruption to traffic at the short straits is being hailed as a success by the UK Government, without it highlighting the significant reductions in flow since the transition period ended. The fact is that flows have still not recovered after almost five weeks, and might never recover. Furthermore, a much higher proportion of the heavy goods vehicles that leave the UK are now empty as they head to pick up supplies on the continent.

Far too often, such unambiguous data are glossed to fit a predetermined narrative, even if that narrative does not reflect the lived experience of many businesses. In order to address that issue, the Scottish Government is asking the UK Government to work constructively with us and the other devolved Administrations to agree a set of information that will provide a clear view of what is happening on the ground, and foster mutual confidence in the data. Just as the UK

Government strenuously avoided doing an economic impact study of its Brexit policies, it is avoiding close examination of what is happening on the ground as a result of those policies having been implemented. Indeed, it is even denying reality, when confronted with it.

For a long time, Scottish Government modelling has indicated that it would be likely that the seafood and agricultural sectors would be the first to bear the brunt of EU exit. That has proved to be the case. The disruption to the seafood sector has resulted in damaging delays, huge costs and devastating losses, which we feared would be the outcome of our becoming an EU third country and having to deal with new and untested processes.

It is already obvious that the benefits of the so-called sea of opportunity were not delivered by the UK Government in the negotiations, are not being delivered now and will not be delivered in the future. For the second time in even the Prime Minister's bizarre definition of a generation, Scottish fishermen have been tricked and deserted by the UK Government and UK Prime Minister—a Prime Minister who did not even have the guts to meet those fishermen last week, nor to acknowledge the damage that he has done.

The truth is that the tide of that “sea of opportunity” has turned, and has turned against Scottish fishermen. They were promised a greater share of catch, but instead they have faced reduced access to key species including cod and haddock, and are now dealing with crippling red tape and plummeting sales. Industry groups have universally condemned the deal, with the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations calling it “minuscule, marginal, paltry, “pathetic”, while the Scottish Fishermen's Federation has said that the Brexit deal falls

“far short of ... commitments and promises”.

Seafood exporters, which have reported their loads being rejected at border control posts and either being destroyed or returned at the exporter's expense, have simply called the whole situation “catastrophic”. Even when goods eventually get through, the freshness and quality of produce is often affected, so the price that exporters receive is lower. Last week, one senior industry figure in my constituency sent me an email that—leaving out the expletive—said:

“Michael ... do everything in your power to get us the hell out of the UK and back into the EU, or Scotland won't have a seafood industry left!!!”

There are other effects. Ports such as Lochinver, which is a fragile community in a fragile area, are losing trade because EU vessels that are worried about red tape and about having to deal with a third country's systems, are choosing to land in Ireland. We have seen Peterhead market

suffering, as vessels land their catches in Denmark in order to make use of its EU membership. The whole coastal economy is being hit.

In response to public pressure, the UK Government announced funding of up to £23 million to support seafood exporters across the UK. However, industry groups estimate that as much as £1 million a day is being lost by seafood merchants. In addition, it seems to be unlikely that the money will reach those who need it most, because those who are able to benefit do not include catchers who have tied up due to inability to sell their catches or those who have suffered loss as a result of—understandably—incorrect filing of paperwork.

That is why the Scottish Government has announced today that we will provide an additional £7.8 million to support Scottish seafood businesses and individuals in the sector who have been failed by the Brexit deal, and who are now being failed by the UK Government's inadequate compensation scheme. That money will seek to protect and preserve vital jobs in our coastal communities. In addition, we will continue to back calls from our food and drink industry for a six-month grace period to allow exporters more time to digest the outcome of negotiations and change as best as they can.

Unfortunately, it is not just the fishing part of the food industry that is being impacted. As the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism set out last week, a whole new category of prohibited and restricted goods has been created, which means that Scottish exporters can no longer trade their produce freely with the EU. As a direct result of the UK Government's refusal to align UK seed potato regulations with the EU, Scottish seed potato farmers will no longer be able to export their product to Europe—their biggest market—which is resulting in estimated immediate losses of around £11 million.

All that confirms that, although businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises were promised last year that Brexit would open up a raft of new opportunities in new markets, the reality this year is that, already, 38 per cent of SMEs say that their trade with the EU will decrease as a result of Brexit, and 32 per cent are saying that costs associated with running their businesses will be impacted. Instead of providing the business community with exciting new opportunities, the UK Government is putting businesses in a position in which they might have to shrink to survive, or even to move their location to the EU, as UK Government economic sources have apparently advised them to do.

There are wider impacts, too. It is currently estimated that 1.3 million EU citizens have left the

UK—1.3 million people who worked tirelessly in hospitals and universities, and in every sector and at every level. They are 1.3 million people whose talents we need and whose presence enriches us all, but who have been alienated by the rhetoric and actions of a Brexiteer UK Government that rejoices in the end of freedom of movement.

The Scottish Government is seeking to counter that. We need EU citizens, so our “Stay in Scotland” campaign pledges to stand by and protect the rights of European citizens who choose to call Scotland their home, and it offers a package of support to help them to stay. Once again, I urge all EU citizens who want to stay in Scotland to ensure that they apply to the UK Government's settled status scheme by 30 June this year. I say to them, “You are welcome here. Please, stay in Scotland.”

The futures of our young people have also taken a profound hit from this low deal. Due to an explicit last-minute UK Government decision, the justification for which has not been shared with the devolved Administrations, Scotland will no longer be able to participate in the Erasmus+ scheme, which has benefited more than 2,000 Scottish higher education students and more than 1,100 further education students a year.

Among many other positive benefits, Erasmus—which goes much wider than HE provision and the parameters of the supposed UK replacement, which has also not been discussed with us—improves participants' self-confidence, language learning, cultural awareness and employability. That is why the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science is pursuing the issue. He has met the relevant EU commissioner and, along with all of us, is grateful to Terry Reintke and David McAllister, who have organised an amazing letter that has been signed by more than 150 of their fellow MEPs supporting devolved access to the scheme. Danke Freunde.

The deal has also had a significant impact on the fight against crime in Scotland, with Police Scotland and the Crown Office now having to use slower and less effective tools. The loss of access to the Schengen information system database means that Police Scotland will no longer have access to real-time or immediate alerts from EU partners on wanted or missing persons.

Another serious loss is the European arrest warrant, as the new system allows EU member states to refuse to extradite their own nationals to Scotland. However, even when EU member states permit surrender, bringing someone to face justice in Scotland will likely take longer and cost more than it would have cost under the European arrest warrant.

The deal also does little to facilitate access to the single market for our financial services sector, which employs 87,000 people in Scotland and has exports that are valued at £8.6 billion. I appreciate that the EU and UK are aiming to agree a further memorandum of understanding on financial services by next month, but if it happens it will focus on regulatory co-operation and will, as we understand it, do nothing to reinstate our lost market access.

The UK Government has now admitted that those are not “teething issues”. They are a permanent exclusion from the single market that leaves many businesses in Scotland toothless in a competitive modern economy.

I could go on. Some professions—architects, for example—are already experiencing loss of mutual recognition. There is also now no legal protection for our geographical indicators, which is producing new uncertainty about the market advantage of excellence in products from Scotland.

Despite the ludicrous and offensive decision by the European Commission on Friday about article 16 and vaccines—fortunately, it was quickly rescinded—the aggressive refusal, which is unique in the world, by the UK to officially recognise the EU ambassador in London speaks to a negative agenda that is still being pursued by the UK Government, when a positive one is now urgently required.

There was a further sign of that in Michael Gove’s remarks yesterday about the Northern Ireland protocol, the negotiations for which he oversaw, the implementation committee for which he co-chairs and the details of which he told us all last month delivered the

“best of both worlds”.

I have not even mentioned as yet the cost of all that. The Tories here were baying for blood last week when they thought, mistakenly, that the Scottish Government had recently spent £100,000 on an independence referendum, but their party in Government in the UK is meeting a vastly greater bill for the Brexit boorach.

Bloomberg economics estimated last year a minimum cost to the economy of £130 billion. Even the Bank of England expects the cost to the economy to be about £80 billion. Direct spending by Government on its Brexit preparations has been at least £8 billion in the past four years and is probably much higher and, of course, it is all still costing and is still being pursued in the depths of the pandemic crisis.

In the Scottish Government, we remain determined to act as positively as we can despite that rank hypocrisy. In our agencies, and through the building resilience steering group, we have

been offering a wide range of help to those who are affected: for example, by Food Standards Scotland putting additional staff into the three Scottish logistics hubs, by recruiting and training more specialist customs agents, and by providing businesses with tailored advice and support on completing paperwork. With our enterprise agencies, we are building on the engagement that they had with the 1,400 most Brexit-vulnerable companies before Christmas by supporting them to adapt to the challenges that we face.

We published “Scotland’s Vision for Trade” last Tuesday. It sets out Scotland’s trade policy priorities post EU exit, and demonstrates the role of trade as a social, environmental and economic lever in Scotland’s economic recovery. Our work will continue for as long as it is needed. As we have done throughout the Brexit process, we will continue to engage constructively with the UK Government on the issues that we are facing.

We never voted for even the softest of Brexits—which was, of course, the promise that was made five years ago. We have ended up with the hardest of Brexits being recklessly pursued in the very depths of the pandemic. That was bound to be a disaster, and it has been.

It is therefore significant that polling today not only shows that Scotland would, if we were asked again, vote to remain by the same huge margin, but confirms that Scotland emphatically wants to rejoin.

The Scottish Government will, of course, continue to do everything in our power to mitigate the impacts of Brexit on this country and on its businesses and communities. Far from being over, the problems that have been created by Brexit are getting worse, and we face more difficult times ahead. For the remainder of this session of Parliament, I will continue to keep Parliament updated.

However, I will also make sure that Scotland and Scotland’s neighbours understand that we regard exit from the EU as temporary, and that there is a way, but only one way, to rejoin. Westminster parties have sold the pass on that matter, but Scotland’s party and Scotland’s Government have not. The only way back is to choose independence, as virtually all the other normal small countries in Europe have done. Post-pandemic, we will redouble our efforts to secure that goal, which will allow us to rebuild our economy and our society in the way that we wish, and not in a way that we are told to by a Tory UK Government that is the author of this terrible, continuing, costly and, indeed, worsening Brexit mess. We can make our next significant step towards normality on 6 May.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you. The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 30 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business. It would be helpful if members who wish to ask a question were to press their request-to-speak buttons now. I call Dean Lockhart.

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for an advance copy of his statement.

The Scottish Government has received £200 million of Barnett consequentials to prepare Scottish business for Brexit but has refused to detail how that money is being spent. Will the cabinet secretary agree today to publish a detailed breakdown of how that £200 million is being spent to help Scottish business prepare for the new trading arrangements?

In terms of disruption to exports to the single market and under the Northern Ireland protocol, it is becoming increasingly clear that the European Commission is acting unreasonably. That came into sharp focus last Friday when the Commission invoked article 16 of the protocol to restrict the flow of vaccines to the UK and, in effect, impose a trade border on the island of Ireland—a move immediately condemned by all parties across the UK and in Ireland but met by radio silence from the SNP. Will the cabinet secretary work with the UK Government to resist any and all moves by the European Commission to use the Northern Ireland protocol to restrict the supply of vaccines to the UK?

In relation to his comments about the impact of Brexit and the costs to the Scottish economy, does the cabinet secretary agree with the report issued today by the London School of Economics and Political Science that warns that the cost of independence to the Scottish economy would be three times greater than that of Brexit?

Michael Russell: All those questions are predictable, particularly the last one, which I will come to in just a moment. However, I will start with the issue of the spending of money. The Scottish Government has had to spend far more than £200 million on preparing for Brexit, but I remind Dean Lockhart that the devolved settlement does not require the Scottish Government to submit its accounts for approval by the Secretary of State for Scotland. He might think that he can order the military into Scotland, which appears to be what he was trying to do this week, but he is not the accountant general. We have made it absolutely clear that we are spending every penny and more on the mess that the Tories have created and we will continue to do so.

On article 16, I appreciate that Dean Lockhart is a bit embarrassed because he dashed out a tweet on Friday night condemning me for not having said anything at all about article 16. Regrettably, I had done so before he did, as he now knows, but he was reluctant to apologise for that—indeed, he was determined not to do so—and he has just done the same thing again. I made it clear in my speech what the position is. It is my position, the Scottish Government's position, the SNP's position and Scotland's position and I am glad that it is the Scottish Tories' position, even though they came to it later than I did.

Finally, I am grateful for the opportunity to address the report from the LSE. I welcome all independent consideration of such matters, but there is something fairly extraordinary in the report. The report assumes that, if Scotland were to become independent—and I hope that it will—we would not change a single policy, we would not use a single lever on the economy and we would not have anything new to do; we would just sit there and pretend that nothing had changed.

One of the key issues is trade dependence. The Irish are a really good example of how to use independent membership of the EU to move from trade dependence on another country to trade independence.

In addition, the report does not fully examine manufacturing and a range of other issues. The authors thank Jim Gallagher for his input to the report. Although I have the greatest respect for Jim Gallagher, he could not be regarded as a man without an axe to grind on these matters—an axe that he usually likes to use on the SNP. I am grateful for the input, which I always consider seriously, but I have reservations about it, and I have expressed them in a reasoned and reasonable way.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement. It is clear that the mess set out in the statement is of the Tory party's and the Prime Minister's making. As I have said repeatedly in the chamber, it is completely unacceptable that this is happening at a time when lives and livelihoods are still at risk and our collective focus should be on getting through and recovering from Covid.

It is clear that the situation will have an impact on trade and on the free movement of goods. The customs checks are obviously impacting on livestock and fisheries. Clearly, this is not just impacting on Scotland; it is having an impact right across the UK. What engagement has the cabinet secretary had with metro mayors in England and with the First Minister of Wales to find a collective approach to challenging the UK Government on this unthinkable, unforgivable approach to how we trade in the UK?

I want to find agreement with the cabinet secretary on Brexit, and I want to work with him to get through the Covid crisis, but I do not think it is right for us to selectively quote independent experts when it suits our personal agenda and to ridicule them when it does not. He and I will have quoted the LSE on Brexit. He was willing to accept its opinion on Brexit, but he is not yet willing to accept its opinion when it comes to independence. We cannot pick and choose. I suggest to the cabinet secretary that we focus on what unites us as a country, not on what divides us, which is getting through Covid and saving lives and livelihoods.

Michael Russell: I, too, want to make as much common cause as I can with Anas Sarwar, but I disagree with him on picking and choosing. Surely, as rational human beings, we should read a report and come to a conclusion as to what we agree with and what we do not agree with. We may agree with one report; we may disagree with another report.

On trade dependence, for example—and this is very significant—the percentage of goods that Ireland traded with the UK in 1973 in exports was 55 per cent; in 2018, it was 11 per cent. Looking around Europe, Danish gross domestic product per head is 20 per cent higher than UK GDP per head, and Norway's is nearly 40 per cent higher. Separating yourself from the EU is not a good thing, but being a small independent country in Europe is a good thing. That is not picking and choosing; it is looking at the information and coming to a reasonable conclusion.

Having disagreed on that, let me agree with Anas Sarwar and, indeed, with his colleagues in Wales. I have worked very closely with his colleagues in Wales, first with Mark Drakeford when he was my opposite number—and I have huge respect for him—and later with the Counsel General, Jeremy Miles, who is my opposite number now. The basic element of our success in working together was that, although we disagreed on the constitutional process, we agreed on the problems of Brexit and we worked together on them very hard.

Anas Sarwar and I will disagree on the constitutional journey—although I must say that Welsh Labour appears to be much more open minded on the issue of sovereignty, which I would be happy to debate with him at any stage—but I am happy to work with him on these issues.

Anas Sarwar and I can also agree that many of the problems that we are discussing arise because the UK is now a third country as far as the EU is concerned, and that is not going away—that is the problem. Whatever initial teething problems there are, that permanent change means that trading will be harder, will take longer and will cost more

money, and that is the last thing we need in the middle of a pandemic.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): It is clear that the agriculture sector is in need of urgent support to manage pressures arising from the red tape that Brexit has thrown up. The new limitations on exporting certain goods such as seed potatoes are particularly concerning. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the UK Government should be providing more support to businesses in the agriculture sector? Will he give more details of what such support should look like?

Michael Russell: I agree with Joan McAlpine. Over the next few weeks and months such concerns will emerge as the agriculture industry realises and experiences such difficulties and the costs of those become clear.

Three things require to be done. First, in advance of such experiences occurring, the UK Government needs to get in, estimate the extent of the problems and be willing to assist with them. Secondly, it needs to ensure that if changes to systems could be made here, they should be made. There are not likely to be many such changes to systems in the EU, because all those aspects have been agreed by the UK Government. However, if the UK Government could perhaps show a bit of humility about the situation, change its own systems and listen, progress might be made, but the problem of our being a third country would still be there and will not go away. Thirdly, the Scottish Government—along with the Welsh Government, the Northern Irish Government and, I hope, the UK Government—could perhaps have a serious conversation about the work that needs to be done. However, that will require the UK Government also to accept the problem. As I indicated in my statement, it is having great difficulty in doing so. It has tried to bluff and bluster its way out of it, but that will not do.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I will try just once again with the cabinet secretary. In his statement, he said a lot about what he believes to be incontrovertible facts. Does he not agree that the LSE report provides incontrovertible facts when it tells us, in some considerable detail, that independence would hit Scottish trade far harder than Brexit will?

Michael Russell: No, I do not agree. The reason for that is that I am trying to engage on the issue in a serious way.

My first point is that, as the member will have to accept, the report makes assumptions that no policy changes would take place. That is just impossible—actually, if we step back and think about it, it is nonsensical. My second point is that

issues of trade dependence and trade flows need to be considered, especially in relation to how they could be changed. The third step would be to take objective evidence from other small countries, such as Denmark, Norway and Ireland, to see how their situations have changed. Let us add all of that to the mix.

The LSE is venerable, and I am sure that the people who have been involved in producing its report entirely wish to get the right results. However, they are not infallible, which is an important point that should be made about all academic research.

Dean Lockhart: And you are.

Michael Russell: Dean Lockhart says that I am infallible. [*Laughter.*] It is nice of him to say so—I am grateful for that—but it is not true. I am not infallible, the academics are not infallible and even Dean Lockhart is not infallible. [*Interruption.*] It is a stunning revelation, particularly to Dean Lockhart, that that is the case.

I have to make it clear that what we should do is look at information, judge it and debate it. What we do not do is simply say, “That’s it done and dusted—I’m away now.”

Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): The July deadline for EU citizens who reside in my Cowdenbeath constituency, and across Scotland, to apply for settled status is growing ever closer. Can the cabinet secretary advise whether the UK Government has provided details of how many individuals in Scotland have applied to date? Can he confirm what the Scottish Government is doing to encourage and support eligible individuals to apply for settled status before the deadline?

Michael Russell: The UK Government publishes figures on such applications—I think it does so every three months, although I would require to check that. I assure Ms Ewing that Jenny Gilruth, the minister who is responsible for that matter and who happens to be sitting behind me, will provide that information to her as soon as she can.

We have taken a number of actions to ensure that we are supporting people who have applied or are applying for settled status. I deeply regret that we have to do so. Some of my own constituents have told me how insulted they feel that they are having to do so, having lived and contributed here and having been our fellow citizens. However, regrettably, they have to apply—and they should do so.

Once people have settled status, we will do everything that we can to defend them and to stand up for them. I hope that the UK Government will show a generosity that, so far, has been lacking in recognising the contribution of such EU

citizens. We have undertaken a great deal of work—for example, through citizens advice bureaux—to ensure that we are providing information. We will continue to do so and to reach out to EU citizens—as the First Minister did last year on a number of occasions, most recently in December—and we will go on doing so.

We want people to stay. Our stay in Scotland campaign is crucial to that, too. Those EU citizens are our fellow citizens. I want to be an EU citizen with them again, and I look forward to that day.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

I thank the cabinet secretary for his statement. Like the cabinet secretary, I am very concerned about the effects of Brexit on our seafood industry, which have been well outlined in today’s *Press and Journal*. In the past, as the cabinet secretary is well aware, the Highlands and Islands have benefited greatly from EU structural funds and the European maritime and fisheries fund. What discussions has the cabinet secretary had—[*Inaudible.*—over the shared prosperity fund and other instruments, to help to protect this vital sector?

Michael Russell: I know of David Stewart’s very good work on such matters and of his hard work for the people of the Highlands and Islands on that and on other considerations. The new shared prosperity fund has not been put together with the involvement, say-so or input of the devolved Governments—that is simply the case. For example, the Secretary of State for Scotland is apparently going to administer some of those funds but I know nothing about how he will do so. He regards himself as able to do all sorts of things, such as order troops about and be an accountant general—I presume that he also has to sign the cheques. As far as I am concerned, however, it would be far better had the precedent been set of ensuring that the devolved Governments were involved in the administration of those funds.

On support for the fishing industry, anybody who goes about the Highlands and Islands—whether in my constituency or in the area represented by a regional member such as Mr Stewart—can see the investment that we have had from those funds. Money has come from the European Investment Bank and elsewhere into the infrastructure of the Highlands and Islands. The fact that the funding has stopped—just like that—and nothing has been put in its place—not a penny is yet flowing from the new shared prosperity fund—is a thundering disgrace, and it is making the people of the Highlands and Islands suffer for something they did not vote for and would not have voted for.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Further to the cabinet secretary’s remarks about the Erasmus+ scheme in Scottish Government talks with European commissioners, has the UK

Government given any indication of whether it would obstruct such Scottish participation? If it were to do so, would the Scottish Government consider taking that to the courts, in order to clarify in whose competency the issue falls?

Michael Russell: Yes, I am sure that we would consider that. However, I hope that the UK Government might be sensible about it, although it has not been sensible about negotiating it. On a number of occasions, Jeremy Miles and I raised at the joint ministerial committee—and, I think, on other occasions—the possibility that, if the UK Government did not wish to continue with Erasmus, although we thought that it did, we would like to see a negotiation for the devolved Administrations to continue. That suggestion was brushed aside—I remember David Frost brushing it aside at a particular meeting. I raised it with the EU, and I was told that it was a matter of competence between the UK Government and the EU and that the UK Government had made no such approach. It might have been possible for the UK Government to negotiate even when it was deciding that it did not want to be part of it, but it refused to do so.

Nevertheless, I hope that better sense might prevail. I am always hopeful of a rational approach from others. As we move forward, I therefore hope for two things: first, that the UK Government will not interfere; and, secondly, that the money from the UK Government that might have gone on the scheme will be divided among the devolved Administrations, if they wish to continue, so they can choose whether they take part in Erasmus, in the Turing scheme or in a bit of both.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Brexit is truly a mess, and I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for, once again, providing a long list of reasons why we should not repeat the mistakes of Brexit with independence. However, in a spirit of consensus, I add my support to the efforts to resolve the export routes for seafood products—particularly those from Pittenweem, in my constituency—and to the efforts to rejoin the Erasmus scheme, which has benefited many students right across Scotland.

Michael Russell: I am grateful to Willie Rennie. I will dwell not on his first sentence but on the others. As Anas Sarwar indicated, it is important that we try to make as much common cause as possible.

The Erasmus scheme has been beneficial to many young people, so we should all be behind it. I remember a time when the Tories were behind it, but, alas, they seem to have walked away from it. I hope that they might come back to support Scottish membership of the scheme and to persuade their colleagues in London to do what I have just asked for.

The current situation is tragic for many seafood producers, whether they are in Pittenweem or Tarbert, in Argyll. Livelihoods and businesses are being destroyed. The additional support scheme that Fergus Ewing has announced will be helpful, but we need to ensure that there are ways for people to continue in business in the long term, and that is what we will try to do.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary share my concern and that of many businesses that the UK Government is not taking sufficient steps to support them to adapt to the new customs processes in order to ease cross-border travel? Does he agree that additional action is absolutely essential in order to prevent further mass wastage of perishable goods?

Michael Russell: The member raises an interesting point. I will answer in two parts. First, because people are not travelling as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the real problem is not being demonstrated. When people start to travel as individuals again, we will see considerable problems, because every traveller from these islands will be a traveller from outside the EU and the European economic area—we are all familiar with the signs that refer to that—and so we will not be included in the faster flow. For example, the passport machines will not be available to us.

As individuals, we will find out how bad it is, and we will probably also find that with things such as mobile phone roaming charges. Many of the things that we have taken for granted in recent years will simply not be available to us. Some people who live abroad for part of the time are already finding that. For example, they are discovering that there is a limitation on the time that they can spend abroad, as it is now 90 days out of 180.

Secondly, the need for customs clearance for goods creates a big increased cost. This morning, I talked to somebody who pointed out that customs agents, who do that job for people, were previously charging £125 a consignment but are now charging £500 a consignment. I am not criticising them—it is because they have so much work and they are in demand. Businesses cannot meet that cost on some consignments. That is impossible, because they simply do not sell enough at a big enough profit margin. Therefore, unless they do the work themselves—some cannot do it—that prevents goods from being exported or imported. We are still in a period of comparative grace, and the situation is going to get much worse. It is wise to say that rather than to pretend that that is not the case, as the UK Government is doing.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Given that businesses are still adjusting to leaving the EU, that we have the

serious economic challenges of Covid still to face and that people's jobs and livelihoods are at risk, can Michael Russell tell us which, if any, business organisations, trade bodies or industry groups agree with him that the nationalist obsession with another divisive independence referendum is the answer?

Michael Russell: It is important that Mr Halcro Johnston steps back a little and perhaps rewinds to when I made my statement. I quoted the CBI, British Chambers of Commerce, Make UK, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors, which have made a joint statement setting out

"the substantial difficulties faced by firms adapting to the new ... processes",

and the

"sizeable obstacles to moving goods through the Dover-Calais route".

I did not ask those organisations about anything else; I did not even ask them about that—they published the statement voluntarily. When we get into a debate about independence, I am happy to have a debate with Mr Halcro Johnston and those organisations on what I think will be beneficial.

Forgive me for saying this, but Mr Halcro Johnston is engaged in a smokescreen activity. He does not want to address the very serious issues that I have raised today. He says that—*[Interruption.]* He says that this has been happening during a Covid pandemic, but the opportunity was there for it not to happen, because all of us—every voice, apart from the Scottish Tories—said to the UK Government, "Do not do this during a pandemic." What did the UK Government do? It did it during a pandemic. The UK Government was warned, and it was warned often. *[Interruption.]*

I am happy to have a debate with Mr Halcro Johnston, even though he keeps shouting from a sedentary position. It is difficult for people to see that if they are watching this from elsewhere. Mr Halcro Johnston has not listened to a word that I have said; he has just shouted from where he is sitting. I regret that because, in the end, he will have to debate the issue seriously, and he cannot do that if he is sitting there roaring and yelling.

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I remind the chamber that I am a member of the Musicians Union.

Scotland's music sector has been severely impacted by the pandemic and is facing future barriers to recovery in the form of the UK Government's hard, isolationist Brexit deal. Will the cabinet secretary commit to continuing to apply pressure on the UK Government to get back round the negotiating table and strike a deal that

restores musicians' right to work unhindered across these islands and the European Union?

Michael Russell: One of the saddest aspects of the issue that Mr Arthur raises is that it is now clear that if the UK Government had asked for an exemption for performing artists, it would have received such an exemption. Why David Frost—who, fortunately, is not to be the national security adviser, which allows all of us to sleep easier in our beds at night—did not ask for that, I do not know. The circumstance is that that industry, which had already been hit extraordinarily hard by the Covid pandemic, has now been put in an impossibly difficult position. I hope that the UK Government is considering that, and that it might—with a degree of humility—go back to the EU and say, "We got that wrong. Is there something we can do?"

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): Mr Russell makes valid criticisms of the UK Government's handling of Brexit. However, turning to areas in which the Scottish Government has responsibility, in light of the fact that, over the period since 2013, local government is £937 million short of funding, what action will the Government take to support local government to mitigate the adverse effects of leaving the EU?

Michael Russell: I continue to work closely with local government. I meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on a fairly regular basis.

I think that Mr Kelly perhaps misses out an element, which is that the Scottish Government has been under enormous pressure and has sought to maintain the funding that it provides to local government at as high a level as it possibly can, and certainly in a better way than has been done elsewhere. We have provided resources to local government and will continue to do so, to help it to come through the pandemic and to meet the other challenges that exist. However, it will be tough on all of us, as Brexit will be damaging to all of us. I welcome the Labour Party's support for that point to be made, and for it to be made clearly. I think that we should make it in a unified manner, too.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): The cabinet secretary said that 1.3 million EU citizens have left the UK, which is obviously disappointing. Does he anticipate that farming and other sectors will struggle to get the labour and the staff that they will need in the coming year?

Michael Russell: I think that there will be labour shortages this year. The UK Government has launched a new scheme, but it is far more bureaucratic and will be more difficult for people to apply to. That is one side of the equation.

The other side of the equation is willingness. There is a shortage of agricultural labour

throughout Europe—in fact, there is a worldwide shortage of agricultural labour—so people can earn a living in places that they feel are more hospitable than the UK has become through having a very negative view of migration.

I think that there will continue to be difficulties. The real sadness about that is that there do not need to be difficulties, because freedom of movement worked for Scotland—it worked extraordinarily well for Scotland. It worked for the rural parts of Scotland, in particular, and it also worked for us, as Scottish citizens, because we could go elsewhere. Losing freedom of movement is not something to crow about or to express pleasure in; it is deeply damaging and it should not have happened.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

In his statement, Mike Russell said that the Scottish Government's modelling showed that the seafood and agriculture sectors would be the hardest hit post-Brexit. That being the case, why has the transfer depot at Larkhall been such a cause of delay in getting seafood out of Scotland, given that that part of the process is totally in the hands of the Scottish Government? It has failed our seafood exporters, despite knowing for months that such hubs would be required.

Michael Russell: I have seen that bizarre excuse in letters from the rickie of remaining Tory members of Parliament in Scotland, of whom there are fewer with every election; hopefully, there will eventually be none. It is a ludicrous excuse. It is yet another smokescreen. We had Mr Halcro Johnston's smokescreen; no sooner had that started to blow away than we got Mr Chapman's smokescreen.

The reality is that the suffering of the seafood industry and the fishing industry comes from Brexit and from the betrayal of those industries by the UK Government. Not only does Mr Chapman support that Government but, time and time again, he told us in the chamber how wonderful it would be for the seafood industry and for fishing. Either Mr Chapman did not know that the industry was about to be betrayed, or he knew and did not say.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):

The Scottish Government has affirmed its desire to continue in the Erasmus+ scheme. Can the cabinet secretary provide an update on discussions with the European Commission to explore Scotland's continued engagement with the programme? Does he share my concern about recent reports that European Union students who come to study in the UK may be asked to pay for access to healthcare and claim it back—a process that could take up to a year?

Michael Russell: The constant and increasing complexity of the problems that people will face in

both going out to Europe and coming in from Europe are beginning to become clear. The Erasmus+ scheme is something that we would like to see and are working to have reinstated, but if it is reinstated, it will be in a changed environment. The member is absolutely right to point to parts of that changed environment that may make it less attractive to students.

Another issue with attracting EU students is the fee structure. I am the person who introduced that and I think that we all came to realise that it worked well for Scotland, but unfortunately and regrettably it has had to change, too. We have a series of difficulties that feed on one another.

We could move forward in this Parliament if the Scottish Conservatives accepted that they endorsed and supported something that has turned out to be disastrous and that they should not have done so. That is where they started in June 2016, because, to their credit, most of them did not support Brexit then. However, they have gone along with it, so they must take their share of responsibility for what has happened.

We have seen no sign of that from Mr Halcro Johnston, most recently from Mr Chapman or from the other Conservative members in the chamber, and that is deeply to be regretted. I hope that they will change that stance. If they do not, I have to say that I think that the people of Scotland will change it for them.

Universal Support for Self-Isolation

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): I remind everyone that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the campus. I ask everyone to take particular care when they are entering or exiting the chamber.

The next item of business is a Scottish Green Party debate on motion S5M-24029, in the name of Mark Ruskell, on universal support for self-isolation.

15:18

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I start by expressing my gratitude to all those who are working so hard to keep us safe during the pandemic, not least those who work in our front-line health and care services. The roll-out of the vaccines, in particular, is a remarkable effort in every corner of these islands, and the daily vaccine numbers show that the race between the virus and the vaccine is starting to be won.

However, it would be a mistake to see that race as an end game in a battle against a severe acute respiratory syndrome virus that is constantly mutating and probing our weaknesses. As Professor Sridhar put it recently, the vaccine is

“not a strategy in ... itself and relying on it alone is highly, highly risky”.

A well-functioning test, trace and isolate system must form the foundation of our approach to dealing with this and future pandemics.

At last week’s COVID-19 Committee meeting, the national clinical director stated:

“It looks as though we will have to live with Covid in some form for years to come, probably with routine vaccination over time.”—[*Official Report, COVID-19 Committee*, 28 January 2021; c 11.]

If that is to be the case, developing a strong self-isolation package now will serve us well into the future.

Such a system will be successful only if people are actually isolating, and studies have consistently shown that many are struggling to. United Kingdom-wide research that was published by University College London on 13 January shows that 38 per cent of respondents were not isolating for the recommended number of days, and 13 per cent were not isolating at all. That is extremely concerning, and it emphasises the barriers that many people face when attempting to isolate. The same research shows that those from higher-income households are far less likely to not isolate at all. With one in three not fully isolating

when requested, we need to do much more to support people.

There are concerning signs that the Scottish Government’s £500 self-isolation support grant is not getting to everyone who needs it. I warmly welcome the First Minister’s announcement yesterday that the grant will be extended to those earning the accredited living wage and below. That was another step in the right direction, which came after conditions were slightly widened last year to include those who meet criteria for the receipt of universal credit.

However, statistics from November show that just 1,200 of almost 4,000 applications for the grant were accepted—only 30 per cent. The Scottish Government suggested that that might be because of a high number of speculative applications, but we urgently need more clarity on that as the criteria have been widened again. Can the cabinet secretary guarantee that applicants are not being wrongly refused? After years of complaints from councils that the administration costs for the Scottish welfare fund are not being met by Government, are councils being fully supported to administer the grant? Even if speculative applications are the main reason for such a high rate of rejections, does that in itself not indicate that there might be significant unmet need?

The grant is means tested, and means-tested social security payments almost always have a lower uptake than universal ones. Has the Scottish Government estimated how many people are entitled to the grant but have not claimed it? If not, why not?

Countries with a far better track record of managing Covid are not scrimping on support. New Zealand offers the equivalent of about £315 a week, regardless of income. Similar amounts are paid on the same basis in Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea, whereas Finland guarantees 100 per cent of the person’s lost income, again regardless of individual circumstances.

Last month, it emerged that a universal payment is the preferred option of England’s Department for Health and Social Care. I strongly encourage the Scottish Government to consider making the grant universal or, at the very least, increasing eligibility further.

In the words of Dr Çevik, who is a member of the new and emerging respiratory virus threats advisory group,

“You can’t just expect people to sit at home with no money, no income, and then get £500 two weeks later, or four months later. The majority of people with Covid have mild symptoms and they will continue going to work if the alternative is that they lose their income.”

As the motion states, there are practical barriers to self-isolation. The self-isolation advice on NHS Inform advises those isolating to

“Separate yourself from other people in your home and keep the door closed. If you can’t stay in a separate room, try to stay 2 metres away from the other people ... If you can, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household.”

That is easy if you live in a four-bedroom house with plenty of space, but it will prove difficult for many—not just those in temporary unsuitable accommodation but people in multigenerational households and small flats. Hotel accommodation must be offered to everyone who cannot practically follow the self-isolation guidelines in their own home.

In May, my colleague Alison Johnstone asked the First Minister:

“will accommodation such as hotel rooms be offered free to those who need them?”

The First Minister replied:

“The short answer to that question is yes.” —[*Official Report*, 27 May 2020; c 10.]

However, a freedom of information request that was submitted by the Greens has revealed that, of the 20 councils that have responded so far, only three have provided hotel accommodation for self-isolation—to a total of seven people. That begs the question whether councils are receiving the support that they need to offer isolation accommodation and whether that is being publicised widely enough.

In New York City, a supported isolation package, which includes voluntary, free-of-charge stays at hotels with transport provided, food, medication, pet care and social care, is offered. Other countries that have had considerable success in tackling the virus have introduced similar packages. In South Korea, quarantined individuals are provided with daily necessities and sanitary kits. In Taiwan, individuals are offered financial compensation and support services, including daily follow-up calls, medical care, household services, accommodation and meal delivery.

I note the reference in the Scottish Government’s amendment to the national assistance helpline and the local self-isolation assistance service. I would very much welcome more reporting from Government on the reach and effectiveness of those services, which I know council staff are working hard to deliver in partnership with the third sector. However, given the accommodation figures that I have quoted, I am sure that the cabinet secretary will understand my concern that we need to do everything that we can to proactively support people to isolate.

The Scottish Greens have repeatedly called for an elimination strategy for the virus. I think that that is still achievable, despite the widespread community transmission that has taken place. The challenge will be keeping the virus pinned down. That can happen only through a robust contact tracing system, a supported isolation package, and a very dynamic vaccination programme. If we let any of those elements slip, we will fail, and we cannot afford to fail ever again.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the COVID-19 vaccination programme and extends its thanks to all NHS workers and others delivering it; understands that an effective test, trace and isolate regime will be needed now and in the future; considers that there are many barriers to adhering to self-isolation, including financial concerns, insecure employment, unsuitable accommodation and caring responsibilities; believes that proactive support is needed to reach the most vulnerable people and to enable compliance with self-isolation, and calls on the Scottish and the UK governments to make the Self-Isolation Support Grant universal and offer a supported isolation package that will provide accommodation, food, and any other essential services that might be required to allow people to self-isolate, free of charge.

15:27

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): I thank the Scottish Greens for bringing this very important debate to the chamber. Alongside the vaccination programme and the testing programme, compliance with self-isolation is vital to ensuring that the transmission of Covid-19 is reduced.

I recognise that self-isolation is difficult practically, financially or emotionally for many people. Despite that hardship, the vast majority of people comply when they are asked to do so. It is important that we are clear about the facts. A recent University College London study on compliance with self-isolation across all four nations set out that 62 per cent of people developing symptoms complied with the isolation period and 80 per cent of people who had been in contact with someone who had tested positive complied with the guidance. Although the latest research shows that the rates of compliance are much higher than figures that are often quoted, including in the chamber, we still have more to do, of course.

We will continue to build on the substantial support that is available to people who are self-isolating to ensure that, if someone needs help to self-isolate, they can access that.

In 2020, the Scottish Government commenced a number of support services to ensure that vital support is available should people need it. Those services include the self-isolation assistance

service, which is a proactive triage call service that is delivered by local authorities. Everyone who is contacted via test and protect is offered a call from their local authority to discuss all the support that is available—both the financial support and the wider support package. Indeed, that service can also be accessed by anyone by phoning the national assistance helpline. Those services provide essential medication, access to food and groceries, and access to local services. Many local authorities also offer wellbeing services, such as newspaper delivery, befriending and dog-walking services.

Local authority staff have made 91,000 calls to assess the needs of people who are self-isolating, and more than 26,000 support referrals were made to help those in need through those services from October to January. I thank all the local authority staff who are delivering that vital support, and I confirm that the Scottish Government will meet the additional administration costs for that, once they are agreed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

I have heard some fantastic examples of support being provided. A local authority staff member arranged the delivery of breast milk from a new mother to the hospital. A call handler supported a single mother so that her daughter could celebrate her birthday with a cake, a card and a present. A single person who received food delivered to them was also given the support that they needed to re-establish their electricity supply.

In recognising that local authorities best understand the needs of the people in their area, I am also keen to ensure that we enable the sharing of best practice in delivering those services. To that end, we are reviewing the existing support services with local authorities to consider how to standardise the offer nationally. Where local authorities identify opportunities or demand for a particular type of support, we will work to look at unlocking the existing resources to deliver that support to more people across the country.

For many people, though, the financial support is most vital to ensuring that they can afford to comply with a request to self-isolate. The Trades Union Congress today described the UK Government's statutory sick pay provision as "paltry" and called for a decent level of sick pay to be offered to those who are required to self-isolate. I very much echo that call. The UK's position on statutory sick pay is far less generous than any other country's.

The purpose of the self-isolation support grants from the Scottish Government is to help low-income workers who cannot go to work because they must self-isolate and who will lose income as a result. From 16 February, the reach of that grant will be extended to workers who are in receipt of

council tax reduction. It will also become available to those with caring responsibilities for someone over the age of 16 who is asked to self-isolate, where the carer fulfils the other eligibility criteria. Workers who earn the real living wage of £9.50 or less will also be eligible for the grant. We will continue to work with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to develop clear guidance on those changes for local authorities and for people who have been asked to self-isolate from 2 February onwards.

I also recognise that there is more to do to ensure that people who are self-isolating are aware of the support that is available to them should they need it. To that end, we will undertake a further national media campaign to promote the available support. Public Health Scotland officials have also revised communication materials that are used as part of the contact tracing service to be even more explicit that, if someone needs support, it is there for them.

If we wish to beat the virus, we must all play our part, whether that is self-isolating, going for a test or complying with restrictions. I am grateful to the many employers who have supported their employees who need to self-isolate. I am mindful of the many challenges that businesses face at this time.

However, it is clear that too many people feel unable to stay at home and self-isolate when required, because of a fear of their employer not allowing them to be absent while self-isolating. People who are required to self-isolate but who attend their place of work present a serious public health risk. Encouraging staff to attend work during their isolation period puts that business at risk of temporary closure due to an outbreak. It puts the lives of other employees and their risk as well. By the end of February, all people who are contact traced will be asked whether they would like a notification from Public Health Scotland to confirm that they are required to self-isolate and the dates of their self-isolation period. That notification will make clear to the employer that the person should not be attending the workplace, and it will ensure that people who are self-isolating are supported to stay at home. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary is just finishing, and she is over time.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: My apologies. I hope that that gives a flavour of the support that is available from the Scottish Government. We are pleased to support Pauline McNeill's amendment. We cannot support Rachael Hamilton's amendment, as we have already extended the eligibility for self-isolation grants.

I move, as an amendment to S5M-24029, to leave out from “test, trace and isolate” to end and insert:

“Test and Protect system and self-isolation are necessary to stop transmission of COVID-19; notes that recent UCL research shows that 62% of symptomatic people and 80% of close contacts comply fully with isolation guidance, and expresses thanks to all those who do so; further notes the importance of employers acting responsibly and supporting employees to self-isolate; agrees that there are barriers to adhering to self-isolation, including the UK Government’s low rates of Statutory Sick Pay; acknowledges that eligibility for the Scottish Government’s £500 Self-Isolation Support Grant will be extended to workers who earn less than the Real Living Wage, are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, or have responsibilities for someone over 16 who needs to isolate; notes the Scottish Government’s intention to increase awareness of the support available to those self-isolating, which includes the grant, the National Assistance Helpline and the Local Self-Isolation Assistance Service; expresses thanks to local authorities for delivering this support to their communities, and calls on the UK Government to make adjustments to Statutory Sick Pay and the Job Retention Scheme to provide increased and consistent support to people who need to self-isolate.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Rachael Hamilton to speak to and move amendment S5M-24029.3.

15:33

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): In opening the debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives, I echo the thanks that are expressed in the Greens’ motion to our hard-working national health service staff and others, and notably our fantastic armed forces personnel and volunteers, who have been instrumental in the roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccine across Scotland and the UK.

I am not supportive of the Greens’ solutions, but I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to discuss the subject. We are all aware that self-isolation is crucial to prevent spread of the deadly virus. We have to break the cycle of transmission, especially in community settings, and use a package of measures to get on top of the virus. As we learn of new variants, compliance must be improved and barriers to self-isolation must be broken down.

We know that compliance varies hugely. Some studies say that it is at 62 per cent, which was quoted by Shirley-Anne Somerville, but others say that it is 18 per cent. Regardless of that, changing behaviour is key. In the week of 24 January, 4,249 people arrived in Scotland and were expected to quarantine in case they were incubating the virus, compared with 9,868 people living in Scotland who actually tested positive. Dr Müge Çevik, who is a virology expert at the University of St Andrews, says that compliance is our “weakest link”.

I want to make three main points in addressing the various issues that are covered in the Green Party’s motion, and to look for ways in which we can improve the current circumstances.

First, I say that this short debate cannot solve the problems that we are facing, and neither can yesterday’s announcement by the Scottish Government of extension of eligibility thresholds for self-isolation grants, although we welcomed it. The Scottish Government must look at why people are not self-isolating. We know that financial concerns, insecurity of employment, caring responsibilities and unsuitable accommodation are all reasons why people might choose not to self-isolate. As part of the measures to address concerns, changes to statutory sick pay were welcome.

We know that vulnerable communities, including black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, are less likely to self-isolate because of poorer housing, anti-vaccination theories and, possibly, their economic situation. We need a more bespoke intervention to suit those communities, rather than just taking a universal approach. Enforcement can be a key tool in supporting adherence, but it is essential that unintended consequences because of inequalities are carefully looked at so that people who do not have appropriate resources to support self-isolation are not unfairly penalised.

We know that some people break self-isolation because they have to go to the shops for food. Currently, students and low-income households in Scotland are supported by delivery of groceries through central provision, but other countries—for example, Denmark—offer designated quarantine accommodation that includes food and supplies for people who are self-isolating.

Secondly, we know that additional financial support is crucial, so we welcome the changes to statutory sick pay eligibility for people who cannot work because of coronavirus. However, we must look carefully at the Scottish welfare fund, which has not performed well during this time of great need. Of the £59.5 million of Scottish welfare fund that was available in 2020-21, by the end of September 2020, only £18.9 million of it, or 32 per cent of the cash that was available, had been spent. The self-isolation support grant is administered through the Scottish welfare fund.

At the tail end of last year, we heard in the Social Security Committee that many people had been unsuccessful in obtaining support. I share Mark Ruskell’s concern that only 2,000 people had received the self-isolation grant up to the end of November, when just under 7,000 people had applied for the grant. Richard Gass of Rights Advice Scotland spoke of the poor success rate and of how Glasgow City Council was receiving

250 applications per week but was turning down three quarters of them.

The guidance states that when someone does not meet the criteria for the self-isolation grant, they should be considered for a crisis grant, but we know that crisis grants are also not reaching those who need them. Back in March, Shirley-Anne Somerville sent a letter to advise local authorities that it should be possible for people to obtain the crisis grant more than three times a year, but the Child Poverty Action Group made it clear in committee that crisis grants are still being refused on the basis that someone has already had three grants, and their exceptional circumstances have been ignored.

We know that £22 million of additional funding has been earmarked for the Scottish welfare fund, so why are so many people being turned away? The problems that are being caused by distribution of the Scottish welfare fund need to be sorted out, especially for people who are self-isolating.

Thirdly, we know that there is a route out of the pandemic, but I do not believe that the Scottish National Party has grasped the urgency of the situation. On Sunday, we saw the lowest daily figure of just over 9,000 vaccines being administered, while other nations in the UK raced ahead. Our route map out of the pandemic relies on a strong track and trace system, increased testing and, crucially, efficient and rapid vaccination of our population. There must be more mass asymptomatic testing and support to get mass vaccination centres up to 20,000 vaccines a day, with the help of the British Army.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could you come to a close please?

Rachael Hamilton: I certainly will. We cannot support the SNP amendment, given that it offers no measures that have not already been announced and only a tweak to improve self-isolation rates. I would like to work together, but I will have to move the amendment in my name.

I move amendment S5M-24029.3, to leave out from “and the UK governments” to end and insert:

“Government to ensure that the eligibility criteria for self-isolation support grants covers all those who most need support.”

15:39

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Scottish Labour supports the Green motion because we agree with the basic principle that everyone should be able to afford to self-isolate.

The pandemic has already caused astronomical levels of hardship, but in tackling the virus, the current system still does not go far enough. Many low-paid workers struggle to afford to self-isolate,

despite earning more than the real living wage. Many people face a choice between Covid compliance and financial devastation.

Transmission reduces only if people who have the virus self-isolate and if those who are identified as having been close to an infected person do likewise. However, many people are nervous about downloading the Protect Scotland app because they do not—mainly for financial reasons—want to be told to self-isolate if they have been near someone who has Covid. After a year of disrupted work, many people’s finances are under enormous strain and many feel that they cannot afford to self-isolate.

Dr Wanda Wyporska of the Equality Trust charity has said, as we have heard today, that people avoid testing for a range of reasons, from caring responsibilities to employment worries. She said:

“Some people have said they’re not going to take the test, because if they are told to isolate, they won’t be able to work”

and will, therefore, not get any income. Initial data show that there is low take-up of Covid testing in deprived areas of the United Kingdom, along with higher levels of people testing positive. We need to take stock to discover whether that situation has changed at all, and we need to try to understand whether a pattern exists, so that we can work out what we must do to respond.

People on lower incomes have been hardest hit by the virus and by the collateral damage of restrictions. It is obvious that the test and trace approach will reduce transmission only if infectious people are able to isolate effectively. That is the biggest barrier.

Recent research by University College London found that only 43 per cent of people who develop Covid symptoms say that they had requested a test. What happened to the other 57 per cent? That is a finding of the biggest study to date, and its lead author, Dr Daisy Fancourt, said:

“The number of respondents who say they are not isolating for the recommended number of days is also deeply concerning. The increased adherence to self-isolation rules among those with a higher household income suggests that many of those not isolating are breaking guidelines due to financial concerns, and more support needs to be put in place to allow people to self-isolate without fear of losing out financially.”

Without proper support to help people to self-isolate, there is an economic divide between those who have the means to stay at home and those who do not. Even if people want to self-isolate, finances can prevent them from doing so. Working-class households are bearing the brunt of that divide. We hear that “We are all in it together”, but for many people, it does not feel as though

that is the case. While some people are paddling, others are waist deep.

Less than one third of the population of Scotland have downloaded the Protect Scotland app. People who test positive for Covid-19 are given a randomly generated code to enter, which then alerts close contacts who also have the app that they should self-isolate. However, fewer than half of those who use the app and have tested positive have actually entered the code to alert others. Clearly, we have more work to do in that regard.

I know that, in England and Wales, an update to the contact tracing system has been added to enable people to apply for the £500 grant if they receive a self-isolation direction. I note what Shirley-Anne Somerville said about updates to the app, so it would be useful if, in winding up, ministers could clarify whether we have similar processes here in Scotland.

As far as I can establish, the Scottish welfare fund is very important when it comes to self-isolation. There are issues around lack of public awareness of the fund and inconsistency in awarding grants. Last year, the Poverty and Inequality Commission found that the fund was underutilised through the initial period of lockdown from April to June and, shockingly, it found that there had been a massive underspend of £1.1 million compared with the same period in 2019. We can see how desperate things have become for a lot of people. The latest figures show that less than a third of people who applied for a self-isolation grant had their applications approved.

I think that we all agree that asymptomatic testing is extremely important in tracking down the virus, so we must make it easier for people to self-isolate without undermining their financial situation. One in three people has coronavirus without displaying any symptoms; therefore, we also need to target testing at people who cannot work at home during lockdown.

In conclusion, I say that no one should pay a financial price for isolating from family, work and friends to stop the spread of the virus, if they cannot afford to do so. Therefore, Scottish Labour supports the principle of the Green motion, which is that there should be a universal right to be supported in order to self-isolate to stop the spread of the virus.

I move amendment S5M-24029.1, to insert after “future”:

“and is integral along with the vaccine roll-out in the fight against COVID-19; believes that this will require full use of Scotland’s testing capacity to deliver mass asymptomatic testing in communities across Scotland”.

15:45

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western)

(LD): I am grateful to the Green Party for making time for this important debate today. We have some differences of opinion on universality, but it is important that we make it clear that nobody should be disadvantaged if they are forced to self-isolate.

It is nearly a year since the first cases of Covid-19 were confirmed in Scotland. When I look back at that time, it seemed that the threat was very far away. It is strange to think that, just a year ago last week, I was asking the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport about repatriating British citizens from a Chinese city that I had barely heard of and, today, I learned that one of my closest friends has tested positive, after sitting at the bedside of her father, who died in an Edinburgh hospital of Covid on Friday. We had no idea just how much the pandemic would turn all our lives upside down.

Since then, coronavirus has dominated every aspect of the business of Parliament, which is right. Consideration of public health has to come first, but the impact has been felt in all portfolios and discussions—from justice to jobs and from education to the environment. We have not always agreed in the chamber on the right course of action, and sometimes that disagreement has been vehement, but that comes from a good place. It comes from passion and from having a duty of care for the people whom we were all sent here to represent.

The top line of the Green Party motion rightly refers to the Government’s vaccine roll-out. My frustration about that is a matter of public record. It is not the fault of clinicians; it is because of a centralised bottleneck. We are starting to see improvement, for which I am grateful, but I will restate the point that my leader, Willie Rennie, made at First Minister’s question time this afternoon. A vaccine hub has been established in one of the most deprived areas of my constituency, in Muirhouse, but everyone who lives within sight of it will be shipped to the Edinburgh international conference centre to get their vaccines. We really need to identify and remedy some of the administrative hurdles.

The motion also refers to the need for an “effective” test, trace and isolate programme. That need was urgent six months ago; the Government’s launch of test and protect proved to be many things, but “effective” was not one of them. That said, I welcome the plans that the First Minister laid out yesterday to widen asymptomatic testing in healthcare settings and to launch community testing across mainland areas. Some reassurance will be given to teaching staff—who are rightly anxious, given the prevalence and transmissibility of the new variant among young

people—that they will have access to asymptomatic testing twice weekly.

These are unprecedented times, as is absolutely manifest in the workload from all our inboxes and mailbags. There have been queries about the restrictions, about interpreting guidance and rules and about many other aspects of Covid-related casework.

However, for me—and, I am sure, for other members—the greatest amount of time has been spent helping people who have had little or no support from the Government, because they have slipped through various cracks in the firmament. I do not blame the Government for that. It is very difficult to have a catch-all provision in these difficult times, but there are many such cases.

The toll that that has taken on people has been huge. The stress and emotional burden of being unable to pay for the basics, not knowing how rent will be paid next month and not knowing how they will keep up a decent standard of living have been unbearable for so many of my constituents, as they have for many of other members' constituents. The virus is punishing enough without people having to choose between following rules and being able to feed their families, so we need to make it easier for people to self-isolate.

Thanks to the broad shoulders of the UK economy, people have been able to access the coronavirus job retention scheme, and I welcome the First Minister's announcement yesterday that the £500 self-isolation payment will be available to everyone whose income level is below the real living wage.

As I close, I urge the Scottish Government to ensure that the new measures are robust and inclusive enough that no one who needs or is entitled to support will lose out. The Government will have the responsibility for ensuring that the support packages succeed where they have previously failed, because the livelihoods of all our constituents depend on them.

Let us not lose sight of the recovery. The biggest thanks that we can give to those who are working hard to keep us safe throughout the pandemic is to do everything that we can to fight the virus with a world-class test and trace system, adequate support packages for individuals and businesses, and a vaccination programme that will allow businesses to reopen, our economy to restart and schools to return.

A number of members have mentioned the real possibility, as articulated by Jason Leitch at the COVID-19 Committee last week, that Covid might be here to stay and that we might have to learn to live around it. That means that we need to make it safer and more convenient for people to observe

the rules and to ensure that people are financially recompensed if they are required to do so. Achievement of that will require a spirit of partnership and co-operation inside and outside Parliament, with people working together in the interests of everyone, in all corners of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I ask for speeches of no more than four minutes, please.

15:50

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a few brief remarks in the debate. I join Mark Ruskell and colleagues from across the chamber in thanking our front-line health and social care workers, particularly those who are working, in some cases, around the clock to roll out the vaccine programme.

I agree with a huge amount of the Green Party's motion and, instinctively, I favour universality in the delivery of benefits. I qualify what I am about to say with that statement. A challenge that we face in relation to the fiscal support that we offer in Scotland is that we have to operate within the limited resources that we have at our disposal. When we have to manage an unpredictable crisis, there is a strong case for ensuring that we target every resource at where it is most needed, but I certainly want to move towards universality if we know that that will be fiscally sustainable.

Mark Ruskell and Alex Cole-Hamilton made the important point about being cognisant that we will be living with Covid for the long term. We should ensure that the test and protect system is robust, because Covid will be with us for some time, and we should put in place measures to support people who have to self-isolate. Covid will not be a passing issue; it will occupy the attention of members for much of the next parliamentary session, just as it has occupied all of our attention over the past 12 months.

Several members commented on the link between the prevalence of the virus and poverty, deprivation and low income. Members who have been forensically examining Public Health Scotland's Covid maps daily will be aware that the areas in their constituencies or regions with the highest concentration of people who have tested positive are very often areas in which lower incomes are more prevalent and areas of increased multiple deprivation, so I completely agree with Mark Ruskell about the need to target those groups and ensure that support is available in order to achieve elimination.

Some members touched on the vaccination programme. The way in which that issue has been politicised is deeply regrettable. Across these

islands, we have to be rooting for one another. The failure of one part of the UK is a failure for all of us in our fight against the virus. The Scottish Government has said that, initially, the focus has been on depth rather than breadth, to use the First Minister's terms. However, the figures from yesterday and today show that the pace of vaccination is picking up considerably, and it is likely that that pace will accelerate. In the weeks preceding an election campaign, I understand the temptation to look for a wedge issue.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Will the member give way?

Tom Arthur: I will, but I can anticipate what the member is going to say.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: The member is belittling real and genuine concerns that have been raised in good faith by Opposition parties that want the SNP to succeed with its vaccination programme. Frankly, it is not succeeding, and we want that to change.

Tom Arthur: I would never doubt Mr Cole-Hamilton's sincerity, for which I know he is reputed across the chamber. However, I question the motives of the UK Government, given that it is briefing about quantities of the vaccine while insisting that the Scottish Government does not put that information into the public domain. I raise the issue for a very straightforward reason: that creates uncertainty and worry among constituents. Countless constituents have got in touch with me after reading newspaper headlines on the back of Opposition party attacks. I phone to reassure them and, a day or two later, they have had their vaccine and everything is fine.

I encourage members to resist the temptation to create uncertainty. If they do raise the issue, they should temper their language and be cognisant that a lot of very vulnerable people are very worried. We have a responsibility not to needlessly spread fear.

15:54

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Other members have begun with thanks, and I echo one line in the Government amendment and thank those who have done the right thing by self-isolating as necessary. However, I am certain that I am not the only member in the chamber who has, since the very beginning of the pandemic, heard from constituents who are self-isolating despite their severe anxieties about the consequences for themselves, their livelihoods and their families. We have a responsibility to recognise those anxieties and to address them.

I have heard from constituents who have been made to work by their employer, even despite

having reported symptoms; told not to use the test and protect app; refused furlough; and told directly not to self-isolate—"Turn up for work, or you'll lose your job." Those are the kinds of threats that people have had. Never mind just the loss of pay during the self-isolation period; staff are told, "Turn up for work, or you won't get any more shifts at all." That is the type of coercion that some constituents have reported experiencing throughout the whole saga.

I worry that the fear of coercion or reprisals from employers will only grow as the vaccine programme rolls out. Irresponsible employers will feel strengthened in that regard, and some employees will feel under greater pressure to take risks with their own health and the public's health. Most people want to do the right thing, but they face barriers—about money, but not only money.

I will mention some of the arguments from the Scottish Trades Union Congress. In my memory, the STUC has never taken a simplistic jobs, jobs, jobs or all-jobs-are-good-jobs approach. It recognises that quality of employment matters. Some jobs are secure, well rewarded and protected by legal workplace rights and good practice by employers. Work of that kind is great for people's wellbeing, socially and physically as well as economically. Bad jobs do the opposite. As Rozanne Foyer told the Finance and Constitution Committee today in her evidence on the budget, the pandemic has shown us more clearly than ever "that bad work kills", including by creating barriers to self-isolation where that is necessary.

As I said, some of those barriers are financial. They may result from precarious work; insecure incomes; a lack of employment rights; and the low level of, or a lack of eligibility for, statutory sick pay. It is therefore absurd to remove from the motion any reference to the UK Government. However, there are also challenges that are within the devolved competence of the Scottish Government, because barriers to self-isolation also exist in the form of living space, caring responsibilities, mental health and many more factors.

I very much welcome the First Minister's acknowledgement that issues such as international travel should have been dealt with more firmly in the past. We are now moving to a system of managed hotel quarantine, which is overdue but welcome and necessary. Why should there be any less of a proactive approach to self-isolation for people who live here, who know that they may have been exposed to the virus and want to do the right thing, but who need a bit of help? We need a much more proactive approach from both Governments. I commend Mark Ruskell's motion to the chamber.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Donald Cameron.

Excuse me, Mr Cameron, we seem to have an issue with your sound. Perhaps you could hold on for a moment.

Can you say hello to us, Mr Cameron? We are still not hearing you. I see that Willie Coffey is in the chamber, so I ask him to be the next contributor.

15:59

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The financial support that is being provided to people who are self-isolating is really important, and I have no doubt that it is much welcomed.

As usual, our SNP Government is going further—as far as we can to help as many people as possible. Yesterday, as the cabinet secretary said, we extended the support to cover people on the real living wage or less. It now includes people who already depend on a council tax reduction and those with caring responsibilities, which I am really pleased to see. There is also an extension to the timescale for applying for the support, to try to help as many people as we can. All that means that we will be able to reach another 200,000 people in Scotland.

After the £500 grant was introduced in October, the Government was asked to include the parents of children who had to self-isolate, and we did so. We also reached out to support people who were not on universal credit but would qualify for it if they applied, so we can see that the Government is doing as much as possible to help and responding to circumstances as best it can. Can we do more to help more people? I hope that if we can, we will, but I am sure that the people of Scotland can see that the Government is stepping in to help the most vulnerable of our citizens who are having to self-isolate.

A development that is interesting to note is that the Protect Scotland app that many of us have on our mobile phones will shortly be updated, so that people who are notified to self-isolate through the app will get details of how to apply for the grant. As I understand it, the app will also give them a certificate to authenticate their claim when they make the application to their local council. That should help, too. It is a really helpful and useful application of information technology in these times. Well done, once again, to our software engineers for making it possible.

I want to say a few words slightly away from the debate about money and on isolation itself. When we get through this awful time, as I know that we will, I hope that the Government will look back and examine the impact that self-isolation has had on

our people and continue to provide support in some form or other. Let us not forget our shielders, many of whom have in effect been living in isolation since the start of the pandemic, nearly a year ago now. I will share one or two examples of the impact of isolation on my family. It will probably be the same experience as for other members in the chamber and many families across Scotland.

My sister, Helen, is shielding and living at home with my niece, Kerri, who is both special needs and disabled. They have hardly been out of the house in 11 months. The impact on Kerri of not seeing any friends for such a long time is hard to imagine, and on Helen, too. She is trying to cope with her own vulnerability while protecting Kerri; that is impossible to comprehend.

My daughter, Niamh, despite being healthy, spent much of last year in self-imposed isolation while trying to complete her master's degree at the University of Stirling, because her boyfriend, Seb, is extremely vulnerable to the virus and has been shielding for a full calendar year. To protect and help him, she decided to keep apart from her family in order to keep him safe.

Last but not least, my partner's dad, Jimmy Muir, aged 93, was enjoying his life quietly at home at the start of the pandemic but he is now confined to a care home as a result of isolation and lack of mobility. They will all probably be really annoyed with me for mentioning them, but to say that I am proud of them all is an understatement.

The impact of self-isolation has been felt by many of our citizens, young and old, and it is much wider than we think. I am asking that we care enough to reach out to people, ask them about their experience to learn as much as we can about it and be prepared to keep offering help, if it is needed, as we recover from the pandemic. If we do that, on top of helping with grants wherever they are needed, we will have done some good and valuable work for the people of Scotland at this time of crisis.

16:04

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): Notwithstanding the Government's action to widen the entitlement criteria, which was announced yesterday, I welcome today's debate and agree that the self-isolation support grants should be universal and barrier free. Today's motion recognises

"that there are many barriers to ... self-isolation, including financial concerns, insecure employment, unsuitable accommodation and caring responsibilities".

That is what I want to focus on.

For the past three months, I have been consulting on a member's bill to set up a Scottish employment injuries advisory council. There is a lot to resolve with the now-devolved benefit, but I believe that Covid-19 and its long-term effects should be regarded as an industrial disease when the illness is caught by someone in the workplace. Key workers such as NHS, social care, retail and transport workers all face a higher risk of getting Covid and getting it severely or coming into contact with someone who has it. They cannot work at home and some are lower paid than others.

I will take care workers as an example. On paper, the grant should work for them, but we know that life is not as simple as that. During the member's bill process, I was told about care workers having faced and continuing to face barriers to self-isolation. The trade unions Unite and GMB told me that many have been wary of getting tested because they fear the loss of income if they have to self-isolate, as they would not get sick pay. They are low paid and many are on universal credit, but they also face stigma if they have been off work. Other workers, including construction workers, face financial and potential employment repercussions from pay lost and possibly jobs lost in an industry with a history of blacklisting. They, too, lose out from self-isolating or speaking up about the workplace not being Covid safe. In addition, if they are not on a means-tested benefit, they are not eligible for the grant.

When the alert call or text message to self-isolate comes, people have to drop everything instantly. It is a devastating irony that those who are most at risk have to do the most to get help. Baked into the entitlement criteria are a multitude of barriers and paperwork requirements to access the support. In what is supposed to be—and is—an emergency situation, before they can get any help, they must locate and submit proof of qualifying benefits and a recent bank statement, and they must get proof that they cannot work from home and that their earned income will fall. Instead of slashing the criteria, the Government has simply changed the thresholds.

Low-paid workers might also have a different experience from that of a professional or a homeworker when they receive that alert. We would all panic about having food in and medication in the cupboard, but many of us are lucky enough not to have to consider whether there is enough cash in the bank to go and get that shop in before the grant is paid or whether there is enough credit on the phone to claim the grant or set up an online account for an online shop with an unfamiliar supermarket.

The pandemic has accelerated the divisions in society and our workforce at a rapid rate. Key

workers, furloughed workers and those working at home all have different experiences of being at risk of catching the virus, of having to self-isolate and of that risk being borne by their workplace. For the sake of those who are most likely to lose out by self-isolating, the Government must drastically think harder about how it can remove the barriers to their getting this vital support.

16:08

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands)
(Con): I hope that you can hear me, Deputy Presiding Officer.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a horrific experience for many, and in different ways. First and foremost, many people have had to deal with the tragic deaths of family members and friends, while others have been at the front line of our NHS or in social care, dealing with the devastating impacts of the virus at first hand. Even for those who have not been directly affected by the infection itself, the virus has nevertheless had a debilitating and pernicious impact, especially when it comes to being unable to see family or friends.

The series of lockdowns that have been designed to keep us safe and protect our NHS have had a significant and profound impact on many people's lives. In particular, they have had an unintended impact on the mental health of the nation, which is something that we must not just recognise but act on.

Indeed, both lockdown and periods of self-isolation will affect people in different ways, which is something that has scarcely been discussed during the course of the pandemic. I therefore commend Mark Ruskell for bringing this debate to the chamber, even if Conservative members cannot fully endorse the entirety of his motion. I note that it is an issue that Mark Ruskell has pursued tenaciously in the Covid-19 Committee, which I have the honour of convening.

It is plainly right that we support those who are most at risk from taking time off work to self-isolate, not just to ensure the efficacy of self-isolation as a means of preventing further spread of the virus, but because self-isolation, in and of itself, can lead to significant anxiety, as many members have pointed out, not to mention the practical consequences that it can have.

As the motion notes, self-isolation can have those unintended practical consequences and it can put people in precarious situations relating to their employment status and financial means, among other concerns. It is right, therefore, that both the UK and the Scottish Governments have similar schemes offering £500 to those who are most in need, so that they can self-isolate with some financial stability and security. The Scottish

Conservatives have concerns, however, about how the scheme has been managed in Scotland, with less than a third of applications for the self-isolation grant having been approved by the SNP Government, according to the latest available data. Clearly, improvements need to be made in ensuring that such targeted support gets to those who need it most.

That scheme is not the only way in which people have been supported during the pandemic. It would be churlish not to recognise what the Scottish Government has done in that regard, but there are also schemes such as the UK Government's furlough scheme and its self-employment income support scheme, which have provided valuable income to those who are unable to work during the pandemic. The UK Government has also sought to support some of the most vulnerable people through investing additional money in the universal credit programme and through easing the eligibility criteria for applications for universal credit.

Those are all positive interventions, but it is clear that more is needed to help those who are struggling with the pandemic and its effects. As I noted, there are real and legitimate concerns about the impact of self-isolation on people's mental health, especially at this time of year. In November, the Scottish Association for Mental Health published a study that revealed

"that 50% say their mental health has been worse in the last few weeks than at the start of the coronavirus pandemic."

Age Scotland has noted

"the impact of loneliness ... increasing the risk of stress, anxiety and depression, and doubling the risk of dementia."

Clearly, we must ensure that those stressful factors related to self-isolation are mitigated as much as possible.

We agree with the general thrust of the motion, but we are of the view that the Scottish Government must do more to reduce the negative mental health impacts of self-isolation. It is clear that existing financial support schemes can play a part in achieving such aims, but only if such support is properly targeted to those who need it most.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Cameron's was the last of the open-debate speeches, and we now move to the closing speeches. We are running a bit over time, for various reasons, so please be tight with your timing. David Stewart, you have up to four minutes.

16:12

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): This has been an excellent debate, with helpful

and well-argued contributions from across the political divide. I, too, congratulate Mark Ruskell and the Scottish Green Party on their initiative in securing the debate.

The Covid-19 pandemic has placed tremendous strain and responsibility on all our hard-working front-line NHS and care workers. The vaccination programme, as well as being a triumph for British and international—[*Inaudible*.]—has required exceptional organisational and administrative expertise in its roll-out. As the motion recognises,

"an effective test, trace and isolate regime will be needed"

not just immediately, but for some time into the future.

The key issue in the debate, as far as I am concerned, is the variety of barriers to self-isolation: money worries, insecure employment, suitable accommodation and caring responsibilities. To be clear, self-isolation is a key and crucial element of any Covid recovery strategy. If quarantine/self-isolation is not carried out effectively, for all the reasons that I have just highlighted, we are weakening one of the key pillars of the plan, which will, of course, put back Covid recovery and renewal and will extend lockdown restrictions for longer than they need to be. Earlier this week, in reply to a question from Bob Doris, the cabinet secretary outlined how the Scottish Government is supporting people to self-isolate. As we have heard, eligibility for the self-isolation support grant has now been extended to those who earn the real living wage or lower.

Members made extremely useful contributions to the debate. I will focus, first, on that of Mark Ruskell, who made the point that our vaccination programme is not a strategy in itself. He also quoted Professor Jason Leitch, who has said that we might have to live with Covid for some years to come. Of course, we will need a strong self-isolation strategy for that reason. Mr Ruskell also quoted academic research that suggested that 38 per cent of individuals were not isolating for the recommended number of days.

The cabinet secretary said that we have more to do, which is, of course, true. She said that, if people need help, they should be able to access it, and she flagged up the national assistance service and the helpline. She gave a good example of best practice when she spoke about the delivery of breast milk from a new mother. The key will be for us to share such best practice.

Rachael Hamilton thanked our front-line staff and mentioned the military, members of which have worked extremely effectively in the current crisis.

Pauline McNeill made the point that everyone should be able to afford to self-isolate. Many

people have to make a choice between compliance with Covid rules versus financial destruction. Ms McNeill said that isolation must work effectively, otherwise our testing and tracing strategy will not be as effective as it could be. More support is needed, particularly for those who fall on the wrong side of the economic divide.

Alex Cole-Hamilton made an important point about welcoming the testing of asymptomatic people. He again mentioned the dilemma that disadvantaged families face, between following the rules and feeding their own families.

I am conscious of the time, Presiding Officer, so I will conclude my remarks. As many members have testified, we need to discuss the broader economic and social context of child poverty in Scotland. Even before Covid, our levels of such poverty and social isolation were high and were projected to rise.

I hope that members will support Labour's amendment, which calls on the Scottish Government to make

"full use of Scotland's testing capacity to deliver mass asymptomatic testing".

We need to keep the virus pinned down. Vaccination is an important part of our strategy, but the test, trace and isolate approach should also be part of the mix. Together, we can defeat this foe and then rebuild our economy and communities.

16:17

Maurice Golden (West Scotland) (Con): I thank hard-working NHS staff who are doing all they can to keep us safe and protected during these unparalleled times. Now that the vaccination programme is under way they are once again working tirelessly to ensure that our population is protected.

The Scottish Greens are right to state that an effective test, trace and isolate regime will be needed now and in the future, particularly as we attempt to deal with the emergence of worrying new variants of the virus—a point made by Mark Ruskell. Donald Cameron also highlighted the mental health impacts with which many of our communities are struggling at this time.

The proactive provision of support will be needed if we are to reach our most vulnerable people and enable them to comply with self-isolation rules—a point well made by Shirley-Anne Somerville and Pauline McNeill. Ms McNeill also raised the issue that the app should be upgraded to improve access to support through it.

Scottish Conservatives believe that support should be offered proactively to all those who need it, including those on low incomes. However,

we cannot agree that it should be offered universally. Many people, including all members in the chamber, would not see any loss of income as a result of either self-isolating or taking time off work following a positive test result. It would be far more effective to provide a comprehensive support scheme targeted towards those who need it, rather than a blanket approach that would cover everyone including those who do not need any support from the state to enable them to self-isolate.

Many members, including my colleague Rachael Hamilton as well as Alex Cole-Hamilton, mentioned the vaccination programme. I agree that an effective test, trace and isolate regime would complement the vaccine programme. In the past 24 hours we have started to hear positive news about the Oxford vaccine, in that a person's ability to transmit the virus could be substantially reduced from 22 days after they receive their first jab. That is further evidence that the vaccination programme is our route out of the crisis and will be the most effective way to significantly reduce the number of people who are required to self-isolate.

More than ever, it is imperative that the SNP handles the vaccine roll-out successfully. I will be clear: I desperately want the Scottish Government to succeed in the vaccine roll-out. However, no degree of SNP spin can compensate for its mishandling of the programme. The fact is that hundreds of thousands of vaccine doses that are allocated to Scotland are sitting in storage, and no degree of SNP spin can explain why we have fallen so far behind the rest of the UK when it comes to administering the vaccine.

All four nations have equal access based on population share. There is no excuse. Last week, 2.4 million first doses of the vaccine were administered. Only 145,000 of those were in Scotland. Based on population share, that figure should have been 200,000.

Supporting all those who need support to self-isolate is critical. However, fixing the vaccine roll-out programme is the surest and fastest way to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

16:20

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I thank members for their contributions to this very important debate. We all appreciate and share an understanding that compliance will continue to be critical for some time. Only by self-isolating when we develop symptoms, or are notified to do so, can we break the chain of transmission of the virus and save lives. We know that self-isolation is a significant challenge for people to undertake, and I have set out the extensive range of support that is available

to people who are self-isolating and our intention to expand that.

Mark Ruskell was quite right to challenge the Government to think about the issue not just in the short term but for the long term, and I reassure him that we are committed to looking at the lessons that we need to learn for the future. However, I cannot agree with him on the aspect of his motion that is about a universal offer for everyone who self-isolates. According to our forecasting, that would cost £700 million for the next financial year, and, given the financial constraints that we are under, the Scottish Government believes that there are better ways to support people at this point.

I urge Rachael Hamilton not to use again the figure of 18 per cent compliance—which is woefully out of date—because that does a disservice not to the Government but to those who are making the difficult choice to self-isolate. Compliance is high, as I said in my opening remarks. If we do not give people the correct picture, and instead give them a false one, that will damage morale and compliance. We must, please, use the most up-to-date figures, not for the Government's benefit but for the people out there who are listening to us and looking for leadership.

Many members have, quite rightly, asked about the number of people who have been turned down for a self-isolation support grant. In passing, I add that that replicates roughly what is happening in England. I note that a report in *The Guardian* yesterday said that 70 per cent of people who apply are being refused. We are taking action to ensure that we extend eligibility, so perhaps more people will be eligible in future than have been in the past.

However, I also point to some other reasons why people are not eligible for a grant—for example, people who have applied had not been in work and have therefore not had a drop in income; people have not been self-isolating; and there have been speculative applications. We will look, and have been looking, very seriously at what we need to do on eligibility. That is why we have already made changes and we will continue to look at it.

Pauline McNeill talked about people who are frightened to come forward for a test because of a fear of self-isolating. She was quite right to highlight that. That is why we are already looking at what we need to do about putting in information about support when we are doing community testing, so that people are aware of what is out there. Again, I mentioned in my opening remarks the publicity campaigns that we will be doing in general.

Patrick Harvie: I am sure that the cabinet secretary recognises that people face threats of consequences, and coercion, from employers, and have fears of such. Surely, as hospitality and retail reopen and as the vaccine rolls out, we need more than just information for employees; we need a way of ensuring a high level of good practice by employers. We need the stick, not just the carrot.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I was just coming on to the remarks that Patrick Harvie made earlier and to that point. He rightly raises the issues that some employees have been facing, and I know that he has previously spoken about those in the chamber. In my opening remarks, I mentioned some of the measures that we are looking to undertake. The member should be reassured that we are considering what more can be done. We are taking the issue very seriously, and I am happy to work with Patrick Harvie and others on the further details of that.

Patrick Harvie and others spoke about isolation accommodation. The Scottish Government and COSLA developed isolation accommodation guidance last summer. The feedback from those delivering the support is that, although the service has been on offer for people who need it, there is very limited demand for alternative accommodation. However, we keep the issue under review. For example, we are examining how we offer support to make sure that the information is detailed enough so that people understand the offer that is out there.

We have a strong universal support package that is available to everyone in Scotland and we are taking targeted action for people on low incomes that are less than the real living wage. We have a strong package but, as always, I am of course willing to work with members from across the chamber to see what more can be done. We will see the best results through a shared endeavour to tackle the virus and to support compliance.

16:26

Mark Ruskell: I thank members for their contributions and warm words. I hope that the debate has put a strong spotlight on one aspect of our Covid response, and I look forward to further scrutiny of the issue not just in the chamber but in the COVID-19 Committee, under Donald Cameron's convenership.

It is right that we scrutinise the issue, because we have never had a full picture of the effectiveness of self-isolation or of the services and support that we are putting in place to help people to self-isolate. The cabinet secretary rightly said that 68 per cent of people have managed to self-isolate. In some ways, we can welcome that

figure and thank those people for their efforts. That has been very difficult, particularly for those who have had to shield for a long period. Willie Coffey's heartfelt contribution showed just how hard it has been, particularly for carers, to go into self-isolation and to shield.

However, the flip-side of that is the figure that I mentioned: the 32 per cent who have been unable to self-isolate. As Pauline McNeill said, some people are paddling, but others are waist deep and are really struggling. There is an element of fear for people about self-isolation and what might happen in their workplace and if they lose income.

The Scottish Government's support package has evolved. The local assistance service started by working just with those who were shielding but is now available to everybody who needs to self-isolate, alongside a national helpline. We need to see how effective that service is. I make no criticism of the incredible work of council officers who are delivering the helpline alongside strong third sector partners, but we need to ensure that there is consistency across the country and that the work of the local assistance service is getting through to the people who desperately need support.

I welcome the cabinet secretary's commitment to ensure, in conversation with COSLA, that the administration costs of running the service are fully met. All of us who have contact with our local authority colleagues know just how hard council workers are having to work at the moment and the stresses and strains that they are under. That is an important point.

Something is not quite happening on the accommodation side. Earlier, I highlighted the incredibly low uptake of the accommodation offer. I understand that, in Edinburgh, the figures show that, recently, only 1 per cent of those who have been in touch with the local assistance service have gone on to get further support. That is difficult to understand, given the inequality that exists in the city and the needs of people who are living with poverty and disadvantage. I have my doubts about whether the service and the support packages that we are putting in place are getting through to the people who desperately need them. I hope that I am wrong, but we need to provide more scrutiny on that.

The cabinet secretary mentioned a national media campaign. That would be very welcome. I have constituents who are genuinely unsure about what type of support they can get. I know of virtually nobody who believes that they can get hotel accommodation through the existing arrangements. In theory, I think that people can, but it is not clear whether someone who lives in a two-bedroom flat that three or four people live in

can get hotel accommodation. There is an issue with the messaging.

In addition, as has been mentioned, there are barriers to accessing the grant. Up to now, there has been only a 10-day window. Some people who have been ill have missed that window and have been turned down for the grant. The extension to 28 days makes a lot of sense. There is also an element of digital exclusion, as Mark Griffin mentioned and Citizens Advice Scotland has discussed. People who are self-isolating cannot get outside the house, so they will need a computer or an iPhone or whatever to send in the evidence that is needed in order to apply for the grant. Every time we impose such a requirement, we put up a barrier. Every time we do that, we make it harder.

I think that I have one minute left. The Presiding Officer has confirmed that. In that time, I want to talk about employers.

Mark Griffin and Patrick Harvie spoke about irresponsible employers. The STUC is right—bad work kills. It kills every day, but it kills even more in a pandemic. Bad employers are making implied threats to their workforce, which means that they are unable to do the right thing.

However, there are good employers. There is a very good employer near where I stay in Stirling called Recyke-a-bike, which is a social enterprise. It does not have as much income coming in as it would like to pay beyond statutory sick pay; it is also in a business in which the work cannot be done at home, which makes things difficult. Recyke-a-bike has called me repeatedly to ask for the eligibility criteria to be extended to beyond the real living wage so that more of its staff can be captured, they can get the support that they need and they do not need to choose between isolating and eating.

I welcome the fact that progress has been made this week. In effect, eligibility has been extended to another 200,000 people in Scotland, which is welcome progress, but a lot more than 200,000 people are in in-work poverty, and we need to focus on them. We need to put in place the most robust package possible in the world to ensure that they can do the right thing, isolate when they need to and be supported in doing that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the Scottish Green Party debate on universal support for self-isolation.

Unexplained Wealth Orders (Donald Trump)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a Scottish Green Party debate on motion S5M-24030, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on unexplained wealth orders, Donald Trump.

16:34

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): This is a story that goes back a long way. In previous chapters, we saw two successive First Ministers—Jack McConnell and Alex Salmond—actively courting the business interest of Donald Trump, despite already knowing what kind of character he was. We saw the Scottish planning system being overturned for him. We also saw the highest level of environmental protection that any land in Scotland is able to have being overturned; in the end, that protection proved worthless against an environmentally destructive development.

Even before Trump's candidacy or presidency, he was known around the world to be an untrustworthy, dishonest, racist conspiracy theorist. This was never someone that we should have wanted to associate Scotland's good name with. Now he is a disgraced former President who left office only after attempting to overturn a democratic election and inciting a violent mob at the Capitol—a mob that was composed of the people he had radicalised: the conspiracists, the white supremacists, the religious extremists, and the grifters of a Republican Party that enabled him. Some people were shocked, whereas others thought that behaviour entirely predictable and in character.

Now that it is all over, maybe some people think that Trump should just go back to being the global joke that he was before he became a global threat. However, people who abuse political office need to be held accountable, not only as a matter of direct justice, but as a clear signal to those who come after them that they will not get away with such abuse. That is why the definition of "a politically exposed person" in the legislation that provides for unexplained wealth orders makes it clear that the status continues after the person has left office. The mechanism is no less relevant to Trump now that he is out of power.

The reasons for the concerns about his financial conduct are long standing and they have been detailed in many places, including reports published by Avaaz and given to the Scottish Government. The purchases in Scotland were part of a very long spending spree, with his spokespeople claiming that he had vast sums of money sitting around and available for investment

even though, at the same time, he was apparently being turned down for credit.

The Avaaz report says:

"investigations by the US Department of Justice Office of Special Counsel, the US Congress, and others have unearthed a wealth of evidence tying Mr Trump to alleged financial misconduct, including opening questions about Mr Trump's financial dealings in Scotland".

We all know that a number of Trump's former associates have been investigated and that some have been prosecuted and convicted, including for crimes of dishonesty and financial misconduct.

I have neither the time nor the need right now to go through every single detail of the concerns and questions that surround Trump's business dealings. That is not what this debate has to be about. We all know what the investigations have shown. The point of this debate and the issue that we bring to the chamber is that it is for Scottish ministers to take action.

I totally understand the principle of independent prosecutors acting without control or guidance in individual cases. When it comes to individual criminal prosecutions, it would be completely wrong for ministers to decide who should be prosecuted and who should not. However, what we are talking about is not a prosecution, but merely going to court and asking for information to be provided.

As the legal opinion that was published recently by Avaaz makes clear, this is a matter of political responsibility for the Government. It says that, as a matter of law, it is simply not possible for the Scottish ministers, including the First Minister, to insulate themselves from the responsibility—legal and political—and accountability for decisions concerning unexplained wealth orders in Scotland. Even if the immediate departmental responsibility for the operation of seeking UWOs has been allocated to the Lord Advocate, that can be only for the purposes of administrative convenience or efficiency. It does not and cannot change the legal responsibilities of the Scottish ministers.

There are reasonable questions to ask a court to put to the Trump Organization. If it can provide reasonable answers to the reasonable questions, it will have no problem. However, the Scottish Government and Scottish ministers have a responsibility to ask those questions, and they cannot maintain the position that they have no ability to act. They do, and so does this Parliament.

I ask that all members back this necessary and relatively modest step towards accountability.

I move,

That the Parliament calls on the Scottish Ministers to use their powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to seek

the grant of an Unexplained Wealth Order in respect of Donald Trump's property transactions in Scotland.

16:39

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): Before I go into the detail of the motion and our amendment, let me make it clear that, frankly, I find former President Donald Trump to be a deplorable individual. I do not say that lightly, but as a person of colour and a Muslim, I am exactly the type of person who would be the target of his racist and divisive policies if I lived in America. Members will find no defence of Donald Trump from me or, indeed, this Government.

However, we rightly have a separation of the political and law enforcement. Just because I do not like someone, or because something might be to my political advantage, that does not mean that I should exercise any power that allows me to instigate an investigation into individuals or law enforcement processes against them. If I would not do such a thing to somebody whom I like, I must apply that equally to those whom I do not like—and Donald Trump is at the top of that list. That would be an abuse of power and would fundamentally undermine our entire justice system.

I turn to the detail of the motion and the amendment in my name. The amendment calls on Parliament to recognise that there are calls for an investigation, or for a UWO to be sought, regarding the finances of Donald Trump. I have had emails from Avaaz, which has led a campaign, and the First Minister has had those emails, too—I expect members across the chamber have had them. We recognise that there are calls for such an investigation. However, my amendment to the Green motion makes it clear that it is for the civil recovery unit to independently undertake the investigatory role that is associated with civil recovery in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish ministers, and that that process must not be subject to any form of political interference.

Patrick Harvie: I entirely recognise that the Scottish Government is entitled to delegate certain decisions to the civil recovery unit or the Lord Advocate, but that does not absolve the Scottish Cabinet and ministers of responsibility for making the necessary political judgment. UWOs are specifically about politically exposed persons. Does the cabinet secretary not recognise that there is a political judgment to be made, and that the Cabinet needs to make it?

Humza Yousaf: No, Patrick Harvie is incorrect. He is asking the Cabinet to make a political decision on instigating an investigation into an individual. I have sat in many Cabinet meetings, and the Cabinet should never discuss instigating an investigation into an individual. That would not

be correct, so I disagree with Mr Harvie. I will go into more detail about why I disagree, although I suspect that I associate myself with Mr Harvie's judgment of former President Donald Trump.

Decisions on applying for a UWO are an operational matter for the CRU. The CRU is responsible to the Lord Advocate, who exercises an oversight function under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 as one of the Scottish ministers. That arrangement was put in place not by this Administration but the previous Administration, in 2003.

Although Mr Harvie is right that the Scottish ministers could apply, I do not think that it would be right or proper for ministers—either individually or, to answer Mr Harvie's question, collectively—other than the Lord Advocate, who is not a political minister, to become personally involved in the pursuit of a particular investigation into any individual.

A society that respects and seeks to uphold the rule of law should not aspire to a system of civil recovery under POCA that could be influenced by how well connected the person holding the assets was to a Government minister, or how disliked they were by a particular Government. That is the crucial point.

Mr Harvie has called on the Scottish ministers to use their powers under the 2002 act, but he does not recognise that the CRU undertakes its impartial investigatory role on behalf of the Scottish ministers and reports directly to the Lord Advocate, who is a non-political minister. Scotland is a nation that upholds the rule of law. No matter how much I, or we, as the Government, dislike any individual, to preserve the integrity of an investigation into the activities of any individual, there must be no political interference in the process of seeking an unexplained wealth order.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I cannot recall whether you moved your amendment, cabinet secretary.

Humza Yousaf: I move amendment S5M-24030.1, to leave out from "calls" to end and insert:

"notes the calls on the Scottish Ministers to use powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to seek the granting of an Unexplained Wealth Order in respect of property transactions by Donald Trump in Scotland; recognises that the Civil Recovery Unit (CRU) undertakes this independent investigatory role on behalf of the Scottish Ministers and reports directly to the Lord Advocate; believes that, to preserve the rule of law, there must not be political interference in the enforcement of the law, and notes that the CRU does not confirm nor deny the existence of any investigation taking place."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You may have moved it twice, but so be it.

16:45

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): With just four minutes to contribute to the debate, I shall be brief.

I remind members that I am a member of the legal profession, although I am an employment law specialist, not a criminal law specialist.

I listened to Mr Harvie setting out his case for why he believes that ministers should apply to the Court of Session for an unexplained wealth order in respect of Donald Trump's property transactions in Scotland. I presume that Mr Harvie has satisfied himself that the court would be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that Donald Trump would not have been able to obtain the property with lawfully earned income and, furthermore, that the court would be satisfied that Donald Trump is suspected of involvement in serious crime or is a politically exposed person who is vulnerable to bribery and corruption. I understand that they are the prerequisites for the court to grant such an order.

Should such an order be made, Mr Trump would be required to set out the nature and extent of his involvement with the particular property. He would require to explain how it was obtained, including how any costs incurred in obtaining it were met, and to set out other information in connection with the property that may be relevant. I presume that Mr Harvie feels either that Mr Trump cannot so satisfy the court or that he will fail to do so, such that there may be a presumption that the property is recoverable under any subsequent civil recovery action.

I believe that Mr Harvie's case is that, although the Crown Office might instigate such an application to the Court of Session of its own volition, he believes that it has chosen not to, in which case, the Scottish ministers may do so. He argues, praying in aid a legal opinion by Aidan O'Neill QC, that the First Minister and her Government can apply to the Court of Session.

Mr Harvie may well be correct that, if there are serious concerns about how Donald Trump financed the purchase of his Scottish golf courses, it might be considered odd that no investigation has ever taken place—but has it not? I note that the Government's amendment specifically says that the civil recovery unit undertakes an independent investigatory role as an enforcement authority for Scotland under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. I listened to the cabinet secretary talking about its independence. Crucially, the amendment says that the unit

"does not confirm nor deny the existence of any investigation taking place."

Nevertheless, the question whether an unexplained wealth order should or should not be

sought surely ought to be a matter for the Crown Office. It is independent, and I am sure that Mr Harvie would agree that the criminal justice system ought not to be, or be seen to be, subject to political pressure.

In essence, my worry is that, although the legal opinion may say that the Government could petition the Court of Session, that does not mean that it should. One cannot help but wonder whether to do so would risk compromising the integrity of any prosecution and judicial process, as well as the perception of the independence of the Crown Office.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member take an intervention?

Liam Kerr: I really do not have time.

Crown Office investigations must not, of course, be motivated by political pressure, and trying to influence the Crown Office would be inappropriate. I did not find Mr Harvie's differentiation between political pressure and seeking information to be particularly persuasive. On the contrary, I found the cabinet secretary's response to the earlier intervention to be well founded.

Although it is not for the Conservatives to answer on behalf of the Scottish ministers—the cabinet secretary has set out and will, no doubt, set out in closing the reasoning for choosing to use or not to use any powers that they have—it does not feel wise for the Parliament to seek to require the Crown Office to pursue what some might feel to be a politically motivated investigation, particularly in the context of the recent challenges over malicious prosecutions that we heard about in the chamber only yesterday.

I will conclude with a simple observation. We are in the middle of a pandemic that has taken a terrible toll on the people of Scotland. Parliament needs to be 100 per cent focused on our economic recovery and rebuilding Scotland from that pandemic. We should be working together—as I look forward to doing—in the national interest to manage the crisis and rebuild our country. For that reason and the other reasons that I have set out, I shall vote accordingly at decision time.

16:49

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to open for Labour in this debate on a motion that

"calls on the Scottish Ministers to use their powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to seek the grant of an Unexplained Wealth Order in respect of Donald Trump's property transactions in Scotland."

Labour supports the motion and agree that there are valid questions to be answered about the acquisition and exploitation of Scottish property by

former President of the United States Donald Trump.

The case for doing so has been set out by Patrick Harvie and by the campaign group Avaaz, which in 2019 published a full report on the need to launch an unexplained wealth order investigation into Donald Trump's all-cash purchase of Turnberry golf course, as well as a legal analysis of why an unexplained wealth order is appropriate in this instance. Given the wealth of evidence in relation to financial misconduct by the former President—which I cannot go into now, because if I did, we would be here all day—I do not see why the Scottish Government is so hesitant to pursue that course of action.

The Government's amendment says that it

"believes that, to preserve the rule of law, there must not be political interference in the enforcement of the law".

However, the Criminal Finances Act 2017, which introduced unexplained wealth orders, clearly states:

"The Court of Session may, on an application made by the Scottish Ministers, make an unexplained wealth order in respect of any property if the court is satisfied that each of the requirements for the making of the order is fulfilled."

The legal claim for the Scottish Government to seek an unexplained wealth order is quite clear, so it begs the question: why is the Scottish Government so hesitant to use the powers that are available to it? I find it quite amazing that those powers have never been used in Scotland. We have at our disposal a means to target politically exposed persons or those involved with serious crime to explain how certain property ownership came about. I do not think that it is unreasonable that an action that could be used in Scotland is more fully used, and certainly in relation to Trump, given the massive question mark over so much of his financial affairs. I do not buy what the cabinet secretary says. We will support the motion, and I hope that the Government will look at the issue again.

16:52

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Let us be clear: the unexplained wealth order was specifically designed to bring transparency to the murkiest of dealings. All that today's motion does is call on the Scottish ministers to use their power as set out in legislation. The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, as amended, allows for the Court of Session to make an order

"on an application made by the Scottish Ministers".

The Scottish Government has claimed that that power rests entirely with the civil recovery unit, which reports directly to the Lord Advocate, and

the cabinet secretary has relied on that argument again today.

However, the decision-making process was designed by ministers. The power to apply rests with the Scottish Government as a whole—that is what the legislation says. It is then the Court's decision whether to grant an order. That is not just my interpretation; the Lord Advocate confirmed as much when I raised the matter with him last March. In a letter to me, he stated:

"Scottish Ministers are the enforcement authority for the purposes of civil recovery proceedings in Scotland. This function is fulfilled, on their behalf."

Therefore, the Scottish Government's contention, as set out again in its amendment, that an unexplained wealth order is a question for the CRU and the CRU alone, does not stack up.

Over the last year, many of my constituents have shared with me their deep concerns about the way in which the Trump retreats were purchased. Those concerns may be misplaced and they may not, but the Lord Advocate's response was hardly reassuring. I was told to

"appreciate that the work of the CRU is necessarily of a sensitive nature"

and that the unit responsible for unexplained wealth orders could therefore

"neither ... confirm nor deny the existence of an ongoing investigation".

That response is even less transparent than Trump's business dealings.

As the Avaaz report explains, the unexplained wealth order is a legislative tool that should "compel transparency" where there are questions to be answered. The motion does not try to preempt the findings of any such investigation. It simply asks the Scottish ministers to make use of a power that rests with them. It is not enough to stand idly by. If the Scottish Government is genuinely interested in preserving the rule of law, it must ensure that it is upheld without fear or favour—President or not. The Scottish Liberal Democrats will support the motion at decision time.

16:54

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Like other members, my main concern is Covid, the vaccination programme, and bringing the pandemic under control. However, even with the pandemic consuming the majority of our time and attention, I am sure that I am not the only one who has been gripped by the shocking situation and the boorach in the United States.

Before I address the motion, I remind members that I spent 14 years living in the United States,

and that I am married to an American. I want to say how relieved I am that Donald Trump is no longer in a position of power, and that the disorder, division, and chaos that he created in the Government can now begin to be rectified and repaired. I send my heartfelt congratulations to President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, and I hope for a brighter future for America. It is a wonderful country, full of many wonderful people, and I enjoyed my time there immensely.

In a failed attempt to overturn his defeat, Donald Trump fed the myth that the election was stolen, he told his supporters that they would need strength to take back their country, and then a mob stormed the US Capitol building. We should not forget that five citizens died and dozens more were injured on that day.

We need to be careful that we see no more Presidents who stoke the fires of racism and misogyny, and that Donald Trump is the last President to ridicule people who have disabilities.

To turn to the substance of the debate, I of course agree that Scotland is a law-abiding country that stands against corruption, tax evasion, money-laundering and other financial illegalities. In Martyn McLaughlin's article in *The Scotsman* yesterday, he wrote that, since Mr Trump incorporated his first company in Scotland 16 years ago, none of his companies has turned a profit, and publicly available accounts show that they have run up losses of £55 million and

"owe £157 million to US-based limited liability companies and trusts in Mr Trump's name."

Companies House records for Trump's golf course resorts showed that neither has paid a penny in UK corporation tax. The Avaaz campaigning report on his transactions in Scotland makes for really interesting reading, and I encourage everyone who can to read it. A couple of paragraphs are really important because they show that, when Balmedie and the Turnberry resort were being purchased, there was misconduct in Mr Trump's inner circle. As a result of the inquiry, Mr Trump's former campaign manager has pled guilty to money laundering, his former deputy campaign manager has pled guilty to conspiring to defraud the United States, and his personal lawyer has pled guilty to eight criminal counts, including campaign finance violations and tax fraud.

I am conscious of the time, but want to say that I support the Scottish Government's amendment and I look forward to closing comments from members.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am glad that you noticed the time, Ms Harper. You made a very interesting contribution, although I do not know

whether you actually spoke to the amendment. However, I am taking a light touch this afternoon.

16:58

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I am pleased to hear that, Presiding Officer.

Like most members, I celebrated the results of the US presidential election and counted down the days to Joe Biden's inauguration. When it was mooted that, rather than attend the inauguration, Donald Trump would fly into Prestwick en route to Turnberry in my South Scotland region to play golf, I urged the UK and Scottish Governments to nip such talk in the bud and make it clear that the travel restrictions would be enforced. The only place that people wanted to see Donald Trump travelling was out of the door of the White House.

Given the hatred that he generated, and the violence that he incited, I also said that I hoped that Scotland had seen the back of Donald Trump. He has been an absentee owner of Trump Turnberry since he bought it, and with the financial losses being made year-on-year, the Trump Organization has been as successful at running the resort as the founder was at being President.

In the summer, the Trump Organization showed its true colours when it used the pandemic to try to axe 80 workers at Turnberry, as well as worsen working conditions, despite receiving public funds during the Covid pandemic. I supported the campaign by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers—the RMT—to protect jobs and conditions amid fears that the company planned to casualise the workforce, and I lodged a motion on the matter. As an aside, that motion did not get support from the Greens. However, I support the Greens' motion today.

In the discussions on the valid questions about the source of the funding for the cash spending spree that allowed Trump to purchase a string of houses and golf courses including Turnberry, we should not lose sight of the livelihoods of the workforce at the resort and its importance to the local economy. Turnberry is a fantastic hotel. It has a rich history and has great golf courses. Its importance to the economy is one of the reasons why I want to see the end of Trump's ownership. The Trump brand is being diminished by the day and it would be a positive move if this fine venue could be freed from the discredited Trump name under a new owner who would give staff some long-term security and whose finances did not have so many questions hanging over them.

In the meantime, there are clearly grounds for carrying out further investigations into how the current owner acquired Turnberry, and a strong public interest in doing so. The Scottish Government has been keen to avoid responsibility

for that decision and has insisted that applying for an unexplained wealth order is exclusively in the remit of the Crown Office. However, we have all seen the legal advice put forward by Avaaz that directly contradicts that position, claiming that, under the 2002 act, the Lord Advocate would be acting in his role as a minister of the Scottish Government when making that decision, not in his role as the head of the prosecution system.

It is also important to say that an unexplained wealth order is a civil power, not a criminal one. It does not necessarily make accusations of criminality. Rather, it is used to ensure that everything is in order. It is clear that, in this case, the threshold for applying for an unexplained wealth order also appears to have been more than met, in light of the alarming questions that are being raised by investigations in the US over Donald Trump.

Humza Yousaf: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his last seconds.

Colin Smyth: I was literally on my last sentence, but I am sure that the cabinet secretary will pick up on the point that he was going to make in his closing speech.

I believe that the Scottish Government has a case for applying for, and should get on with seeking, such an order.

17:01

Alex Rowley: Emma Harper made an interesting point about Trump and his impact on America, which is now a deeply divided country—it is the divided states of America. There is a lesson there for politicians in our country. When politicians sow the seeds of division in the way that we have seen, they will get such an outcome.

To get back to the subject of today's debate, the cabinet secretary is hiding behind the law. Commonly, he uses a lot of rhetoric about what he does not like but fails to take the action that is necessary, and that is what we see today. Avaaz has said that there are two critical questions to which Scottish ministers have the power and the justification to seek answers: how did Mr Trump raise enough up-front liquid assets to buy Turnberry, given what was known about his financial straits at the time; and was Scotland exploited as a money-laundering agent? Those are legitimate questions to which ministers should want to seek answers. I can understand why the Tories would not want to seek answers to such questions, but I cannot understand why SNP members continually team up with the Tories—as they will again tonight—to block the legitimate

concerns that are being raised. Parliamentarians have raised legitimate questions, but Humza Yousaf is hiding behind some legal argument that says that everything is down to the Lord Advocate.

Basically, Avaaz says that the First Minister has designated the Lord Advocate as the relevant Scottish minister responsible for carrying out the unexplained wealth order portfolio. Because of the wording of section 396A of the 2002 act, any such appointment by the First Minister of the Lord Advocate can be made only in his capacity as one of the Scottish ministers. As such, any decision by him in his capacity as her designated minister with immediate responsibility in relation to the administration and operation of the unexplained wealth order regime remains, at all times, one that falls within the collective responsibility of Scottish ministers.

The point is that Scottish ministers have the power to put the order in place, and Mr Yousaf should come off the fence and stop hiding behind the Lord Advocate. This matter is the responsibility of Government, and I urge members to support the Greens' motion.

17:05

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): By now, unexplained wealth orders are a well-established part of Scotland's ability to tackle criminal wealth and property retention but, as a legal process, their basis and investigation, should they be used, should be entirely independent of Government. In other words, they should be non-political.

No one, including politicians, should be above the law but, at the same time, the law should treat everyone equally, including politicians. The old statue of Justice holding up a set of scales blindfolded may be familiar to us, and the picture presented by the statue is a very real one: the law in action in the justice system should be fair and balanced in its application. It is understandable why the Scottish Government—quite rightly in my view—is hesitant about doing what is being asked of it in this case. The orders should not just be unavailable to be used as a political tool; they should be above suspicion of being used as a political tool.

The old legal adage *nemo iudex in sua causa*—no man may be the judge in his own cause—reminds us that the principle goes far beyond the judge's chair in the courtroom. Indeed, it reaches to the Crown Office and those who work there.

Certainty of law, another eternal principle of justice, means that individuals, whoever they be, should not be subject to criminal proceedings simply because of the views of those who happen to hold elected office at any given time—those who may, like a certain recently replaced

President of a major North American country, be here today and gone tomorrow—the ballot box being where such issues should and have always been decided in a democracy.

The Crown Office has featured in the news lately; I am sure that no one who is listening to the debate has missed that. This Scottish Parliament should be focused on getting our own house in order here in Scotland. That focus has at times been sadly lacking from the current SNP Government, but even it recognises the difficulty with the motion as placed before the Parliament. The amendment in the name of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice notes the need for an absence of

“political interference in the enforcement of the law”.

I, for one, welcome that.

The Crown Office should be best placed to ascertain whether the criteria for the basis of an unexplained wealth order exist, and how and whether the matter should be investigated. That is where the matter should lie, whatever the powers available, not with politicians.

17:08

Humza Yousaf: I will address some of the remarks that have been made in members’ speeches. It seems that we all have a universal dislike of former President, Donald Trump. As I said in my opening remarks, however, whether I dislike or like somebody is irrelevant. There should not be political interference in an investigatory process—whether it is criminal or civil—that could lead to subsequent law enforcement processes being enacted. There should not be and must not be political interference in that, regardless of how much I like or dislike an individual or how the Government views that individual.

I come now to some of the points that members made. Liam McArthur mentioned that the Scottish ministers can apply for a UWO. I am not disputing that point in law; I am saying that, although that power is conferred on the Scottish ministers—when the Scottish ministers are referenced in law, we often operate as one legal person—and although we have that power, we rightly do not use it. Instead, the CRU, the civil recovery unit, acts operationally independently, and the Lord Advocate, as the non-political minister in the Government, exercises an oversight function. That keeps the work of the CRU at arm’s length from any political interference, which is just the way it should be.

Liam McArthur seemed to cast some doubt on why the CRU and the Government neither confirm nor deny that an investigation is taking place. He seemed to say that there is no good reason for

that, but there is. If the CRU were to confirm that an investigation was taking place or that it had applied for a UWO, which is an investigatory tool, the individual concerned could dissipate their assets and hide or conceal their wealth. Any member who says that an investigation is not going on is merely speculating, because the CRU neither confirms nor denies the existence of an investigation.

Some members are finger wagging at the Government and saying that it should go away and do something on the issue and that it is hiding, obfuscating or sitting on the fence, as Alex Rowley described it. What possible motive would the Scottish Government have, given our political stance, in not applying for an unexplained wealth order, other than to preserve the integrity of the justice system, which is the reason that I have given?

I will not speak about Alex Rowley’s contribution, which was immature and childish. In fact, it lacked any understanding of the most basic principle of the rule of law.

It is fundamental that any investigatory process that could lead to law enforcement action should not be at the whim of politicians; it must be free from political interference. I hope that we can all agree to the Government’s amendment to the motion.

17:11

Patrick Harvie: I thank members for taking part in what was a deliberately short debate—partly because of the need to prioritise the Covid debate and partly because the issue needs a decision rather than a lengthy debate. It certainly was not intended to be about “finger wagging”, as the cabinet secretary, perhaps tongue in cheek, described it.

Mr Yousaf called Trump “deplorable”, but he maintains that it is not for ministers to act. I say that holding someone such as Trump accountable specifically for being what is defined in law as a “politically exposed person” is a legitimate political choice. Given that other authorities around the world are prepared to do that, we should play our part.

I think that the SNP regrets its previous errors in courting Trump, even though some of the individuals who were involved at the time remain in high office today. I hope that their predecessors in the Labour-Lib Dem coalition also regret courting Trump. The comments from Alex Rowley and Liam McArthur suggest that they do. Everybody knew what sort of person Trump was, but perhaps they did not see the scale of the threat that he posed or the damage that Scotland’s

reputation might suffer from association with the toxic Trump brand.

Liam Kerr and the cabinet secretary repeatedly expressed concern about independent prosecution. I say, again, that the proposal is not for prosecution; it is simply about asking the courts to seek answers to reasonable questions. Colin Smyth made that point well.

It would not surprise me if some Conservatives reject the case for holding Trump to account, given that so many of their colleagues tried to normalise his politics or even praised him and his extremist movement. However, I welcome support from Labour and the Lib Dems.

I appeal to SNP members who recognise that Scotland made a serious error of judgment in inviting the toxic Trump brand into Scotland. Let us not just acknowledge the mistake but seek transparency, accountability and the information that we need to answer the serious concerns that have been raised.

Trump can no longer be dismissed as just an unpleasant, bullying developer or a celebrity conspiracy theorist with offensive views. He became, and remains, a political danger not only in the US but globally. He has used his platform to promote fascists in this country and still has links with far-right politicians here. The threat that he brought to the US Congress a few weeks ago is by no means limited to the US.

If suspicions of financial illegal practices had been swirling around a disgraced former President of a developing or undemocratic country in Africa or eastern Europe, I do not think that there is any doubt that we would have acted by now. The unexplained wealth order is the obvious mechanism through which to act.

Humza Yousaf: I want to make sure that Mr Harvie is not insinuating that, if the former President was a person of colour, we would somehow treat him any differently, because I would take pretty great exception if that was the insinuation.

Patrick Harvie: I think that a country that is less powerful than the US would be treated very differently. I do not lay that at the cabinet secretary's door, as he has said clearly that he will not make any decisions about the matter at all but will leave it to others to decide. I think that a country other than the US would have been treated differently.

Let us not refuse to do what I propose simply because it concerns a dodgy character who has held office in a different country. That makes it more, not less, of a priority. Let us assert clearly that Scotland is not the kind of country where anybody with money, no matter how they came by

it, can rock up, buy a slice of our country, do what they like with it, trash our environment and keep their business dealings opaque. Let us say clearly that they will be held accountable.

Business Motions

17:17

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-24040, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 9 February 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions

followed by Ministerial Statement: COVID-19

followed by Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee Debate: Green Recovery

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Wednesday 10 February 2021

12.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

12.30 pm First Minister's Questions

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

4.30 pm Decision Time

Thursday 11 February 2021 (Virtual)

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

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

followed by Ministerial Statement: Developing Scotland's Hydrogen Economy

followed by Ministerial Statement: Coronavirus Legislation Update

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

4.15 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

followed by Members' Business

Tuesday 16 February 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions

followed by Ministerial Statement: COVID-19

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.05 pm Decision Time

Wednesday 17 February 2021

12.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

12.30 pm First Minister's Questions

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Liberal Democrat Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

4.30 pm Decision Time

Thursday 18 February 2021 (Virtual)

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity;
Justice and the Law Officers;
Constitution, Europe and External Affairs

followed by Scottish Government Business

5.05 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

followed by Members' Business

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 8 February 2021, 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-24041 and S5M-24042, on the stage 1 timetable for two bills.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Fair Rents (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 25 March 2021.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Travelling Funfairs (Licensing) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 25 March 2021.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-24043, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 12) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/17) be approved.—[*Graeme Dey*]

The Presiding Officer: I call Michelle Ballantyne, who would like to speak against the motion.

17:18

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Reform): It gives me no pleasure to take up members' time to speak against the motion, but I feel that it is important to raise how unsatisfactory it is that SSIs are presented to the Parliament with a broad range of elements that we have either to support or reject en masse. I have raised the matter at the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee and hope that, in the next session of Parliament, the manner in which SSIs are presented can be reviewed.

This afternoon, we are being asked to support seven different restrictions and requirements in one SSI, with the only connection between them being that the Scottish Government considers them important in suppressing the Covid virus. However, I am struggling to find the evidence to support some of them.

For example, what happens to landlords who are not receiving rent but cannot take action? Will they lose their properties if they cannot pay their mortgages? If the properties are then sold on, what happens to the tenants?

Do parents who can, by court order, see their children only at a contact centre lose the right to see their children during this difficult time?

How does having a number of people waiting and chatting outside a takeaway door—as I have experienced—aid management of Covid, when people can stand inside and queue in a supermarket?

Finally, why is it necessary to prohibit consumption of alcohol in a public place in a level 4 area, when the regulations require people to stay at home unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, and when many areas already have byelaws governing the matter?

I am reserving my position until I hear whether the minister can give rational and evidence-based

explanations for the regulations, and explain how the risks that they pose will be mitigated.

I wonder whether my fellow MSPs are fully conversant with the content of what they are voting on and, as lockdown continues, of the risk that some of the regulations pose when the bundling of them is so disconnected.

17:20

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs (Michael Russell): The regulations tighten aspects of the lockdown restrictions in a number of ways, in order to help to bring the virus under control. I stress that they are to bring the virus under control.

They regulations adjust restrictions surrounding click-and-collect services, prohibit consumption of alcohol in outdoor public places and disallow customers from physically entering food takeaway outlets.

The regulations tighten the existing stay-at-home requirement to ensure that non-essential activities are not undertaken when leaving the home, and they will restrict work in other people's homes to essential work only, in level 4 areas. The regulations also require closure of child-contact centres, with the exception of those that are provided by local authorities.

The regulations also provide for a number of positive changes. They prohibit evictions from taking place in level 3 and 4 areas in order to ensure that renters are protected and do not have to form new temporary households with friends and family at this time. They also allow premises that are required to be closed to reopen if that is for the purpose of providing a venue for vaccination.

I understand that Michelle Ballantyne does not agree with lockdown being imposed, but lockdown is in place in all four nations. It is supported by all commissions advising Government and by the medical community as a whole—not just in the four nations, but internationally.

No matter what Ms Ballantyne's new party believes, including support for the Great Barrington declaration, which the World Health Organization called

"dangerous, unethical and lacking a sound scientific basis",

all the measures are necessary for limiting social contact and bringing the new strain of the virus under control, thereby preventing our health service from being overwhelmed and, ultimately, reducing infections to the level at which we can consider lifting the restrictions.

As the First Minister has set out in her regular updates to Parliament, there are some

encouraging signs that the measures are beginning to have an effect in Scotland. I would like that to continue and not be derailed in the way that Ms Ballantyne is suggesting. We know that it can take a number of weeks for measures to feed through into the numbers of cases and of people in hospital. We need to stay the course and see this through, and not throw away the hard-won progress that we are making by relaxing restrictions too quickly, or for ideological reasons.

For those reasons, I invite Parliament to support the motion.

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

The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S5M-24053, on approval of an SSI. I ask Graeme Dey to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 [draft] be approved.—[*Graeme Dey*]

The Presiding Officer: I have had notification from two members who wish to speak on the motion, but I can take only one. I apologise to Jamie Greene. I had advance notice from Beatrice Wishart first, but it is noted that Jamie Greene wished to speak.

17:23

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I have supported the move to a legal right to funded deferrals throughout the “Give them time” campaign, but I have great concerns about what the Government has brought forward today. People who are working on the campaign are disappointed by the proposals that are set out in the SSI. It says that there will be a full right to deferral, but that right will not exist across Scotland until 2023. The five local authority areas where full funding will now be piloted were already accepting 100 per cent of applications.

This year, children have missed out on so much because of the virus. Some will barely remember socialising with anyone outside their bubble, and we know how critical the early years are to life chances and attainment.

More families than ever before will be wondering whether their four-year-old is ready to start school this August. Those children will turn up to school for the first time having missed out on 18 months of normal play. Playgroups and social events have not been an option and nurseries have been stop-start. The plan for 2023 fails to recognise how difficult the next group of school starts might find the adjustment. The Scottish Government speaks

about getting it right for every child, but this August there will be a £4,500 price tag hanging over families who want to give their children more time.

The Education and Skills Committee took evidence from the minister, but I have yet to hear a convincing justification for why 2023 is the best that we can do. Why should deferral not be available to every family that thinks that it is right for them? Parents should be given the legal right both to defer primary 1 and to have it replaced with funded early learning and childcare.

Parents should be allowed to concentrate solely on what is best for the child, not on the family's financial situation. That should be an important part of the education system's response to the pandemic and the plan to help children to catch up. Children start school only once. The Government could remove the extra financial barrier, guarantee full funding for all parents who need it and empower families to do what they feel is right.

On that basis, the Scottish Liberal Democrats cannot support the regulations today.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. The Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd, will respond on behalf of the Government.

17:26

The Minister for Children and Young People (Maree Todd): I am delighted that we have laid legislation on deferral to ensure that children whose primary 1 place is deferred can benefit from high-quality funded early learning and childcare. I am pleased that we have also now legislated to reintroduce the statutory duty to deliver 1,140 hours of childcare by August 2021. However, we must be mindful that delivery in parallel with our deferral commitment requires a balanced approach, particularly with the continued backdrop of the challenges that are imposed by the Covid-19 response.

It is essential that the introduction of the SSI does not put at risk successful delivery of the early learning and childcare expansion, for which the Scottish Parliament has demonstrated strong support. It is important to note that the deferral policy has the potential to have a significant impact on the number of children attending ELC. Around 20,000 children will become newly eligible for funded ELC as a result of the SSI, but it is difficult to predict likely uptake. We do not know what impact the change will have on parental behaviour, in terms of changing demand for deferred places.

Local authorities have planned carefully for the 1,140 hours expansion and are working to full capacity to ensure that sufficient places will be

available across the public, private and third sectors in August. To add the additional pressure of the deferral obligation during the final stages of preparation would introduce an unacceptable and unnecessary level of risk to successful delivery of the expansion. We must therefore gather robust evidence to help us to better understand likely changes in uptake of the entitlement, ahead of full roll-out.

That is why we announced £3 million in December to support five local authorities to pilot implementation in 2021-22, which we intend to extend to more authorities during 2022-23. We will learn from all the pilots, including those in authorities that have previously funded most or all requests for discretionary deferrals. We will, for example, learn more about behaviour change in terms of parental demand if there is not an application process.

I am acutely aware that this year has been a difficult one for children, and that it will continue to be so for many families. I have said previously and say again that it is important that we do not think of children as being school ready, but of schools as being child ready. Most children will be eager to start school as normal in August, and I know that schools and ELC settings will be carefully considering the needs of the cohort, as they plan their transition. Ahead of full implementation, I expect local authorities to continue to use their discretion on funded deferrals, with the interests of the child being at the heart of those decisions, whether the request is due to the impact of Covid-19 or otherwise.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. Again, the question on the motion will be put at decision time, to which we will come shortly.

The next item of business is consideration of 11 Parliamentary Bureau motions. I call Graeme Dey to move and speak to motions S5M-24044 to S5M-24051, on approval of SSIs, and to move motions S5M-24052 and S5M-24054, on approval of SSIs.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 13) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/25) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 25) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/474) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/5) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/6) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/7) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 4) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/19) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 5) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/21) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Pre-Departure Testing and Operator Liability) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/20) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Agricultural Holdings (Relinquishment and Assignment) (Application to Relevant Partnerships) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Rules of Procedure in Children's Hearings) Amendment Rules 2021 [draft] be approved.— [Graeme Dey.]

17:29

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Graeme Dey): I will speak to two of the motions. One prohibits evictions from taking place in level 3 and 4 areas. Regulations also allow premises that have been required to close to the public to reopen for the purposes of their becoming vaccination venues, and require child contact centres to close. They impose a prohibition on people consuming alcohol in public places outdoors in level 4 areas, prevent customers from entering takeaway outlets in level 4 areas, and restrict to essential work only the ability in level 4 areas to carry out work or services for the upkeep and maintenance of homes. Those regulations came into force on 16 January.

The other SSI moves the isles of Barra and Vatersay to level 4 lockdown restrictions, and came into force on 20 January.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. Sharp-eyed members will have noticed that there are 10 SSIs, not 11.

Decision Time

17:30

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Before I put the first question, I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Rachael Hamilton and Pauline McNeill will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S5M-24029.2, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24029, in the name of Mark Ruskell, on universal support for self-isolation, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

I suspend the meeting to allow members, both in the chamber and externally, to access the voting app.

17:31

Meeting suspended.

17:35

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We move to the first vote. I remind members that the Government amendment pre-empts the Conservative and Labour amendments. I also remind members that we are voting on amendment S5M-24029.2, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24029, in the name of Mark Ruskell, on universal support for self-isolation.

Members may cast their votes now. This will be a one-minute division.

The vote is now closed. Any member who had difficulty in voting should let me know.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to connect to the digital platform. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. It will be noted that you would have voted no to the Government amendment. Your vote will be added to the register.

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My screen went blank. I would have voted yes, but I was unable to.

The Presiding Officer: I assure Ms Somerville that her vote was registered.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): [*Inaudible.*]

The Presiding Officer: Could you switch on your microphone, Ms Mackay, or could you put it up, please? We cannot hear you. [*Interruption.*] If it will save you the trouble, Ms Mackay, I can advise you that you have voted and your vote has been registered.

Rona Mackay: Okay. Thank you.

The Presiding Officer: I advise Ben Macpherson and Angela Constance, who are online, that their votes have been registered. I also advise John Swinney and Shona Robison that their votes have been counted. In fact, I can tell every member that their vote has been registered.

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)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)

McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 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) (Reform)
 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)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (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)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 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) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S5M-24029.2, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24029, in the name of Mark Ruskell, on universal support for self-isolation, is: For 66, Against 59, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is therefore that motion S5M-24029, in the name of Mark Ruskell, on universal support for self-isolation, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a one-minute division. Members may cast their votes now.

The vote is now closed. I believe that a number of members may have had difficulty in registering their vote. If members think that they were not able to register their vote, they should let me know by a point of order.

David Stewart: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I had difficulties again, and I would—*[Inaudible.]*

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, Mr Stewart, but I did not quite catch that. Please repeat it.

David Stewart: I am sorry. I had difficulties again in logging in, and I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: You would have voted no. Thank you. That will be noted and added to the register.

The Minister for Drugs Policy (Angela Constance): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Despite refreshing the app on my phone, I was not given the opportunity to vote. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you very much, Ms Constance. You would have voted yes. I will make sure that that is noted and added to the register.

Shona Robison (Dundee City East) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was not able to vote, either. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you very much, Ms Robison. You would have voted yes. I will make sure that that, too, is added to the register.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Like my colleagues, I was unable to refresh the app, and I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Swinney. Your yes vote will be added to the register, too.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I, too, had connectivity problems and would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms McAlpine. You would have voted yes. That will be added to the register, too.

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)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)

McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 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)
 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) (Ind)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 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) (Reform)
 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)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S5M-24029, in the name of Mark Ruskell, on universal support for self-isolation, as amended, is: For 71, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the COVID-19 vaccination programme and extends its thanks to all NHS workers and others delivering it; understands that an effective Test and Protect system and self-isolation are necessary to stop transmission of COVID-19; notes that recent UCL research shows that 62% of symptomatic people and 80% of close contacts comply fully with isolation guidance, and expresses thanks to all those who do so; further notes the importance of employers acting responsibly and supporting employees to self-isolate; agrees that there are barriers to adhering to self-isolation, including the UK Government's low rates of Statutory Sick Pay; acknowledges that eligibility for the Scottish Government's £500 Self-Isolation Support Grant will be extended to workers who earn less than the Real Living Wage, are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, or have responsibilities for someone over 16 who needs to isolate; notes the Scottish Government's intention to increase awareness of the support available to those self-isolating, which includes the grant, the National Assistance Helpline and the Local Self-Isolation Assistance Service; expresses thanks to local authorities for delivering this support to their communities, and calls on the UK Government to make adjustments to Statutory Sick Pay and the Job Retention Scheme to provide increased and consistent support to people who need to self-isolate.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-24030.1, in the name of Humza Yousaf, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24030, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on unexplained wealth orders, Donald Trump, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

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

The vote is now closed. If any member was not able to vote, please let me know through a point of order.

Angela Constance: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am sorry but, once again, I was not given an opportunity to vote. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Constance. You would have voted yes. I will make sure that that is noted and registered.

John Swinney: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Once again, I was unable to gain access to the voting app. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Swinney. I will make sure that your vote yes is added to the register.

I call David Torrance to make a point of order.

I am sorry, but we cannot reach David Torrance, and I am afraid that I will have to close the vote at that point.

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)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 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)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Ind)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Abstentions

McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S5M-24030.1, in the name of Humza Yousaf, which seeks to amend motion S5M-24030, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on unexplained wealth orders, Donald Trump, is: For 90, Against 33, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-24030, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on unexplained wealth orders, Donald Trump, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

That vote is now closed. Please let me know if you had any difficulty in voting.

Daniel Johnson has a point of order.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): [*Inaudible.*]—

The Presiding Officer: We can see you, Mr Johnson, but you need to switch on your microphone.

Daniel Johnson: [*Inaudible.*]—

The Presiding Officer: Mr Johnson, could you indicate with your thumbs—by putting them up or down—whether you voted for or against the motion, or abstained?

I can see that you have your thumbs down, so I am assuming that you voted against the motion. I will make sure that your vote is added. [*Interruption.*] We are okay—it is not the Roman colosseum.

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)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-

shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 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)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 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)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 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)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 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)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)

White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Ind)
 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)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Abstentions

Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S5M-24030, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on unexplained wealth orders, Donald Trump, as amended, is: For 89, Against 32, Abstentions 1.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the calls on the Scottish Ministers to use powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to seek the granting of an Unexplained Wealth Order in respect of property transactions by Donald Trump in Scotland; recognises that the Civil Recovery Unit (CRU) undertakes this independent investigatory role on behalf of the Scottish Ministers and reports directly to the Lord Advocate; believes that, to preserve the rule of law, there must not be political interference in the enforcement of the law, and notes that the CRU does not confirm nor deny the existence of any investigation taking place.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-24043, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to. The regulations in question are the ones on coronavirus restrictions that relate to local levels, which Michelle Ballantyne spoke against. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed. Members should let me know if they were unable to register their vote.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Presiding Officer, I do not appear to have voted, or it may be that my app has not updated. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Mountain. I assure you that your vote was registered.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer, my app did not load. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Whittle. I will make sure that you are added to the register.

I confirm to Michelle Ballantyne, Aileen Campbell and Jeremy Balfour that their votes were registered.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 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)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)

Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 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) (Ind)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S5M-24043, in the name of Graeme Dey, on approval of an SSI, is: For 120, Against 0, Abstentions 1.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 12) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/17) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-24053, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on approval of an SSI, be agreed to. The instrument in question is the draft Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020, which Beatrice Wishart spoke against, and on which Jamie Greene was intending to speak. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed. Members should let me know if they had any difficulties in voting. *[Interruption.]* I will give members a chance to applaud in a minute.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)

Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 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)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)

Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Elaine (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 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)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Ind)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S5M-24053, in the name of Graeme Dey, is: For 117, Against 7, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on the remaining 10 Parliamentary Bureau motions, unless any member objects.

The final question is, that motions S5M-24044 to S5M-24052 and motion S5M-24054, all in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 13) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/25) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 25) Regulations 2020 (SSI 2020/474) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/5) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/6) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/7) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 4) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/19) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 5) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/21) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Pre-Departure Testing and Operator Liability) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/20) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Agricultural Holdings (Relinquishment and Assignment) (Application to Relevant Partnerships) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Rules of Procedure in Children's Hearings) Amendment Rules 2021 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: Before I close the meeting, I am conscious that it is 6 o'clock and I know that many members wish to participate in the clap to commemorate Captain Tom Moore. I will allow members to do that now. [*Applause.*]

Thank you very much, colleagues. On that note, I close the meeting.

Meeting closed at 18:02.

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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