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CONTENTS

	Col.
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	1
JUSTICE AND VETERANS	1
Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Legislative Review)	1
Prisons (Support for Vulnerable People)	2
National Community Justice Strategy	4
Bairns' Hooses	5
Not Proven Verdict (Removal)	7
Remand Prisoners	8
Covid-19 (Safety of Prison Officers and Prisoners)	10
Shooting Ranges and Firearms (Control, Use and Licensing)	12
FINANCE AND ECONOMY	12
Green Economy (Support for Businesses)	13
Fiscal Framework (Review)	14
Ferries	15
ATMs (Use and Accessibility)	17
National Health Service Funding (Barnett Consequentials)	18
Covid 19 (Funding for Ventilation in Schools)	19
Scottish Ambulance Service (Funding)	20
Covid-19 (Funding for Culture, the Arts and Events)	21
CERVICAL SCREENING (UPDATE)	23
<i>Statement—[Maree Todd].</i>	
The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd)	23
NORTH SEA OIL AND GAS	35
<i>Motion moved—[Liam Kerr].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Michael Matheson].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Monica Lennon].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Liam McArthur].</i>	
Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con)	35
The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson)	38
Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)	40
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)	43
Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con)	45
Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)	46
Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab)	48
Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con)	50
Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)	51
Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)	53
Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP)	55
Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD)	56
Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab)	58
The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead)	59
Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con)	61
GENERAL PRACTITIONER SERVICES	65
<i>Motion moved—[Annie Wells].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Maree Todd].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Jackie Baillie].</i>	
Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con)	65
The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd)	67
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	70
Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD)	72
Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con)	74
Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)	75
Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab)	77
Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)	78

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)	80
Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green).....	82
Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	84
Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab)	85
The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf)	87
Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con).....	89
BUSINESS MOTIONS	93
<i>Motions moved—[George Adam]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS	96
<i>Motions moved—[George Adam]</i>	
DECISION TIME	98
JUST TRANSITION FOR TORRY	111
<i>Motion debated—[Maggie Chapman].</i>	
Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green)	111
Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)	114
Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab)	115
Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con).....	117
The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead)	119

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 15 September 2021

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

Portfolio Question Time

Justice and Veterans

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Good afternoon. I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the campus. I ask members to observe the measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber. Please use the aisles and walkways only to access your seat or when you are moving around the chamber.

The first item of business is portfolio question time, and the first set of questions is on justice and veterans. I ask members who wish to ask a supplementary question to indicate that in the chat function if they are joining us remotely, or to press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation (Legislative Review)

1. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to review the legislation on commercial sexual exploitation during the current parliamentary session. (S6O-00133)

The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham): Last week, we published in the programme for government the Scottish Government's commitment to develop a model that effectively tackles men's demand for prostitution. We will progress that in this parliamentary term. Due to the complexities of the issue, we require to assess not only the legislative needs of our chosen model but the support that is available for those who are involved in prostitution. We will be commissioning a programme of lived experience engagement to further inform the work.

Many countries have adopted a challenging demand model from which we can learn, and we are working on a comprehensive international review to develop our evidence base and understand key challenges and common principles applied across the approaches.

I know that the member shares my resolve to get this right and supports our overarching aspirations to embed equality and human rights in Scotland.

Rhoda Grant: The minister will be aware of the recent work that the cross-party group on commercial sexual exploitation carried out on commercial websites that sell people for sex, which causes misery and turbocharges trafficking. In light of the report, will she look to outlaw online pimping to stop commercial websites profiting from exploitation by advertising prostitution?

Ash Denham: We are aware of the findings of the cross-party group's report, which follows its inquiry into websites that host adverts for sexual exploitation. We have previously written to the online platforms, including Vivastreet, to make our concerns clear and help to ensure that people are protected from exploitation. We will continue to develop policy in that area as part of our on-going engagement with the United Kingdom online safety bill, and as part of our work to develop a model for Scotland that challenges men's demand for prostitution.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): The recent equally safe consultation into challenging men's demand for prostitution highlighted that support for women involved in prostitution should be

"holistic, person-centred, and able to address the multiple, underlying needs of many women."

Will the minister outline what the Scottish Government is doing to ensure that such support is available to those women?

Ash Denham: The consultation highlighted that we need to do more to ensure that women are able to access appropriate support services that can meet their needs. We know that services, including those that help people exit prostitution, are inconsistent across Scotland, and our aim is to address that. As part of that work, I am clear that we need to involve the voices of those involved in prostitution in the design of the services that affect them.

Prisons (Support for Vulnerable People)

2. Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports vulnerable people in the prison system. (S6O-00134)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): We recognise that increasing numbers of prisoners have a range of multiple and complex needs. The health needs of the prison population, for example, are particularly challenging. We know that people in custody often have higher rates of substance use issues, mental health problems and complications with physical health in comparison to the general population. The support that is required to address the often multiple needs of vulnerable people in custody can be multifaceted and is delivered through effective

joint working between the Scottish Prison Service and a range of partners including social care, health, third sector and education authorities.

Gillian Mackay: In recent months, there have been a number of serious incidents at Polmont young offenders institution, including a riot and an inmate being scalded. How is the Scottish Government working with the Scottish Prison Service to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people in Polmont?

Keith Brown: The safe treatment of mental health issues of all those in custody, whether in Polmont or elsewhere, is a key priority for Scotland's prisons and our Prison Service. We take the mental health of all those in custody very seriously. The SPS is developing a new health and wellbeing strategy for the service that recognises the increasing complexities and the underlying health conditions of the prison population in comparison to the wider population. The strategy will focus on a public health approach through the organised efforts of the SPS in partnership with those who have responsibilities for the delivery of healthcare in prisons.

The new health and wellbeing strategy will provide the overarching framework for all health-related strategies, which includes mental health. We are also undertaking a substantial study in relation to the complexity of needs in the area. We will produce a report on that next year, which will inform the strategy that I have mentioned.

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): Thanks to ITV News, we know that supposedly tamper-proof mobile phones have been hacked and have been used to deal drugs. Organised criminals are targeting vulnerable inmates for the use of their phones. We also know that many of the drugs that come into prison are impregnated in letters.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question, please, Mr Findlay.

Russell Findlay: Two weeks ago, I asked the cabinet secretary to consider photocopying letters rather than giving the originals in order to stem that flow. What has he done about that?

Keith Brown: As I think the member knows, that is quite a complex area. The Prison Service was aware of the issue and is looking at it now. Officials who were present at the committee meeting to which the member refers or who listened into it are examining the proposal. It was a constructive proposal, and I took it in that spirit. I ask the member to give us time to look at it seriously and get back to him.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): A University of Glasgow study of 200 fatal accident inquiries into deaths in custody found that, in 90 per cent of

cases, sheriffs made no recommendation to improve practices, which I found surprising. I think that the cabinet secretary mentioned the issue in the tail end of his answer to Gillian Mackay. In view of that study, I thought—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question, please, Ms McNeill.

Pauline McNeill: I think that the cabinet secretary referred to the independent review into deaths in custody, which have become a serious issue for Scotland. Will the Government commit to implementing its key findings quickly so that we can learn from past mistakes?

Keith Brown: I agree with the thrust of what Pauline McNeill says. I cannot answer that in advance of knowing the recommendations, but it is a serious issue and we will look at it seriously. Of course, Parliament and the member will have the chance to question us on that. We take very seriously anything that might improve the situation for prisoners in that area.

National Community Justice Strategy

3. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it will develop the national community justice strategy that was announced in the programme for government. (S6O-00135)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): We intend to review and revise the national community justice strategy. To inform the review of the current strategy, which is a statutory requirement under the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016, we will consult those who work in the community justice sector or closely with it, gathering views from a front-line perspective on how well the strategy has performed over the past five years and what might need to be taken into account in updating it. We will then engage with the public through a consultation exercise to explore what approach a revised strategy might take.

Our aim will be to consider how a revised strategy can be most effective and how it can build on the progress that has been made in recent years, and to set clear aims for all who are involved in delivering services. The views and evidence that are gathered as part of the consultative and collaborative approach will be used in finalising a new and improved national community justice strategy, which we intend to launch next spring.

Fulton MacGregor: The supervision requirement of community payback orders is an important part of rehabilitation efforts and reducing the number of people in our prisons. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that the strategy will consider the expansion of supervision

requirements? Will increased funding be required for front-line third sector community justice services that are involved in the delivery of those requirements?

Keith Brown: As confirmed in the programme for government, the new strategy will include an emphasis on early intervention and encouraging a further shift away from the use of custody, where that is appropriate. Community payback orders, which can include supervision as well as a range of other requirements, are a key part of that. Of course, it is up to the sentencing judge to decide on the most appropriate sentence in each individual case, including which requirements might be necessary if a CPO is imposed.

To answer the member's question directly, we are committed to investing in a substantive expansion of community justice services, which underpin the delivery of community sentences, as well as to the delivery of a system for diversion from prosecution and alternatives to remand. The funding that is available for community justice services will, as always, be subject to the spending review and parliamentary approval of the draft budget in due course.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The previous national strategy for community justice, which was produced back in 2016, promised that our justice system would turn around the behaviour of criminals. Why, therefore, are one in four offenders reconvicted within a year of their release? Did the previous strategy fail?

Keith Brown: The review's purpose is to consider all factors. That is fairly obvious from the fact that such a review was built into the 2016 act, so that we can look at past successes and areas for improvement. There has been substantial improvement in the levels of recidivism, which was an aim of the previous strategy, so there have been successes. The review should look at the matter in the round. The member will, of course, have the chance to comment as the review progresses.

Bairns' Hooses

4. **Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its plans to introduce "bairns' hooses". (S6O-00136)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): We believe that every eligible child victim or witness has the right to consistent and holistic support that enables them to have their voice heard, to access specialist services and to recover from their experiences. We have an unashamedly bold aspiration to create our own bairns' hooses in Scotland. That

commitment is obvious in our programme for government, which says that

"all children in Scotland who have been victims or witnesses of abuse or violence, as well as children under the ... age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused ... harm, will have access to a 'Bairns' Hoose' by 2025".

Yesterday, we published "Bairns' Hoose—Scottish Barnahaus: vision, values and approach", which sets out in broad terms our vision of how the barnahaus model should be implemented in Scotland, the values that should underpin the model and our approach to its practical implementation.

Our next steps are to establish a national governance group to oversee delivery of the bairns' hoose model in Scotland, to bring forward standards for the bairns' hoose and to develop an approach that will build on the momentum of the new Scottish child interview model for joint investigative interviews, which will be introduced nationally over the next three years. Further plans on that will be published at the end of this year.

Dr Allan: As the cabinet secretary said, the bairns' hoose concept has the potential to transform how children in Scotland interact with the criminal justice system. I would be grateful if he could outline how the plans will ensure that there is better access for children in island and more remote areas. I am thinking about my constituency, the southern part of which is separated from the northern part by 130 miles and two bodies of water.

Keith Brown: That is a very good question. I have already had discussions with ministers in other portfolios who have responsibility in the area to see how we will address that issue. The idea is that we should not retraumatise victims by asking them to move between locations to have the same interview and give the same evidence. That is an important consideration that comes towards the end of the programme, although early thought is being given to how we can make the system as accessible as possible.

We agree on the overarching principles, and we should give local delivery partners the flexibility to adapt the model to their local contexts. We recognise the challenges of delivery in rural settings such as Alasdair Allan's constituency; he is quite right to raise that issue.

Our approach will be based on the European "Barnahaus Quality Standards" and should be flexible enough to allow local authorities to tailor barnahaus to suit local circumstances while also ensuring a degree of national consistency for all children who are eligible for services.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I would appreciate slightly shorter answers so that we can get in as many questions as possible.

Not Proven Verdict (Removal)

5. **Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its planned consultation on the removal of the not proven verdict. (S6O-00137)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): As I made clear in the chamber last week, our programme for government sets out our plans to launch a public consultation on the three-verdict system within this parliamentary year.

Oliver Mundell: The SNP-Green programme for government stops short of committing to abolishing the not proven verdict. In 2019-20, that verdict was used in 25 per cent of rape cases, even though it was used in only 1 per cent of criminal trials that proceeded to court. Victims have said that the verdict gives them no sense of justice and no closure, so why is the Scottish Government making them wait for years to find out whether the unjust verdict will be abolished?

Keith Brown: We believe that a very strong argument in favour of that has been presented by the people to whom Oliver Mundell refers, but other people have a different point of view, including many members of the legal profession.

There are two reasons why we are not abolishing the verdict straight away. The first is that there is no point in holding a consultation if we are not going to listen to what people have to say; we want to hear what people have to say on the issue.

The second reason is that the not proven verdict has a relationship with other parts of the justice system, so we should take that into account. There are interdependences in relation to the two-verdict or three-verdict system, the jury system and so on. It is only right that we take a sustainable approach, so that we can get to the right solution.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary assure us that, should we move towards a two-verdict system, we will consider the option of verdicts of proven and not proven, and nothing else?

Keith Brown: Again, I point out that there are different views on the issue. People in the legal profession in particular, but not uniquely, favour the solution that John Mason has mentioned. Those verdicts are considered ones that juries would understand, as is the case with guilty and not guilty.

We also recognise that a distinction between proven and not proven might be too lawyerly and not quite as obvious to the general public, and that it could perpetuate the stigma and confusion that some people believe the system currently produces. It is right that we consider that as part of the consultation.

Remand Prisoners

6. **Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to reduce the number of prisoners who are on remand. (S6O-00138)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): I have said in the chamber previously that I am clear that action is needed on remand. I know that other parties share that view.

The effect of Covid-19 on the courts has impacted hugely on remand numbers. We have invested £50 million to support the operation of the criminal courts to help to increase throughput of cases, thereby—we hope—lessening the need for remand.

However, it is fair to say that concern about remand pre-dates Covid-19, which is why our programme for government included a commitment to consult on reform in that area, with the introduction of legislative change in year 1 of this session of Parliament.

We continue to invest in and support provision of alternatives to remand, including additional investment in bail supervision and implementation of electronically monitored bail.

Colin Smyth: In April, the Howard League for Penal Reform revealed that more than 40 per cent of young people in prison were on remand and were waiting longer for trials. The Law Society of Scotland has even warned that there is now a perverse incentive to plead guilty, because one might spend less time in jail.

Does the cabinet secretary accept that the shocking numbers of remand prisoners, which add to prison overcrowding, show that there is a real need for urgent action to get more of our courts open and running in order to deal with the huge backlog of cases that has built up during Covid?

Keith Brown: My previous answer acknowledged the urgent need with regard to both the situation before Covid-19 and how it has been exacerbated since. It is true that we have to consider matters such as the people who are held on remand because the court is not certain that they will be available or that they will come to a subsequent hearing.

Colin Smyth is right that we have to increase the pace of cases going through the courts. We have

done that through remote jury courts and through the substantial expansion of sheriff courts this month. The fact that we are taking legislation through in the first year of the session shows the urgency with which the Government is treating that issue.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): One of the 12 new bills that the programme for government announced was the proposed bail and release from custody bill. In what ways is it intended that the bill will address use of remand for prisoners?

Keith Brown: Following from my previous response, I say that it would be good to get, if possible, consensus in Parliament on that issue. Decision making on bail and remand is for the court, but Parliament sets the legislative framework. Prior to Covid-19, 20 per cent of the prison population was on remand; the figure is now 27 per cent. Recent increases reflect the unique circumstances of the pandemic, but concerns are long-standing.

I intend to publish in the autumn a consultation on possible changes to bail law that will seek views on emphasising the importance of public safety as an essential requirement for remand. It will also propose legislative changes to ensure an enhanced focus on victim safety, improvement of the information that is available to the court when it makes a bail decision, and expansion of the services that are available to support the process of reintegration into the community of prisoners who leave remand.

Sharon Dowe (South Scotland) (Con): One risk when releasing prisoners from remand is that, all too often, victims are the ones who pay the price. I wrote to the cabinet secretary last week about a family who had previously contacted his office. An individual who was repeatedly released from custody devastated the lives of that family through a campaign of harassment and intimidation. The Scottish Government has promised the introduction of a victims commissioner in order to prevent similar situations. Can the cabinet secretary tell us when we can expect to see the commissioner take up post?

Keith Brown: I have every sympathy for the case of the member's constituent, but it is—again—important to say that it is the courts, not the Scottish Government, that make decisions on remand. The Scottish Government is specifically prohibited from involving itself in such decisions.

We can address such situations through the legislative framework, which is why we will introduce legislation on which all members will have the chance to have a say. We previously said what we intend to do with regard to the

victims commissioner. It is important, and we want to ensure, that the victims organisations that currently exist—some of which have concerns about the introduction of a victims commissioner—have their say before we proceed.

Covid-19 (Safety of Prison Officers and Prisoners)

7. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what measures have been put in place to keep prison officers and prisoners safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00139)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): To the credit of prison staff, health staff and prisoners, for the vast majority of this pandemic our prisons have seen low infection rates, and the operation of our prisons has remained safe and stable, especially given that early concerns were, rightly, expressed.

Personal protective equipment was provided to all staff and prisoners at the outset of the pandemic, and robust infection-control measures were put in place to limit potential transmission. Recognition of Scottish Prison Service staff as key workers also provided access to symptomatic testing early in the pandemic. The roll-out of asymptomatic testing now offers all SPS staff the opportunity to participate in the weekly testing programme.

Following implementation of the SPS pandemic plan, some prison regime changes were put in place to help to mitigate the risk of infection, including minimising the number of individuals who come into contact with prisoners and maintaining physical distancing between individuals. As of 6 September, SPS establishments are undertaking asymptomatic testing of all individuals who come into custody from court. Covid vaccination also continues to be offered, and establishments are actively encouraging all prisoners to participate.

Richard Leonard: I thank the cabinet secretary for his answer, but I am receiving deeply concerning reports that, as a direct consequence of changes to prisoners' routine during lockdown, consumption of illicit drugs, including the psychoactive substance etizolam, has risen exponentially. That has resulted in an increase in violence and erratic behaviour from prisoners. Just two days ago at HMP Shotts, two prison officers were stabbed.

That is also resulting in an increasing number of prisoners requiring hospital treatment, and they are having to be taken to hospital by prison officers because—I am told—GEOAmey is unable to fulfil its contractual obligations. Will the cabinet secretary tell us what his plans are to tackle the

epidemic of drug use that is sweeping through our prisons?

Keith Brown: I thank Richard Leonard for his question, which touches on a number of areas. Of course, we are alive to some of the issues that he has brought up, especially use of psychoactive drugs, whose effect on inmates tends to be much more challenging for prison officers than are the effects of other drugs.

We want to eradicate all drugs from the prison system, so new technology is being looked at, on top of the existing measures. However, it is true to say—I do not shrink from the fact—that dealing with the pandemic and the threat of infection in prisons has limited some operations, so we have to balance the risks as best we can. The introduction of new technology that should help with some of the drugs that Richard Leonard talked about will be one stage in doing that, but a more profound change in how the prison system deals with drug abuse among prisoners has to take place, so we are also considering that.

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): What steps have been taken to ensure that prisoners can still contact friends and family in a Covid-safe manner?

Keith Brown: The introduction of technology for virtual visits, prison-issued mobile phones in SPS establishments, and cell phones in HMP Kilmarnock have enabled contact to be maintained between people who are in custody and their friends and families. Since implementation, more than 56,900 virtual visits have taken place in the SPS.

The SPS has put in place precautionary measures, informed by public health guidance, to make in-person visits as safe as possible.

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): It has emerged that hundreds of seemingly tamper-proof mobile phones that were given to prisoners during the pandemic have been hacked and are being used to facilitate drug deals. What immediate action is being taken to discipline the perpetrators and to prevent such criminal activity on the prison estate?

Keith Brown: Tess White should know that prisoners being disciplined is a matter for the Scottish Prison Service. It takes those decisions. If the member wishes, I can ask the interim chief executive of the SPS to respond to her.

The member quite rightly mentioned that the phones are tamper-proof. Their benefits have been huge in relation to managing prison services that cannot operate as they did in the past.

I will say one final thing. Discipline within prisons is much harder to maintain with 68-year-old prison officers. That is the effect of the Government that

the member supports pushing the pension age back to 68. We should never have 68-year-old prison officers trying to exercise the kind of discipline that Tess White spoke about.

Shooting Ranges and Firearms (Control, Use and Licensing)

8. **Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last discussed the control, use and licensing of shooting ranges and firearms with Police Scotland. (S6O-00140)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): The Scottish Government is in regular contact with Police Scotland regarding a variety of firearms licensing matters. Officials and police work together to manage complementary licensing systems and to ensure that firearms are possessed and used safely across Scotland.

The Scottish ministers have no role in approving shooting ranges. It is for Police Scotland to be satisfied as to the safety of any land where firearms are used.

Emma Harper: Eskdalemuir is home to the Samye Ling Buddhist monastery and many agricultural holdings with livestock. There are concerns in the community about the Clerkhill and Over Cassock ranges, in the vicinity of which high-velocity 50-calibre weapons are used. Given that both ranges are operating sporadically under the 28-day planning rule, could the cabinet secretary undertake to properly look into the situation? In principle, would he consider removing shooting activities from the 28-day planning rule?

Keith Brown: Planning legislation is not within my remit. The member has rightly raised the issue with me previously; she might want to talk to the ministers who are responsible for that.

I appreciate that the matter is of significant concern to her and the community. I will ensure that my officials engage closely with Police Scotland regarding shooting ranges in Eskdalemuir valley. I understand that the police have already visited the ranges in question several times in recent months to assess their safety and operation, and that they plan to do so again in the near future.

As I said, planning matters—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That will have to do, cabinet secretary.

Finance and Economy

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next set of questions is on the finance and economy portfolio. If members want to ask a supplementary, I ask

them to press their request-to-speak button or put an R in the chat function during the relevant question.

Green Economy (Support for Businesses)

1. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support businesses in relation to developing a sustainable green economy. (S6O-00141)

The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead): Businesses are crucial to achieving net zero. Funding and technical support for businesses to develop a sustainable green economy is being provided through our enterprise and skills agencies.

In advance of the 26th UN climate change conference of the parties—COP26—we have also targeted commitments to drive opportunities for Scottish businesses. For example, we have set out an additional £2 billion of infrastructure investment over the parliamentary session to stimulate demand and create jobs in the net zero transition. That includes our £100 million green jobs fund to offer support to businesses to invest in green products and services, and in research and development.

Brian Whittle: The minister will be aware of a recent report that said that half of Scottish businesses are yet to develop a net zero policy. Does he agree that the focus on new green jobs in the green economy forgets the importance of helping current industry to become greener, which is just as important in the drive towards a green economy?

Richard Lochhead: Brian Whittle makes a number of valid points. It is important that we all work together across the chamber to raise awareness of net zero among Scotland's business community, as businesses will be at the heart of this country's success in creating thousands of new green jobs and achieving our targets.

Of course, there is the race to zero, which is the commitment that we ask Scottish businesses to sign up to to achieve net zero. As this week is climate week, we are using it to promote that message. Members may wish to do so locally in their constituencies.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): Can the minister provide an update on the Scottish Government's work to support workers in carbon-intensive sectors to upskill, reskill and transition to the green jobs of the future?

Richard Lochhead: As Mr Kidd mentioned, ensuring that people have good green jobs is crucial to achieving our net zero targets and

delivering a just transition. There are a number of measures in place. We have our climate emergency skills action plan. Flowing from that, we have the national transition training fund, which is funding a lot of programmes across the country to ensure that employees are able to retrain and upskill for greener industries, if that is required. In addition, we recently launched our green jobs skills academy. On top of that, the programme for government included a commitment on a skills guarantee for anyone who is in a carbon-intensive industry who wishes to retrain for a job in a lower-carbon sector.

There are a number of initiatives under way. The issue is absolutely at the heart of a just transition for the people of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Sue Webber.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): I think that I have a supplementary question after Mr Johnson.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is fine; we will move to question 2.

Fiscal Framework (Review)

2. **Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made on agreeing the scope of the fiscal framework review, scheduled for 2022, with the United Kingdom Government. (S6O-00142)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): We are actively engaging with the UK Government—and have been since December—on options for the scope of the review as well as the independent report that precedes it. I believe that the review and preceding report should be broad in scope to give full consideration to how the framework has performed and to assess how Brexit and the pandemic have impacted funding arrangements. I have been pushing for a meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to take place as quickly as possible to progress that.

Michelle Thomson: Recent research by the Fraser of Allander Institute and others has noted that the UK Government is, as the cabinet secretary confirmed, seeking a very narrow scope to the review. Does she agree that it needs to be broadened out to consider, for example, the sufficiency of capital borrowing powers and the policy risks that arise when UK Government decisions constrain the Scottish Government?

Kate Forbes: I strongly agree on the need for a broad scope. I think that that position is also shared by a number of external stakeholders. Obviously, we have had a parliamentary session's worth of experience. We need to give proper consideration to how the framework is performing. It is critical that the Scottish Parliament and

Government have in place appropriate powers and flexibilities in order to manage the risks that we face through the operation of the framework, respond to fast-evolving pressures and challenges, and tackle economic recovery.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): What measures will the Scottish Government put in place to assist with improving the transparency in Scottish Government fiscal policy, given the concerns that we heard at the Finance and Public Administration Committee yesterday about the need for much better understanding of the fiscal framework and Audit Scotland's concerns about enhanced financial transparency?

Kate Forbes: That is a very important question. The fiscal framework and the devolution of tax powers are still relatively new, and it is important that we are as transparent as possible and help the public and other stakeholders to understand how those things operate. Last year, we took a number of steps to aid that transparency, including an additional budget revision during the year and the publication of the medium-term financial strategy. However, I am open to suggestions, including from the Finance and Public Administration Committee, as to how that can be bolstered.

Ferries

3. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with Ferguson Marine regarding the building of vessels for Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd. (S6O-00143)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): I visited the yard and spoke directly to workers on 25 August. I also regularly meet the chair and turnaround director to monitor progress, most recently on 17 August. I will meet the full board at the yard on 23 September.

Stuart McMillan: As the cabinet secretary will know, I am not just the local MSP; I grew up in the town and my father worked for the yard before he passed away. I am a huge supporter of the workforce and the yard, and its future is bigger than one person. After yesterday's news about the two Islay vessels, which was uncomfortable but not unexpected, will the cabinet secretary instigate a change of management at the yard to ensure that the men and women of Ferguson Marine (Port Glasgow) Ltd have a future, and will she agree to meet me to discuss the future of the yard?

Kate Forbes: I certainly agree to meet Stuart McMillan and I agree with his sentiment about how important it is to ensure a long-term future for the yard. I emphasise that all our actions and decisions must be to ensure that the vessels are

completed and that the yard has a long-term future. I weigh up all decisions within my own powers on that basis.

Leadership matters, and I am closely monitoring progress at the yard through the board, which, ultimately, oversees operational matters and holds management accountable for performance. As I said, I will meet the board next week. I have been crystal clear with the board's management that I expect—no ifs, no buts—the two vessels to be completed and the yard to get into a position to compete successfully for tenders.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): When is the turnaround director going to turn anything around at the yard, and when is somebody's head going to roll over this shambles?

Kate Forbes: On the basis of recent progress, we need to ensure that the two priorities that I just outlined are met. The first is that the two vessels are completed. We have seen progress at the yard, but we still need to get the two vessels over the line. As I mentioned in my previous answer, having most recently visited the yard at the end of August and spoken directly to workers, I am confident that progress is being made.

The second priority is about future opportunities. The yard has two substantial vessels to complete. The new order is not for the last CMAL vessel; in fact, it is the first procurement of £580 million of investment over the next five years to bring new vessels into service, including up to seven new ships under phase 1 of the small vessel replacement programme. Although, in line with normal procurement rules, we have no role, we want to ensure that the yard is in a position to compete successfully for those tenders on an international basis.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): The Government's announcement yesterday was a hammer blow for Scottish shipbuilding. It is about time that ministers took responsibility for the Scottish National Party's on-going ferries fiasco. Turning around Ferguson's means no more delays to current contracts and filling the order book again. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that she will rule out any further delays to MV Glen Sannox and hull 802—yes or no? Were existing delays a factor in Ferguson's not making the short list? Will she publish the assessment criteria? Given public concern, will she suspend the process and consider again making a direct award to the yard?

Kate Forbes: There were a lot of questions in there and I might not get through all of them.

On one of the questions, on behalf of island communities, we should recognise that yesterday's announcement regarding two new vessels for ferry routes was important and welcome. We know—I certainly do, given that I

represent island communities that rely on lifeline ferries—just how important it is to ensure that there are new ferries on those lifeline services.

On the other questions, I monitor the process closely through the board, which I meet regularly. I have been crystal clear that we expect the two vessels to be delivered and for the yard to be in a position to compete. The turnaround director will update the committee at the end of September, as previously set out.

ATMs (Use and Accessibility)

4. Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with stakeholders regarding continued ATM use and accessibility. (S6O-00144)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister, Ivan McKee, is joining us remotely.

The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee): Although we are encouraged to use contactless payments due to the pandemic, we recognise that that is not always possible for everyone. Limited ATM accessibility is a matter of great concern affecting many communities across Scotland.

Scottish Government ministers engage regularly with the banking sector through bilateral ministerial meetings and the financial services industry advisory board. The Scottish Government stands ready to work constructively with the United Kingdom Government, banks and other stakeholders to ensure that customers, local communities and businesses have access to the banking facilities that they need.

Bill Kidd: I have spoken to ATM provider Notemachine, which highlighted that higher rates paid by ATMs in Scotland have not been considered in the setting of interchange fees applied across the United Kingdom. That results in particular pressure on ATMs in Scotland: it means that more money has to be withdrawn per machine to meet costs, which can cause real problems in poorer areas. What interventions are open to the Scottish Government to assist in keeping the cost of those machines affordable, so that they remain equally available to communities across Scotland?

Ivan McKee: The Scottish Government already delivers a number of reliefs for ATM sites, such as continuing to ensure that sites in rural areas are exempt from rates where the building is used only for the ATM, and, more widely, that there is up to 100 per cent rates relief through the small business bonus scheme. Each local council has wide-ranging powers to create rates reliefs to reflect local needs under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2014. Shops that have an ATM inside them might also be eligible for

100 per cent retail, hospitality, leisure and aviation relief in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

I am meeting the chief executive officer of the Financial Conduct Authority on Thursday 16 September, when I will directly raise the issue of access to cash infrastructure.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): An alternative to ATMs for many has been to withdraw cash from their local post office, but we have seen a large number of post office closures. How will the Government ensure that our vulnerable and elderly can access their cash without being short changed by extortionate fees?

Ivan McKee: The member will be aware that financial services are reserved. We continue to work with the UK Government and others to ensure that services are maintained. As I indicated, I am meeting the FCA shortly, and access to cash infrastructure across Scotland will be a subject for discussion.

National Health Service Funding (Barnett Consequentials)

5. Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how the finance secretary plans to allocate the Barnett consequentials arising from the United Kingdom Government's recent announcement of additional funding for NHS England. (S6O-00145)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): We are committed to passing on all health and care resource consequentials to health and social care. We have sought urgent clarity from the UK Government on the level of net additional consequentials that will arise from the recent announcement. Despite that request, the UK Government has not, as yet, given a firm guarantee on the value of the consequentials and that that will be a net addition to the budget. I am sure that the member will join me in urging the UK Government to provide that clarity and ensure that the funding is additional.

Daniel Johnson: Clarity is important, of course. The need for my question is best set out in the report that Audit Scotland published today, to which Liz Smith referred. Will the cabinet secretary be specific? Will she commit to publishing the schedule of regular budget and spend updates that transparency demands, rather than have the Parliament rely on ad hoc budget revisions?

Kate Forbes: The member makes a valid point about ensuring that the Parliament is kept updated about progress on spend. That is why, last year, I tried to do additional budget revisions.

One of the challenges that we face, to which the Audit Scotland report alludes, is that when announcements are made south of the border, the

figures are often not confirmed until very late in the financial year. That makes it difficult for us, as we must use estimates to make decisions without having the clarity of a fixed figure. Last year, we had the guarantee, which helped, and I call on the UK Government to reinstate the guarantee, to help us to provide transparency to the Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is a supplementary question from Sue Webber.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): This time, Presiding Officer.

Last week, Scottish National Party members of Parliament in Westminster voted against £1.1 billion of extra national health service funding. Even though our health service is in crisis and the SNP Government has called for more money from the UK Government, SNP MPs refused to back an annual extra £1.1 billion for Scotland's NHS and social services. Will the cabinet secretary explain why the SNP MPs voted against giving more money to the NHS and social care in Scotland?

Kate Forbes: The member somewhat mischaracterises what happened last week. If she can confirm that that money is indeed additional to our budget and that every penny will come to the Scottish Government, we will ensure that it goes directly on front-line spend. The issue with a rise in national insurance, which has been well documented, is that it will have a devastating impact on some of our most vulnerable working families. This is the first time that I have heard a Tory call tax rises a union dividend.

Covid 19 (Funding for Ventilation in Schools)

6. Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the finance secretary has had with the education secretary regarding the allocation of additional funding to improve ventilation in schools to help reduce the spread of Covid-19. (S6O-00146)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): The education secretary and I agree that ventilation is one of the most important ways in which we can reduce the risk of airborne Covid-19 transmission and keep our schools as safe as possible. We are providing local authorities with an additional £10 million, to ensure that schools and childcare settings have access to carbon dioxide monitoring, and a previous allocation of £90 million of Covid-19 logistics funding was provided to local authorities to use for improved ventilation.

Martin Whitfield: I welcome those comments, but CO₂ monitoring relates not to ventilation but to the build-up of a gas that might indicate a risk of Covid. How is the Scottish Government measuring the effectiveness of the spend? Will adequate

funding be provided to local councils, so that the education estate can be maintained properly?

Kate Forbes: The member has asked a legitimate and important question. A reporting mechanism has been established to track the progress of each local authority, following agreement with local authorities. It covers four key areas and requests details on the purchase and supply of monitors, additional staff training requirements, building assessments and, most important, impacts and remedial action. Local authorities are keeping us updated on significant developments, particularly in relation to the identification of high-risk poorly ventilated areas and the remedial action that is being taken.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 7 is from Alexander Burnett, who joins us remotely.

Scottish Ambulance Service (Funding)

7. Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the finance secretary has had with the health secretary regarding the allocation of additional funding for the Scottish Ambulance Service to increase staffing and resources, particularly in rural and remote areas. (S6O-00147)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): As a member who represents a rural and remote area, I know the importance of the question. Scotland's Ambulance Service has been under significant pressure due to the pandemic, with ambulance staff at the forefront of our response. The service is currently carrying out a national review of demand and capacity, which will ensure that the right resources are in place across the country, including in rural and remote areas, to help to meet current and—importantly—future demand.

We have made available £10.5 million last year and £20 million this year to support the review. That has already resulted in the north gaining a total of 67 extra front-line staff—a mixture of experienced paramedics, newly qualified paramedics, technicians and patient transport staff.

Alexander Burnett: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer; I know that her constituency faces the same problems as mine. In my constituency of Aberdeenshire West, Braemar has had significant issues with ambulance services, which has led to tragic consequences.

I have been in contact with the Scottish Ambulance Service and Braemar community council, but funding is a major issue. The community is looking at the cost of purchasing a 4x4 Caravelle ambulance to replace the existing co-responder there. Has it come to that? Are

communities now so abandoned by the Scottish Government that they must fundraise for their own emergency services, or does the cabinet secretary endorse Humza Yousaf's view that people in rural areas should think twice before calling 999?

Kate Forbes: I will always represent people in rural areas—as I said, I represent some of the most remote and rural areas in the country.

The points that Alexander Burnett raised will not all be solved through funding. I have already outlined the funding position and, coming up to next year's budget, I will discuss health spend with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care. The Scottish Ambulance Service's budget rose in real terms by 17.7 per cent between 2011 and 2021.

However, in the light of the very serious issues that Alexander Burnett raises, I am sure that if he were to raise them with the health secretary, the health secretary would look into the specifics. I would be happy to pass on a note as result of this exchange.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): Can the cabinet secretary assure us that the allocation of funds takes into account that the problem of ambulances being unavailable, certainly in my region of South Scotland, has been exacerbated by ambulance crews having to wait at hospitals for record periods of time to hand over patients, and that fixing the problem requires greater staffing and resources at all points of the emergency service chain?

Kate Forbes: The member raises an important point about the integration of health and social care as a full service and the need to ensure that investment in one part of the health service relieves pressure elsewhere. That is a key theme in our remobilisation plan "Re-mobilise, Recover, Re-design: the framework for NHS Scotland". I make it clear that, when we come to next year's budget, we will look carefully across the NHS and health and social care to ensure that we spend money in the right places to relieve pressures elsewhere.

Covid-19 (Funding for Culture, the Arts and Events)

8. Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the finance secretary has had with the culture secretary regarding the allocation of funding for the culture, arts and events sectors in light of the impact of Covid-19. (S6O-00148)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): We recognise the value of culture and its importance in our recovery, and that is why substantial funding was made available during Covid for businesses that work in the

culture, arts and events sector. I have regular dialogue with the culture secretary as part of Cabinet discussions, and those will be on-going as we prepare for next year's budget.

Foysoil Choudhury: A recent Skills Development Scotland sectoral skills assessment report on the creative industries forecast an increase in gross value added of 28 per cent in the sector by 2031 from the current level. That will be good news for my constituents in Edinburgh and the Lothians, and for the economy more generally.

Can the cabinet secretary outline how the Scottish Government will open up and increase career paths in the creative industries for those who are currently marginalised and excluded from those opportunities, such as those from working-class backgrounds, black and minority ethnic communities and other underrepresented communities?

Kate Forbes: I thank the member for that question, which is hugely important. He reflects on the contribution that the culture sector makes to our economic performance—we recognise that contribution, as I hope will be reflected in our 10-year economic strategy, which will be published in autumn.

SDS needs to take career paths in the creative industries seriously, and we need to ensure that there are equal opportunities. As that is not directly within my portfolio, I would be happy to raise it with my colleague to ensure that he is addressing the specific issues that the member raises.

Cervical Screening (Update)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a statement by Maree Todd on an update on cervical screening. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:49

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): In June, I informed Parliament of a serious incident in the cervical screening programme. I am here to set out how we continue to address that issue and to reassure members that steps are being taken to prevent similar incidents in the future.

As I am mindful of the complexity of the issue, I again ask for a degree of patience while I summarise the background. In December 2020, a national health service board, following its annual invasive cervical cancer audit, discovered that a small number of women had been incorrectly excluded from the cervical screening programme and had subsequently developed cervical cancer. As I explained in June, sadly, one of those women has died.

That happened because the women were incorrectly recorded as having had total hysterectomies when they had, in fact, had subtotal hysterectomies. Members will remember that women who have had their cervix completely removed do not need to be screened for cervical cancer but women should continue to be screened if they have had a subtotal hysterectomy, which leaves some or all of the cervix.

I confirmed in June that immediate safeguards were implemented to ensure that similar mistakes could not happen again. An urgent review into exclusions was also conducted by an adverse event management team consisting of senior gynaecologists, pathologists, public health experts and others.

That review confirmed other instances of incorrect exclusions across Scotland. For clarity, I will update on the work in three parts: the first part of the audit, which reviewed exclusions where records indicated that a subtotal hysterectomy had been performed from 1997 onwards; the second part, which reviewed exclusions where records indicated that a subtotal hysterectomy had been performed before 1997; and plans for a wider audit of other exclusions from the cervical screening programme.

In June, NHS boards sent letters to 434 individuals who had been excluded despite indications on their records that a subtotal

hysterectomy had been carried out since 1997. The audit focused on that time period because records of procedures before 1997 are stored differently and can be more difficult to access. Contacted individuals were either reinstated to the screening programme and asked to make an appointment with their general practitioner or offered gynaecology appointments when they were above the upper age range for screening or their records could not conclusively show that their exclusion was correct.

I confirm that, of the 220 people who were asked to make a GP appointment to be screened, 112 have had samples taken. Those who have not yet made an appointment will be contacted again by the NHS, and I urge anyone affected who has not yet made that appointment with their GP to do so. You will be prioritised and will find supportive and understanding staff when you go.

I also confirm that 130 out of the 215 people who were invited have attended a gynaecology appointment. Of those, 90 people were found to have a cervix but only 65 required to be reinstated into the programme because they remain in the eligible age range for screening. A small number of people have not yet attended a clinic because they chose to reschedule their appointment to a later date, and 68 people did not attend, declined or cancelled their appointment without rescheduling.

Again, my advice to anyone who has not yet attended is to please contact your health board—it is not too late to rearrange an appointment. The clinic will be aware of your situation and they will do everything that they can to support you.

Members will understand that some results are still being processed, but only seven people seen at either their GP or a clinic have so far needed to be referred for further investigations, and no cases of cancer have been detected. In those seven cases in which pre-cancerous cell changes have been found, those involved have been treated through our standard care pathways.

The second part of the audit focused on people who had a subtotal hysterectomy before 1997 and had been excluded from the screening programme. That work concluded as expected at the end of July, and letters were sent to around a further 170 individuals by 18 August. I once again offer my sincere apologies to anyone who has been affected for the anxiety that I know this will have caused.

Thirty-nine people were reinstated in the programme and were invited to make an appointment for screening with their GP, and 132 were offered a gynaecology appointment. Where possible, I will keep members informed of the outcomes in future updates.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust continues to make its helpline available for anyone who is affected or concerned by this issue. It can be reached by calling 0808 802 8000 or via email at helpline@jostrust.org.uk.

To ensure that care for those affected is prioritised, the Scottish Government has provided additional funding to health boards so that gynaecology appointments can be offered as quickly as possible. In total, we have now provided more than £60,000 to support both reviews, and we will continue to make financial support available for boards that require it.

Alongside that audit, clinical teams have completed a review of the cancer registry to ascertain whether there are other cases in which an exclusion may have contributed to cervical cancer. In most cases, they were able to establish that the exclusion was not associated with the development of cervical cancer. However, I am sorry to say that, while it is still not possible to be certain, there is a high level of clinical suspicion that in one case inappropriate exclusion from screening may have resulted in a cervical cancer diagnosis. Separately, there is another very complex case in which several factors may have contributed to a diagnosis of cervical cancer, including an incorrect exclusion from cervical screening.

I have explained that the audit of women who had subtotal hysterectomies and were excluded from the programme was prioritised because those are the cases in which there was most reason to suspect errors. When I last spoke to the Parliament, I said that work was under way to consider the appropriateness of around 2,000 permanent exclusions from the cervical screening programme, which have been made over decades. I can now say that the adverse event management team has recommended that all of those records should be individually reviewed.

I must be open with you that, given the complexity and the numbers involved, it is likely that more people will be discovered to have been wrongly excluded. I know that that will concern people who have been excluded, but I hope that I can offer some reassurance. First, the overwhelming majority of those exclusions will be correct. We know that around 95 per cent of the hysterectomies that are carried out in Scotland are total, and women who have had a total hysterectomy do not need to be screened. Secondly, the risk of cervical cancer in general affects fewer than one in every 100 women in Scotland across their lifetime. Thirdly, there are dedicated NHS staff who are committed to completing this work as quickly as possible and to bringing all their considerable expertise to doing

so. To them I offer my thanks for all the hard work that I know it will involve.

Planning and conducting the audit is extremely challenging, both because of the sheer scale of the task and because of the sometimes complex nature of the hysterectomy procedure. However, the NHS is working to develop and test a robust process involving teams of administrative and clinical staff spanning primary and secondary care, which will ensure that all records can be reviewed consistently. As members will appreciate, that will be an especially challenging task as the NHS continues to recover from the impacts of Covid-19. As the methodology is still being developed and the timescales are not yet finalised, I must say now that the wider review is likely to take at least 12 months to complete.

However, the records that are to be reviewed will be prioritised on the basis of risk, informed by clinical advice. Work to complete the audits will happen in parallel with work to care for those who have been identified as wrongly excluded. The NHS will not wait for the full audit to complete before beginning to contact and assess those affected. I recognise that people whose records are being reviewed will want and need to know how long they will have to wait for the outcomes of the review. The NHS will make sure that those affected are informed about progress, and I will update the Parliament as often as is required.

It is vital to stress, once again, that the safety of the screening process itself is not in doubt. What happened here involves errors regarding who should be invited for screening; it does not reflect on the way in which samples are taken or analysed. Everyone should be clear that screening is the most effective way of preventing cervical cancer—it can and does save lives. It is for that reason that we must maintain confidence in the programme and ensure that everyone who needs screening has the opportunity to receive it.

Our priority has been to address the current errors and do all that we can to prevent anyone else coming to harm. It has become apparent that some instances of incorrect exclusions were discovered in the course of previous data checks, incidents and reviews in 2006, 2015, 2016 and 2017. Those were more limited reviews, which were conducted within narrower parameters than those of the current audit. The errors that were uncovered at the time were corrected, and it was believed that all issues had been resolved. Nonetheless, I am acutely aware that we must consider whether opportunities were missed to identify the wider issues that are now being investigated. That is essential if we are to fully understand what happened in the past and prevent similar incidents in the future.

Therefore, I have commissioned Healthcare Improvement Scotland to carry out a review of the processes, systems and governance for the application and management of permanent exclusions in the cervical screening programme in Scotland. The review will draw on lessons from past adverse events, as well as on the learning from other screening programmes in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. It is important to acknowledge that significant strengthening of national screening programme governance has already taken place over recent years, including the development of a robust process to manage adverse events.

The review will be led by an independent chair from outwith Scotland and supported by an expert review group. I have asked Healthcare Improvement Scotland to take forward the work with urgency, and I will update the Parliament when that appointment is made.

It is important to stress that the cervical screening programme continues to be the best way to prevent cancer before it starts. However, it is also important to say again that anyone who has any concerns about the symptoms of cervical cancer—including unusual discharge, bleeding between periods or after sex, and bleeding after the menopause—should contact their GP straight away for an appointment.

The NHS has established and delivered a pathway for those affected by the incident, and it is developing plans to review the records of all those who have been permanently excluded from cervical screening.

Finally, I have commissioned a review to look back and ensure that we can learn lessons, so that arrangements around exclusion are strengthened for the future.

Once again, I extend the offer to meet Opposition spokespeople should they wish to discuss the matter further. I will continue to update the Parliament as the work progresses.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. I appreciate the importance and sensitivity of the statement, although I am slightly concerned that we have run over time, which will eat into the time that is available for questions. Perhaps we can revisit how we will manage such situations in the future.

I will allow about 20 minutes for questions, after which we will have to move on to the next item of business. Any member who wants to ask a question should press their request-to-speak button or type R in the chat function.

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the minister for advance sight of her statement. I echo her remarks that the cervical screening

programme remains the best way to prevent cervical cancer.

The error has had a profound effect on the women involved, so they deserve answers as soon as possible. Will the Scottish Government commit to the independent review being a full inquiry into why the women were excluded unnecessarily and the effect that that has had?

Maree Todd: I apologise—my team has just contacted me to say that I inadvertently said that 2,000 records were to be reviewed, when I should have said 200,000.

The women are absolutely at the heart of the decision. I put on the record how heart sorry I am that we are in this situation. Our concern for the women who have been affected and their families, and the need for sensitive care and communication, have been at the heart of development of our response to the situation. I assure members that the women will be kept informed about how we progress and how the situation unfolds.

Again, I give the assurance that I will keep Parliament informed. I am more than happy to keep Opposition spokespeople informed, as well.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The matter remains, unfortunately, a huge scandal. Concerns were raised in 2015, 2016 and 2017. In 2016, there were 29 inappropriate exclusions and in 2017, there were 11 inappropriate exclusions. Why were all the cases of women who were wrongly excluded from cervical cancer screening not picked up after the 2016 audit or, indeed, after the 2017 audit? Why did we have to force that information from the Government using freedom of information requests? Why did we need to wait until another case was discovered in December 2020 for that wider review? On what basis does the minister say it was believed that all issues were resolved, when clearly they were not and recommendations were ignored?

After her previous statement, I specifically asked the minister why the issue was not picked up by previous audits and her response was that

“no cases were found through that national audit system until 2020”.—[*Official Report*, 24 June 2021; c 30.]

That is patently inaccurate, given the previous audits. I hope that the minister will correct the parliamentary record.

However, more important is that we will never know whether that gross oversight contributed to the deaths of three women who deserved so much better. Will the minister apologise for the Scottish Government’s failure and assure the chamber that it will never happen again?

Maree Todd: The audits, incidents and reviews that previously took place were all more limited in scope, with very different starting points from the current incident and a narrower focus of investigation. Because of that, those historical audits could not have picked up the wider issues that we have now identified. In particular, none of the previous reviews would have picked up the small number of cases that first brought the incident to light when they were discovered by one health board in December 2020.

Furthermore, and importantly, there was consensus among Scottish screening exercises that the errors that had been identified in the earlier audits had been corrected, and that the issues that had caused them had been resolved. We have been advised by clinicians who are involved in the screening programme that, given the available evidence at the time, the audits were considered to be an appropriate and proportionate response.

However, like Jackie Baillie, with the benefit of hindsight, I can say that it is important to ask whether opportunities were missed to look further and to identify wider issues earlier. I understand that and agree that questions can and should be asked about whether opportunities were missed, which is why we are dealing with the matter as we are.

I, too, want the questions to be answered, which is why I have commissioned Healthcare Improvement Scotland to undertake a thorough review of the processes, systems and governance of exclusions in the cervical screening programme. That will include understanding how the processes have developed over time, and learning lessons from past audits and the adverse events. That will help to establish whether the issues could have been uncovered sooner.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the Scottish Government continue to provide funding to the charity Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust to provide support to women who have been affected and the women concerned for as long as is necessary, particularly given the challenging circumstances that many of those women face?

Maree Todd: Yes—absolutely. As I mentioned earlier, Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust's helpline will remain open and available for anyone who is concerned about or affected by the issue. We will continue to provide additional funding if it is needed, so that the charity can provide support through its helpline. It is important to put on the record that the trust has established links with each NHS board, so there is no need for boards to have their own individual helplines. I state again that the helpline can be accessed by calling 0808 802 8000 or by emailing helpline@jostrust.org.uk. Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has a huge amount of

experience in supporting people who have questions and concerns about cervical cancer. Again, I record my thanks to the trust for the work that it has been doing in supporting people who are affected by the incident.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): Cervical screening is safe, effective and saves women's lives. I urge women, or anyone with a uterus, please, not to lose confidence but to attend the screening programme. To give women reassurance, can the minister say what safeguards were put in place in June to prevent such an incident from happening again, and when an audit will be run to find out whether it has happened again?

Maree Todd: I confirm that, as soon as the issue was discovered, immediate steps were taken to ensure that no one else was excluded in error from the programme. Cervical screening labs will no longer add hysterectomy information without confirmation from the operating gynaecologist that the cervix was completely removed during a hysterectomy procedure. Also, at present, general practitioners can no longer add exclusions; that will remain the case until we can be absolutely assured that a robust process is in place to verify GP exclusions.

As I mentioned, Healthcare Improvement Scotland has been commissioned to conduct a full review of the incident. It will look at the governance processes and at whether there were opportunities to learn about the scale of the incident earlier than we did. I am sure that the review will fruitfully bring forward suggestions on how we can make sure that it never happens again.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I appreciate the minister's update on this serious situation, but my question is about the future of cervical cancer testing in general. Could the minister give an update on the status of the roll-out of human papillomavirus home sample tests and say who will be eligible for them?

Maree Todd: Self-sampling is still a relatively new innovation, and the United Kingdom national screening committee—NSC—has not yet recommended that self-sampling be incorporated into the cervical screening programme. The NSC continues to gather and evaluate evidence on the matter; it is not possible to say when that process will be complete. However, Scotland is playing an active part in supporting that work. We will also take the necessary steps to ensure that we can roll any recommendation out as soon as possible, once one is made. At all times, ensuring patient safety will remain key, so we will not act until we are sure that it is safe to do so.

Some members will be aware that NHS Dumfries and Galloway is currently carrying out a pilot, which involves sending a self-sampling kit to all screening participants aged 25 to 64 who have never attended for cervical screening or who have defaulted on their most recent appointment. Findings from that pilot will inform our work, going forward.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): I am glad that the Government is finally instituting the Healthcare Improvement Scotland review that Scottish Labour asked for, but will the minister clarify the terms of the review, when she expects it to report and how far reaching we can expect it to be in order to prevent further instances from happening?

Maree Todd: As I said, we have commissioned a review by Healthcare Improvement Scotland, which has a long track record in improving quality and safety in Scotland, to look at the incident in its entirety, including the records of all those who were affected, and the governance processes. An independent chair will steer the review in order that we can be 100 per cent sure that we learn everything that we need to learn from the incident.

The review will look not simply at the incident that we have uncovered and the governance that is in place, but also at other screening programmes that are in place in Scotland, in order to see whether we can learn lessons from them. It will also consider asking for learning from the other UK nations and Ireland in order to see whether there are things that we can learn from their screening programmes that would make ours safer.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I appreciate that it is a sensitive and difficult subject, but can the minister tell us what actions have been taken to ensure that cervical screening is fully accessible for age groups that have lower take-up and for disabled women?

Maree Todd: That is an excellent question, because we know that participating in the cancer screening programme is one of the best ways to detect cancer early. That is why we are so concerned about the women who have been wrongly excluded from the programme. We have continued to invest in our screening inequalities fund in order to tackle inequalities in the national population screening programmes. We have committed £2 million over the next two years to tackle inequalities, including those that have arisen as a result of Covid-19. That is in addition to the £5 million that we have put into the fund so far.

At the moment, we are focused on making sure that future projects are sustainable and will deliver real impact. A workshop was held recently to

gather the views of a wide range of stakeholders on how the money can best be spent, and discussions are on-going about how to make the best use of the funding.

I assure the member that we are determined to identify and remove the barriers that exist to participation in the screening programme, because we know just how preventable the illness is. We want to ensure that women can participate in the programme as it is so effective in preventing cancer.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The Government waited until after the election in June, and for months after it had discovered that there was a problem, to tell Parliament that a woman had died after wrongly being excluded from screening. Today, we have learned not only that two more women have cancer after being excluded, but that a review of 200,000 women's records is under way.

How were indications of this public health scandal detected on four separate occasions without that triggering a full-scale investigation? Will the Government as a basic courtesy now write to the 200,000 women whose records will be reviewed in order to keep them updated and give them agency to seek help if they want to?

Maree Todd: Screening systems are inherently complex and they require complex quality assurance mechanisms. We can anticipate that there will always be incidents in which we are required to undertake further checks and investigations, and that is what happened in the previous audits. The changes to screening governance—including the establishment of the programme boards for each screening programme, the development of a formal adverse event management process for screening and the establishment of a national screening oversight function last year—demonstrate the Government's consistent, on-going commitment to improving the governance and oversight of our screening programmes.

We will press forward with the review of women who have been permanently excluded from the cervical screening programme. The work is complex and we will face many challenges in progressing it in a period of unprecedented pressure on the NHS, but we are determined to find every last case where an inappropriate exclusion might have occurred. I assure the member that we will write to the women involved. They will know that their records are being examined and reviewed and we will keep them updated.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have four members who still want to ask a question and less than two and a half minutes in which to bring them

in. I would appreciate brief questions and very brief responses, please.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Will the minister reiterate what work is being carried out to investigate any issues prior to 1997?

Maree Todd: As I said in my statement, the work to review the pre-1997 records concluded at the end of July. Letters were issued by 18 August to 170 individuals who were identified in the second part of the review as being, or potentially being, wrongly excluded. Some 39 people were reinstated in the programme and were invited to make an appointment for screening with their GP, and 132 women were offered a gynaecology appointment. The next step is to consider the larger cohort of 200,000 women whose records feature permanent exclusion from the screening programme.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): We have heard a lot about the development of the review of the records of the 200,000 women who have been permanently excluded from the screening programme. How long does the minister expect the review to take?

Maree Todd: The first point to stress is that the overwhelming majority of permanent exclusions will be correct. As I said in my statement, around 95 per cent of hysterectomies performed in Scotland are total. However, because we know that there is a possibility that some exclusions will be incorrect, we are taking a rigorous approach to reviewing every single record.

I fully expect that the people affected will want to know as a matter of urgency whether their exclusions are correct. I assure them that we are working as fast as we can, but it will take some time to work out the procedure so that we do not overburden the NHS during a period in which it is under immense pressure. The exercise will be like trying to find needles in a haystack. However, because even one person developing cancer is too many, we are absolutely committed to finding each and every woman who has been harmed or who could be at risk of future harm.

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): For those who find themselves needing further treatment, that could be a traumatising event. What other, wider support, such as mental health support, is available for those who need it?

Maree Todd: We have made extra money available to health boards to ensure that gynaecology clinics are available, and we have put extra money into the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust helpline to ensure that it can meet the needs in relation to the incident. I suggest that the first place that women go to is Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust. It has absolutely wonderful people who are

used to giving individual advice to women and who are well prepared and well versed in supporting women through this particular incident. Should mental health support of a different or more individualised nature be required, I would expect women's general practitioners to refer them on.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): The minister outlined that the urgent review uncovered that some exclusions had been wrongly applied across Scotland. Can she outline whether there are further steps to be taken to ensure that exclusions are not applied wrongly again?

Maree Todd: I confirmed in my answer to Sandesh Gulhane that, as soon as the issue was discovered, immediate steps were taken to ensure that no one else was excluded from the programme in error. As I mentioned, Healthcare Improvement Scotland has been commissioned to undertake a wider review of the processes, systems and governance for the application and management of permanent exclusions in the cervical screening programme in Scotland in order to ensure that the issue does not happen again. In particular, the review will look at how processes have developed over time and at lessons from audits and adverse events.

The changes to screening governance in Scotland that I have mentioned—they include the establishment of programme boards for screening, the national screening oversight board and the adverse event management process—provide reassurance that there is robust national oversight of and quality assurance for Scotland's screening programmes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have slightly overrun but, given the nature of the topic under discussion, I wanted to allow as many members as possible to ask a question.

North Sea Oil and Gas

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Good afternoon, colleagues. I remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus. I ask that members take care to observe those measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber. Please use the aisles and walkways only to access your seat and when moving around the chamber.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-01193, in the name of Liam Kerr, on the future of North Sea oil and gas.

15:23

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): No one, especially not the industry, denies that there is a climate emergency. We all saw the conclusions of the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, which underlines the consequences of historical actions and the need to take significant steps now. However, those actions must be carefully considered, and it is absolutely clear that we must avoid the temptation to impose simplistic solutions and should instead consider the science to help us to make what are tough and sometimes unpalatable choices.

The issue that lies at the very core of the debate is that there is still significant on-going demand. Members of the former just transition commission told the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee that just last week, and the Climate Change Committee acknowledges it under every scenario. Currently, oil and gas account for three quarters of the United Kingdom's energy needs, and it is forecast that, by 2050, half of all UK energy demand will still need to be met by oil and gas. By the time that the Cambo oil field is scheduled to start producing, oil and gas supply will have declined by 33 per cent on 2020, but demand will have fallen by only 15 per cent. Yesterday, the cabinet secretary agreed when, in response to my question, he said:

"We have done a lot on the supply side ... we have not done enough on the demand side."—[*Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee*, 14 September 2021; c 17.]

Indeed, this morning, on "Good Morning Scotland", Mark Ruskell agreed, in restating that our focus must be on the demand side.

The situation is complex. About a quarter of the UK's oil and gas goes towards manufacturing everyday products including medicines, cosmetics and household cleaners, as well as asphalt for roads and materials that are used for wind turbines and solar panels. The fact is that we are not yet at a stage where renewables can supply all

the electricity that Britain needs to keep the lights on in our homes, hospitals, schools and factories.

From where should we source the oil and gas to meet that demand? We could source from abroad—we do that already. Between January and March this year, the UK had to import 56 per cent of the gas that was required to keep the nation's homes and power stations running. It cannot be sensible to cut our own resources—it is Scotland's oil, after all, cabinet secretary—and to become increasingly dependent on countries such as Qatar, which exports liquefied natural gas thousands of miles by ship. That is in a context in which, according to the Oil and Gas Authority, natural gas from the UK continental shelf has less than half the carbon footprint of that imported LNG.

If we offshore our responsibilities and emissions, we have no means to control them. As Sir Ian Wood said, we become dependent on countries with far less strict environmental regulations than the world-leading UK. Last year, we imported almost £3 billion in oil and gas from Russia. I cannot believe that members want to increase our exposure to, and reliance on, that regime.

If we prematurely end production, our balance of trade will suffer. Although we know that that is of no concern to the Green Party, we must all be concerned that, last year, when UK and European Union production shrank but demand grew, gas prices surged. If oil and gas costs more, that will plunge thousands into fuel poverty.

Mike Tholen of Oil & Gas UK points out that offshoring production and importing would

"cause an energy skills shortage that would decimate our ability to deliver the low carbon energy mix our members are already creating in the UK, through wind, solar, tidal, hydrogen and other greener technologies."

That is key. The industry supports close to 100,000 jobs in Scotland—more than 60,000 in the north-east. A hard shutdown of the industry would consign the region to a bleak future and would end all the innovations that those workers are already delivering in our transition. We need people with those skills to pioneer greener energy and to develop carbon capture, hydrogen and offshore wind at scale and rapidly. Losing those skills will undermine our transition.

What of the fabled just transition—moving oil and gas workers into the renewables sector? Last week, the former head of the just transition commission, Jim Skea, said that the words "just transition" are used as "magic dust".

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): If the UK Tory Government is serious about the future of the north-east, it should be working to secure it. Does the member agree with Professor

Jim Skea, the former chair of the just transition commission, that

“there has been far more interest from Brussels in the progress on a Scottish just transition than there has been from London”—[*Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee*, 7 September 2021; c 27.]

Liam Kerr: I congratulate the member on reading out a prepared intervention. What is most galling about the relentless whataboutery is that not only does it waste everyone’s time in an important debate but it shows just how unable the member is to either properly address my motion or prosecute the case for her party’s amendment.

The UK has cut emissions faster than any G7 country. There has been a 44 per cent reduction in three decades, while the economy has grown by 78 per cent. In the past 12 months, the UK published clear plans to decarbonise power generation, heavy industry and oil and gas. That is rather better than what has come from the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport. Just yesterday, he conceded that no details around the just transition fund are mentioned in his amendment and that there will be no details on his just transition plan until at least next year.

Would the transition happen in any case? Eleven years ago, the Scottish Government predicted that there would be 28,000 Scottish jobs in offshore wind alone by 2020. The latest workforce data shows that the number stands at 1,400. That is unsurprising, because a BBC report last week said that, if Cambo were to go ahead, there would be

“1,000 direct jobs in Scotland and 2,000 more in the supply chain”

and

“another 500 elsewhere in the UK.”

In contrast, the Viking Energy project—a “vast new wind farm” in Shetland—will have “35 permanent jobs” associated with it.

Last week in *The Times*, a Scottish National Party commentator anonymously said that it was

“hard to understand the political, economic or ecological logic of where the party risks being on this just now.”

It is far better to base our policy on evidence and reality than chase an agenda that would manage to cost jobs, harm the environment more and leave us dependent on undemocratic regimes for supply.

At decision time tonight, will MSPs—particularly north-east MSPs—follow the science and support their constituents, an industry that is worth £18 billion to the local economy, a fair and managed transition and my motion, or will they sacrifice them in favour of virtue signalling to appease their coalition partners? The north-east is watching.

I move,

That the Parliament supports new oil and gas projects, including Cambo, because a strong North Sea sector supporting tens of thousands of Scottish jobs is preferable to increasing energy imports during the transition to net zero.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call the cabinet secretary, Michael Matheson, to speak to and move amendment S6M-01193.3 for up six minutes.

15:30

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): Thank you—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Do we have a problem with the cabinet secretary’s microphone? Could the cabinet secretary maybe take the card out and push it all the way back in? We will see whether that works.

Michael Matheson: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

As the chamber knows, the oil and gas industry supports around 100,000 jobs in Scotland and, even as we transition away from fossil fuels, we know that it has a vital role to play in Scotland’s energy future.

The North Sea will continue to provide Scotland with an important level of domestic energy and, crucially, the infrastructure, skills and expertise of the sector can be a huge asset in helping us to achieve net zero. We believe that they will help Scotland to become a world leader in emerging technologies, such as hydrogen technology, carbon capture, utilisation and storage, and offshore wind.

We are presently in a transition from fossil fuels to renewable and low-carbon sources of energy, which we owe to the planet, and none of us can, or should try to, escape that responsibility. However, we need to transition in a way that is fair and just, which is why the Scottish Government is working with the energy sector in Scotland, including the oil and gas sector, not only to secure the environmental benefits of decarbonising our energy system but to seize the economic opportunities that the energy transition presents.

Our transition to net zero must be made in a way that is just for the workers, which is key, but also for the sector and our energy needs. Additionally, we need to manage that transition in a way that ensures that oil and gas developments are compatible with becoming a net zero society by 2045; that is why we have committed to undertaking a programme of work and analysis to better understand Scotland’s energy requirements

and how they align with our climate change targets as we transition to net zero.

Members are aware of the recent scientific report from the IPCC that the secretary general of the United Nations described as a “code red for humanity”. The report confirms that the threats that global warming poses are already both immediate and severe. Without urgent action to reduce global emissions in line with the goals of the Paris agreement, those impacts will only accelerate. It therefore cannot be business as usual.

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): Does the member agree that the oil and gas industry has taken important steps to become more sustainable?

Michael Matheson: Yes.

The evidence from the IPCC is clear: countries around the world cannot continue to pursue maximum economic recovery of fossil fuels if the Paris agreement goals are to be met—the International Energy Agency supports that position in its report from earlier this year. That is why the Scottish Government has asked the UK Government to commit to significantly enhancing the climate conditionality of offshore production and to reassess the licences that have already been issued, but through which field development has not yet commenced. Although that area is reserved, it is essential that the UK Government shows the necessary climate leadership in reassessing those licences.

Liam Kerr: Does the cabinet secretary not recognise that the UK has already put in place a £16 billion North Sea transition deal to facilitate exactly that process?

Michael Matheson: The member will recognise that the UK Government has conceded the point about the need to make sure that there is a climate compatibility checkpoint for new licences, so applying that same principle to existing licences that are not being developed is absolutely consistent with making sure that we meet our climate change obligations.

We are already making good progress in reducing Scotland’s reliance on fossil fuels, including through a substantial increase in our renewable energy capacity, targeting up to 11GW of offshore wind capacity by 2030, which is enough to power up to 8 million homes.

Renewable and low-carbon jobs cannot replace oil and gas jobs immediately, which is why we are committed to ending our contribution to climate change in a way that is just and leaves no-one behind. That is why in June this year, we announced £62 million for the energy transition fund, which focuses on supporting the energy

sector to recover from the economic impact of Covid-19 and supporting investment in areas that can help us to move towards net zero.

We are also investing £500 million in the transition fund for the north-east and Moray, and I hope that members will support that tonight and join us in calling on the UK Government to match that investment.—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary is in his final 30 seconds.

Michael Matheson: That will support and accelerate the transition of the region and support the role of Aberdeen and the wider north-east of Scotland as a centre of excellence for the transition to net zero. As part of that work, we will look to reaffirm our commitment to a just transition through the just transition plans that we will implement.

A just transition is the right approach for Scotland, recognising our proud heritage and the continuing key role for the oil and gas industry, while expanding and developing our renewable energy sector and reducing our dependency on fossil fuels, and doing so in a way that also recognises our collective responsibility to tackle the global climate emergency.

I move amendment S6M-01193.3, to leave out from “supports” to end and insert:

“recognises how important the oil and gas industry, infrastructure, highly-skilled workforce and supply chain are to Scotland; agrees that countries around the world cannot continue to maximise recovery of hydrocarbons if the aims of the Paris Agreement are to be met; believes that Scotland and the UK cannot ignore the concern that unlimited extraction of fossil fuels is simply incompatible with protecting the planet; understands that the Scottish Government will undertake analysis to understand Scotland’s energy requirements as the country transitions to net-zero in line with the aims of the Paris Agreement; recognises the role that hydrogen, carbon capture, utilisation and storage can play in a just transition, so long as they are not used to justify unsustainable levels of fossil fuel extraction; welcomes the Scottish Government’s commitment to working with communities and those most impacted across Scotland, including the highly-skilled oil and gas workforce, to co-design the Transition Plan for Energy, and to taking forward a 10-year £500 million Just Transition Fund for the North East and Moray, and calls on the UK Government to match this investment, as well as reassess all existing licences for undeveloped fossil fuel extraction in light of the climate emergency.”

15:37

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I am pleased to open the debate on behalf of Scottish Labour. I refer to my entry in the register of members’ interests, as I am a member of Unite the Union and the GMB union.

I have five minutes in which to respond to a motion on one of the biggest issues that our planet

faces, so I will try to make this as straightforward as possible. For many years, the biggest threat to our planet was climate change denial. Now, the biggest threat to our planet is climate change inaction. The message from climate scientists could not be clearer: if we are to limit global warming to 1.5°C—the internationally agreed target of the Paris agreement—there can be no new oil and gas. That means no Cambo.

In May, the International Energy Agency's report, which was commissioned by the UK Government ahead of COP26, stated that, in order to reach global net zero by 2050, there should be "No new oil and gas fields approved for development."

That means no Cambo.

We have heard that the UN Secretary General has called the IPCC's report "code red for humanity". He warned:

"This report must sound a death knell for coal and fossil fuels, before they destroy our planet."

That means no Cambo. When report after report makes it clear that Cambo would be another nail in the coffin of our dying planet, we have a duty to call it out.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Monica Lennon: I want to make some progress.

Without immediate action to reduce emissions, the consequences will include rising sea levels, the extinction of vulnerable species and a higher frequency of natural disasters. Pushing ahead with Cambo would be a betrayal of future generations.

Industrial and economic change is inevitable. It is our duty, as parliamentarians, to guarantee that change and decarbonisation delivers justice for workers. We need a managed and worker-led just transition, because we cannot allow a climate crisis to become a jobs crisis in the north-east or any other part of Scotland. That will require a relentless focus on meaningful, well paid and unionised jobs that are good for people and good for our planet. We just need the political will and courage to act.

Over the summer, I listened to workers and their trade unions. They expressed fears not only about the impacts of climate change, but about their jobs. Those fears are not mutually exclusive. They have good reason to be sceptical about the promises that politicians have made to them. The SNP's green jobs fund has not yet delivered for workers and, so far, the green jobs workforce academy appears to be an underwhelming website with an impressive name. We know that we must do better.

History has taught us that the Tories do not do just transitions. Workers know that, which is why they are worried. Labour's position is clear: Cambo must not go ahead, and nothing less than a green new deal will address the twin challenges of climate change and economic transition.

My Scottish Labour colleague Mercedes Villalba has proposed offshore training passports, which would allow oil and gas workers to move freely between offshore and onshore energy sectors, with standardised certification across roles. Such practical policies would give workers confidence. *[Interruption.]* I would rather give voice to workers than to Tories.

This debate coincides with the release of a landmark report from Friends of the Earth Scotland. Entitled "Watershed: the Turning Point for North Sea Oil and the Just Transition", the report calls for the redirecting of the tax breaks and subsidies that have been offered to the oil and gas sector into funding a just transition. Notably, the report also recommends the creation of a publicly owned energy company in Scotland. The Tories do not support that, either. Scottish Labour and members of the SNP agree that such a move could turbocharge renewable energy generation and control spiralling heating bills. I urge the Scottish Government not to ditch or delay that proposal.

Earlier today, I hosted a well-attended parliamentary briefing on ecocide, with Jojo Mehta and Philippe Sands QC, who are distinguished international environmental and human rights campaigners. The ecocide proposal would criminalise the large-scale destruction of fragile ecosystems. It is a law that could one day apply to proposed developments such as Cambo.

Liam Kerr: Will the member give way?

Monica Lennon: I have only seconds left.

At the event, we were reminded that COP26 is around the corner. What will people see when they look at Scotland and the UK? Greta Thunberg said recently of Scotland:

"Of course there might be some politicians that are slightly less worse than others. That was very mean, but you get the point."

We can and must do better. We need a managed, well-resourced just transition to unlock new economic opportunities. The Scottish Government needs to get off the fence. We will oppose the Tories' motion at decision time. They are on the wrong side of history.

I move amendment S6M-01193.1, to leave out from "supports" to end and insert:

"believes that the development of the Cambo oil field would be at odds with Scotland's aim of being net zero by 2045 and should not go ahead; considers that it is crucial

that the transition to green sources of energy is jobs- and worker-led to retain and increase skilled jobs in Scotland; notes that the number of people directly employed in the low-carbon economy in Scotland is currently at its lowest level since 2014, at only 21,400, according to the latest available figures, and calls on the Scottish Government to use its powers over procurement, offshore windfarm licence approval and the Scottish National Investment Bank to secure and grow domestic supply chains for renewables, creating high-skilled, well-paying jobs across Scotland.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Liam McArthur—*[Interruption.]*. Take a seat, Mr McArthur.

There is a lot of chatter on the Conservative side of the chamber. We would like to hear every member.

15:43

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I am used to that reaction as I clamber to my feet.

This Parliament voted into law a shared commitment to reaching net zero by 2045. As the UK Climate Change Committee has told us, meeting that target will involve

“transitioning almost entirely away from the unabated use of fossil fuels”.

That is the view of experts here and worldwide. I suspect that it is the view of most in the oil and gas sector. Therefore, decisions on the granting of additional licences for oil and gas extraction must be seen in the context of everything that we now understand about the climate emergency and the need to drive down our reliance on fossil fuels.

That is a difficult circle to square because, as the IPCC has warned us, we do not have the luxury of time. Every aspect of how we live needs to be sense checked in the light of the climate emergency, and that certainly includes the oil and gas sector. I simply cannot understand how the UK Government could consider pressing ahead with a decision on Cambo while bypassing its own climate checkpoint.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Liam McArthur: Not at the moment, Mr Kerr.

We should not forget that we are talking about a licence that was first considered in 2001. Back in 2001, many still questioned the very existence of man-made climate change, but, back then, Bob the Builder’s version of “Mambo No 5” was sitting at the top of the charts. Thankfully, the world has moved on since then.

Scotland’s relationship with oil and gas goes beyond everyday reliance. It is not just the fuel that we use to heat our homes and drive our cars;

communities have been built around it and livelihoods depend on it.

The industry needs to undergo a just transition, and those who work within it or who are reliant upon it deserve a just transition. They are skilled individuals and they remain absolutely critical to our success in developing the roles, businesses and industries that are needed to achieve our climate objectives. For that to happen, however, we need to see far more concerted and collaborative action by both of Scotland’s Governments to support people to reskill, retrain and move into more sustainable industries.

Too often, we see green jobs drift abroad. Without proper investment, robust planning and a just transition, many will go the same way in the future. The risk is that ministers will squander Scotland’s potential and leave communities and workers to pay the price in the move to a net zero economy. That would be a betrayal of those in the oil and gas sector.

Polling consistently shows an appetite within the workforce for making a switch but, so far, both the UK and Scottish Governments have failed to provide workers with the opportunities to change. Government support for a Scotland-wide just transition is essential if we are to avoid a repeat of the catastrophic carnage that was done to mining and steel communities in the 1970s and 1980s.

However, the creation of green jobs is only half of the equation. We still need a revolutionary overhaul in the demand for fossil fuels. Homes are still being built with gas boilers. Cars that run on petrol are still being manufactured. The vast majority of the around 2.5 million households in Scotland continue to leak heat from unsustainable systems such as gas boilers. In the meantime, sea levels are rising and the world is getting hotter.

After the sound and fury of this afternoon’s brief debate has passed, the Parliament will have to decide how it plans to honour our shared commitment—the one that we agreed unanimously not so long ago—to achieve net zero by 2045. That does call into question decisions over future oil and gas licences. It also demands a meaningful commitment by both UK and Scottish Governments to a just transition that is properly funded and properly targeted.

It is my pleasure to move amendment S6M-01193.2, to leave out from “supports” to end and insert:

“believes that, in the current circumstances, the licence for Cambo should not proceed; recognises that decisions taken over the next 10 years will either make the planet or break it; believes that every aspect of how people live needs to be sense checked in light of the climate emergency, and that this includes the oil and gas sector; notes the evidence that people in the industry would embrace new opportunities, but that both the Scottish and

UK governments have failed to provide workers with the promised opportunities for green jobs, which are critical to their skills being redeployed as part of a just transition; notes the impact that this has had on communities connected to the oil and gas sector; recalls that the licence for Cambo was first considered in 2001, when the basic facts of global warming were still being regularly disputed, and believes that the climate checkpoint must be applied, given the understanding that now exists around the climate emergency and that the extraction of oil and gas cannot continue unabated.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I remind members that speeches are to be of up to four minutes. There is no time in hand.

15:46

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in what is a hugely important debate—and one that will continue long after this afternoon. I hope that we will make an awful lot more progress in this session of Parliament.

I will start from a position on which I think we all agree. We have an environmental crisis that is impacting the planet in ways that we cannot afford to ignore. There can surely be no debating the fact that we need to change how we create and consume energy. The drive towards net zero emissions and beyond has accelerated greatly recently and is now in the forefront of our minds in a way that would not have been considered even just a decade ago.

However, where I differ from the approach of some members of the Government is around the most effective and timeous way in which we can achieve that crucial goal. I believe that we will reach those targets through innovation, not by shutting down huge swathes of the economy as the Greens and the Scottish Government would have us do. Their approach is blinkered, devoid of any creativity and as far from reality as it could possibly be.

As my colleague Liam Kerr suggested, the petrochemical industry is about far more than simply burning fossil fuel. A significant proportion of oil is used in many other industries, not least in medicines, plastics and even the renewables sector itself—the list goes on and on. It is far too narrow to frame the debate just around fossil fuels.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): How many of the 20 billion barrels of oil and gas in the North Sea will be required to produce medicine?

Brian Whittle: I will just pull that figure out of my back pocket—what a great question. What Mark Ruskell might not know is that, because of its grade, the oil in the North Sea is used for fossil fuel far less than that in the middle east.

We need the oil and gas industry if we are to reach our net zero target, and the industry was considering the issue way before it became fashionable to do so. Some 20 years ago, I was in the office of a major oil and gas company. While I was waiting to go into my meeting, I read its internal magazine, which told how its vice-president had stood up at its annual global conference and stated that his goal was for the company to be the number 1 supplier of renewable energy in the world within 50 years. The industry knew back then that it had to change its business model, and it has been doing that by investing in renewables companies and driving innovation—and not just in more efficient fuels.

Just yesterday, I spoke to an oil and gas company that listed the investments that it had made in the renewables sector and spoke about how it owns wind farms and has invested in wave energy management. I also spoke yesterday to a company that develops offshore wind, green hydrogen and wave energy technology. Its major investors are oil and gas companies. Such companies are investing billions of pounds in the renewables sector and clean energy research, and, with their research and development budgets, they can make the biggest difference. That is investment that Governments cannot replace. We should be working with those companies and encouraging their innovation, which will drive us towards a clean environment and a net zero economy. Shut down the industry and we shut down a major contributor to the future that we all want.

We need a replacement for our current energy supply. Moreover, as Liam Kerr said, we all need to consider how demand can be reduced—and we all have a part to play in that. These days, I think that the oil and gas industry can be legitimately renamed energy supply companies. It would be absurd to just switch off that investment in renewables tech. It is time that the Scottish Government started working with those companies instead of continually vilifying them, to ensure that innovation is not stifled as we drive the crucial green economy.

15:51

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests and my interest in Islay Energy Community Benefit Society.

The Tory motion can only delay our journey to net zero. We must be ambitious and reject it. Scotland has a responsibility to meet our climate obligations while ensuring a secure energy supply and supporting our highly skilled workforce to transition to the green jobs of the future. The SNP-Green Scottish Government is wholly committed to

ending Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2045, and to ensuring that we do that in a way that is just and leaves no one behind.

Liam Kerr: I am listening very carefully. Where would the member source the oil and gas to meet demand?

Jenni Minto: I understand that Scotland is a net exporter of energy.

Scotland should be proud of the action that has been taken so far. Emissions are down by 51.5 per cent since the 1990 baseline. In 2020, 95.9 per cent of gross electricity consumption came from renewable sources. Renewable energy capacity is 11.9GW and there is 14.6GW of renewable energy capacity in development.

In its autumn 2020 report, the Climate Change Committee said of Scotland's progress that

"the Scottish economy has decarbonised more quickly than the rest of the UK, and faster than any G20 economy since 2008. Emissions have fallen rapidly while the economy has grown."

The Scottish Government recognises that challenges remain. Ending our contributing to climate change will require transformational change from every element of society.

I went to the University of Aberdeen and gained my accountancy qualification there in the early 1990s, so I know about the importance of the oil and gas industry to the north-east of Scotland. Many companies that I have audited are related to the oil industry—supply boats, rig management companies and equipment repair and supply companies—and employ thousands of skilled men and women. Now is the time to harness their skills and experience for a just transition from fossil fuels to renewables.

In July, I visited Greenpeace's Rainbow Warrior when she was docked at Leith. I remember the news stories of her crews protesting at North Sea oil rigs in the 1980s, but now Greenpeace is working with oil rig workers to promote a just transition. Together, they have produced a short film, "Rigged: A Worker's Story", which includes interviews with former offshore workers. One of them said:

"I don't think we are going to have a great planet until we do things because it's the right thing to do, rather than because it is profitable".

Those are salient words, and words that Tory members should perhaps heed.

I support the Scottish Government's view that the opening of new oil fields, including Cambo, must be reassessed in the light of the climate emergency that we now face, so I was pleased that the First Minister wrote to Westminster to ask the UK Government to think again.

The stark warning from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the climate emergency poses a severe threat and heightened risk to the planet is a powerful reminder that we all must do more to deliver a just transition.

The green jobs workforce academy will help to assess people's current skills and help them to undertake the necessary upskilling or reskilling. The knowledge and experience of the oil and gas sector and its supply chain will be so important in developing the essential low-carbon technology.

As I said in the chamber last week, in my Argyll and Bute constituency the renewables industry is blossoming. Renewable energy support industries are also establishing themselves. Renewable Parts Ltd, for example, is an innovator in the wind-energy supply chain in Scotland. The company is based in Renfrewshire and in Argyll and Bute and has created a refurbishment and remanufacture supply chain that is creating new jobs in the green energy industry, with skills that are critical to the growth of the circular economy.

Oil and gas are finite, but wind and tides are not. It will come one way or another, sooner or later: the writing is on the wall for oil and gas. The Scottish Government is determined to use the hard-won skills of our oil and gas industries to make Scotland a green powerhouse, with a transition to a greener future—a just transition.

15:56

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests: I am a member of the GMB union.

This is a welcome debate about how we can remake our Scottish economy to ensure the future prosperity of our country. Industry—which puts wages in pockets, food on tables and taxes into our public services—must grow, rather than recede.

No economic issue is of more importance to this country than the future of the North Sea. That concerns not just my Aberdonian constituents, but every Scot. It is about Mossmorran, Grangemouth and the defence industry of the Forth and Clyde valleys. It is about our tax take, our balance of payments, our energy security, our food system, our global security positioning and our role in Europe and the world. It is about our recent past and, which is much more important, our long-term future.

We are all clear that the nature of North Sea industries must, like all economies, change over time. The current transition is necessitated by crisis and it is urgent; the physical effects of

climate change are becoming ever clearer. Net zero requires a 12 per cent reduction in global energy sector combustion emissions, but given rebounding demand, we are now on track for a 3 per cent overall increase. We must think and act differently.

Opening up whole new oil fields would demand business solutions for rapid extraction. Instead, we must clean up extraction in current fields. Doing that work promises far longer gains in innovation, technologies and exports for Scotland. We must tell investors, regulators, researchers and workers that future growth is in new sectors that grow alongside oil and gas.

The UKCCC makes it clear that there will and must be a long-term need for oil and gas extraction. Continued production is baked into any reality-based transition to net zero. The Net Zero Technology Centre has set out a compelling vision of a future for Scotland in which integrated offshore renewables, hydrogen and carbon capture can offer a cumulative £38 billion opportunity, in comparison with the £15 billion contribution from the maturing basin today.

We must act now to avert climate breakdown and to seize such opportunities. When the pace must be quickened, how do we find some semblance of security and hope for our energy workers? Robert J Gordon, in his masterful work, “The Rise and Fall of American Growth”, makes it clear that in technology transitions throughout history, education and reskilling follow opportunity; they do not cause opportunity, and training will not pre-empt innovation. People will retrain when there is a job to go into. Government’s job is to ensure that the state covers the cost of bridging the gap.

Members have mentioned the SNP’s risible record in renewables jobs and its complete failure to capture the first generation of the supply chain. I listened when Alex Salmond told us that we would be the “Saudi Arabia of renewables” and when he compared himself to Labour’s Tom Johnson, who transformed our economy after the war. The difference is that Tom Johnson did things, rather than tell grandiose lies that undermine the long-term confidence of workers such as the people who were promised the renewables jobs in Dundee that came to nothing.

Liam Kerr: The member’s comments are interesting. Dave Moxham, of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, told the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee the other week:

“There will never be the intensity of jobs across the offshore wind sector that there is in offshore oil and gas.”—*[Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, 7 September 2021; c 23.]*

Does the member have a solution? What can he propose that will answer that challenge?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have 20 seconds left, Mr Marra.

Michael Marra: I will try to get everything in. The answer is certainly about having a broader mix of industries and putting in place the electrical grid, including sub-sea. Change is required for export from existing oil and gas facilities. A wide range of hydrogen and carbon capture can be the answer, in part. There is intense activity in that regard and there are far greater opportunities for us to export around the world.

Labour’s focus is where it has always been: on jobs, on wages and on the future of Scotland. On those issues, it is high time that the Government got serious.

15:59

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): I will focus my remarks on our transition to net zero. It is important to remember that all parties in Parliament agree that we need to be serious and to take sustained action on climate change. We agree on net zero, on building a sustainable economy and on ensuring a just transition to that new economy. There is nothing new in our finding common cause on climate change.

The Scottish Conservatives led Opposition parties in defeating the SNP Government on the call for energy efficiency targets to be brought forward. The Greens and, belatedly, Labour support our call for a moratorium on new incinerators. Of course, I trust that the Greens still hold that position, now that they are in coalition with the SNP, which is—given its level of ambition—perhaps the worst-performing Government in the world when it comes to tackling climate change.

The level of inaction from the nationalist Government makes co-operation in Parliament increasingly difficult. Despite repeated warnings from me and colleagues including Claudia Beamish and Mark Ruskell, the SNP Government has refused to listen and is instead allowing the failures to pile up. On its emissions target, it has failed. On its green jobs target, it has failed. On its recycling target, it has failed. On its fuel poverty target, it has failed. On its renewable heat target, it has failed. Given the time that is available, I cannot go on. I simply note that, with Scotland hosting the 26th United Nations conference of the parties—COP26—those failures will soon become an international embarrassment for the SNP-Green coalition.

On recycling, the Government is actually going backwards—the recycling rate is lower now than it

was in 2016. In Dundee, the SNP council is promising a 70 per cent recycling rate by 2025, yet the Government's slow progress means that that will take until at least 2040. Glasgow—another SNP-run city, and the host of COP26—is in the midst of a cleansing crisis and cannot even manage a 25 per cent recycling rate. What will world leaders make of that? What will they make of this nationalist Government's having broken its promise to ban biodegradable waste going to landfill and deciding just to burn it instead? Under the SNP, incineration capacity has ballooned by 400 per cent. Scotland needs a Government that will deliver policies to tackle climate change—not the empty rhetoric that is the SNP mantra.

The UK Government has stepped up to the plate and has launched the North Sea transition deal, which includes early reductions in offshore production emissions, investment of up to £16 billion by 2030 in new energy technologies and a 60 million tonnes reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): Claire Mack, the chief executive of Scottish Renewables, has said that the current transmission charging system is

“entirely contrary to ... the net zero agenda”,

and she called on the UK Government to act without delay to address the outdated scheme. Can Maurice Golden address that point?

Maurice Golden: Yes, I can. I worked as a transmission policy analyst at the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets on that very aspect.

The SNP's problem in that regard is that it is arguing for a reduction in transmission charges for generators, many of which are big businesses, and for an increase in the cost to consumers. That is how transmission charging policy works. The SNP, which has failed to eradicate fuel poverty, is now arguing for a policy of increasing transmission charges to customers in Scotland. That is quite unbelievable.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Golden, I hope that you are coming to a conclusion.

Maurice Golden: Okay, Presiding Officer.

Public support, parliamentary goodwill and the economic might of our United Kingdom—they are all there to help us to reach net zero. I want us to protect oil and gas jobs, to secure a just transition and to deliver on our net zero targets.

16:04

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I like to listen to the BBC radio series “The Listening Project”. It has a simple format: two people in a room have a chat about a topic, and this week's

edition was pertinent to today's debate. Keith, an oil and gas sector geologist from Aberdeen, was having a conversation with Peter, who had been a miner in North Yorkshire, and the subject was energy transition. On the one hand, we had a man who had not been involved in a just transition and, on the other, a man who was on the cusp of a transition and was mulling over his part in it. Keith said what many of my constituents have said to me: affordable, secure and increasingly sustainable jobs are needed.

I have said in the chamber many times that my family owes a lot to oil and gas and that many livelihoods have depended on it. My family's experience is replicated in those of tens of thousands of my constituents, and I understand their fears about the fluctuating nature of the industry and the new energy future that is in front of them.

When I was elected in 2016, the oil and gas sector was in the middle of a downturn and thousands of my constituents were losing their jobs. Geopolitics was reverberating around the doors of Aberdeenshire. Then, as now, people told me that they wanted secure employment. At the time, I relayed in Parliament the testimony of many people who arrived to work at oil and gas offices at 8 am, only to be out in the car park with their belongings in a box by 9 am—families with mortgage arrears and families being referred to food banks. One of my constituents was phoned on his 50th birthday to be told that, after 30 years' service, he would not be returning in a helicopter to his production platform the next week. Transition has been on the minds of oil and gas workers for many years and for many reasons.

Later in that radio broadcast, Keith made a point that is key to the future of oil and gas in Scotland. He said:

“Hydrocarbons are too good to burn. We'll need them for other things.”

I am on record saying this many times in the Parliament: it is the application not the extraction that is the issue.

We need systems that do not burn hydrocarbons. We will continue to need fossil fuels as feedstock for chemicals and manufacturing well into the future. I would much rather that that feedstock comes from our domestic supply, where it is produced with the best health and safety controls in the world, where the emissions from that production have been driven down and where the environmental controls and impact analyses are robust. I do not want to export our emissions as we import that feedstock to meet our current needs. That will not help our economy or our planet.

I see the future north-east having a mix of hydrocarbons, renewables, energy innovation and life sciences as our core sectors. I am in the middle of a listening project of my own in the form of a report on a survey on transition that I ran over summer. The constituents I spoke to are not talking about Cambo or future exploration; they urge us to take down the barriers to transition that they are experiencing now. They want us to take action on making training affordable, recognising the skills and certification that oil and gas workers already have and walking the walk on transferability. The £500 million that the Scottish Government announced for just transition in the north-east is action.

I look forward to applying my ideas and those of my constituents to deploying that. *[Interruption.]* I do not know whether I have time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her last 30 seconds.

Gillian Martin: The solution to our economic and environmental aspirations is neither to exploit the North Sea until the oil runs dry nor to leave it in the ground. The solutions are nuanced and complex, and our mutual constituents deserve our political conversations about the issue to be informed and to take account of that complexity.

To give it its due, the UK Government's climate compatibility checkpoint does that and is in line with Nicola Sturgeon's comments on the issue of new fields. However, seven years ago, people on the Conservative benches told us that the oil was running out, but now the tune has changed. It is there and it has great value, but the real issue is what do we do with it. That is the fundamental issue that both Governments need to act on for the good of the people and the planet.

16:08

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Liam Kerr advised us at the beginning of the debate to listen to the science, so I will quote some people who understand the science and have reflected on it. The UN secretary general, António Guterres, has said recently that countries should

"end all new fossil fuel exploration and production and shift fossil fuel subsidies into renewable energy."

That is not happening under UK Government policy. Dr Fatih Birol, who is executive director of the International Energy Agency, has said:

"If governments are serious about the climate crisis, there can be no new investments in oil, gas and coal, from now—from this year."

Again, that is not happening under UK Government policy. Lord Deben, who is chair of the UK Climate Change Committee and a former

UK Government minister, told Mr Kerr at the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee a couple of weeks ago that

"the justification for any new oil and gas exploration or production has to be very strong indeed, and I cannot say that I have seen that so far."—*[Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, 31 August; c 20.]*

No such case has been presented for Cambo or the continued exploration and extraction of fossil fuels.

Countries around the world are recognising that an oil and gas transition needs a clear destination to transition to. They know that a just transition needs to start years in advance. Otherwise, there is a risk of a sudden deferred collapse of jobs in the future.

The launch of the beyond oil and gas alliance, spearheaded by the Danish and Costa Rican Governments and now involving France, New Zealand, Spain and many more countries, will mark a watershed moment at COP26. Those are states that have turned the corner and are committing to no more oil and gas development. The Scottish Government should join in that conversation in Glasgow and should look to accelerate our own just transition.

The Green-Scottish Government co-operation agreement commits to answering two critical questions, which the cabinet secretary referred to in his opening comments. *[Interruption.]* I want to make a little bit of progress first. The first of those questions is how much oil and gas we can afford to burn while staying aligned with the objectives of the Paris agreement. The second question is what, given what we can afford to burn, our domestic demand for oil and gas will be in the years ahead as we make progress in decarbonising our society.

Those are questions that cannot be answered by the oil and gas sector by itself, because it will always be driven by a UK licensing policy of maximum economic recovery of every last drop from every last reserve. Again, I welcome the comments from the cabinet secretary at the beginning of the debate about some of the flaws in that policy of maximum economic recovery, which is incompatible with the climate crisis. *[Interruption.]* I am running out of time—I am sorry.

Those are critical questions, which must be answered not by sectoral interests but by Governments, and the answers will depend on the level of ambition and the actual progress in delivering decarbonisation and energy demand reduction across the whole of the UK. I am certain that any such assessment that is done will show Cambo to be superfluous to our domestic energy needs and utterly incompatible with the Paris

agreement. It is clear that Cambo must not go ahead.

However, Cambo is just the tip of the melting iceberg. If we are serious about staying in alignment with Paris, some of the 6.6 billion barrels of existing oil and gas reserves will have to stay in the ground, too, alongside the 13.4 billion barrels that the sector wants to develop. Those must stay out of reach.

Our co-operation agreement is a great starting point for a real just transition, with a £500 million deal for the north-east and a new sector deal for onshore wind. This is where the real grown-up debate needs to be in the Parliament. It needs to be about how we manage the just transition and how we protect people and planet. I look forward to the Government making progress in the months and years ahead.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Michelle Thomson will be the last speaker in the open debate.

16:13

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): When I read the motion I was struck by how simple the Tories perceived this issue to be, compared with the SNP amendment that was lodged by Michael Matheson. I have spoken previously about the complexity of climate change and the ambitious policy responses that are required. Only last week I spoke about setting measurable net zero ambitions for public sector pensions, and I was pleased to see SNP councillors in Falkirk pushing for that, albeit without the support of either Labour or Tory councillors.

The Scottish Government has published its detailed response to the original just transition commission, which seeks to work with all the key stakeholder groups, such as trade unions, businesses and communities. Let me briefly set out some of areas that business may need to consider, illustrating both the complexity and the effort required. Any significant transformational change must be driven from the top of the organisation, and the board must develop a clear vision and a strategy. That strategy will have input provided from all divisions or departments, and it will likely involve a number of iterations to ensure that the key themes are aligned. Arguably, that is the easy bit. The vision must be sufficiently compelling to bring all employees on board, given that it could fundamentally change the nature of the company and its operational model. That term usually sounds warning bells for employees, as it could involve changes to jobs or the loss of them.

Alongside that is either developing or keeping pace with innovation, or new, rapidly developing

technologies. We cannot forget the significant funding requirements, developed in an uncertain cash-flow environment.

As I know from my previous career, most large, so-called transformational change programmes fail. They do not take people with them, they often fail to take cognisance of the culture of the organisation and, regrettably, senior executives often lose interest.

If I sound a little bleak, please forgive me. The steps that I have outlined are for one company. To reach net zero, multiple companies and multiple stakeholders—*[Interruption.]* No, I will not give way. Multiple companies and multiple stakeholders in multiple states must change.

My constituency includes Grangemouth, and I am following the progress of the Grangemouth future industry board with interest. Demand for hydrocarbon-based products must decrease but, as other members have mentioned, there are considerable opportunities for a hydrogen economy—*[Interruption.]* I will not give way today, thank you. There are considerable opportunities for a hydrogen economy encompassing both energy storage and sources of fuel for transport, as well as sustainable feedstocks. We have to remember that Scotland does not simply seek to export power; rather, we want to create the added value, jobs and wealth here.

As has been mentioned, it is a global challenge, but there are considerable vested interests that act against the leadership and ambitious change that are required. Our financial system has mostly been predicated on the endless drive for profit, with boards and trustees alike having to commit to that. However, in a world of finite resource, the endless focus on profit is simply not sustainable. Embedding sustainability is another significant challenge.

We must keep who the change is for at the forefront of our minds. Who could fail to be moved by the concerns expressed in the recent study that was led by the University of Bath, in which a statistically significant survey covering 10,000 young people showed that around 75 per cent of them are fearful for their future? Those young people are the future, and we must remember that our decisions today affect their future tomorrow. Hearing their voices is vital, so I was delighted to see that Scotland stepped up to the plate, and the Scottish Government will host the COP26 youth climate conference.

16:17

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate, given the direct interest that my

constituency has in the questions at hand. I declare an interest in that regard.

I am disappointed by how much the debate has focused on the north-east, just as the Scottish Government's £500 million just transition fund did a couple of weeks ago. It is not only the north-east that needs to transition. My family is like many others in Shetland, with members working at the Sullom Voe oil terminal, or offshore in the North Sea. There are also Shetland seafarers employed on oil supply vessels. When oil was first discovered in the North Sea, Shetland adapted to change, and now the islands are looking to the future. They are ready and willing to play their part in another transformation, but they need support to do so.

Renewable projects are in the works—the potential is there—but we cannot just throw people who have built their lives around the oil industry on the scrap heap. I would like to see a new, northern isles just transition commission, to ensure that the islands are not forgotten in future debates such as this. We have specific needs and unique opportunities, which risk being lost in among the politicking that we have seen here today.

As Shetland's MSP, I recognise that the licence for Cambo has been in the works for 20 years. Investment and highly skilled, highly paid jobs are associated with it. Although the demands of the climate emergency mean that the need to move away from oil and gas could not be clearer, questions about how and when that happens are not so easily answered.

Even when we meet our hugely ambitious emissions reduction targets, which the SNP has failed to reach in recent years, some small amounts of fossil fuels will still be needed. The UK Climate Change Committee says that some oil will still be needed on the pathway to net zero. The CCC is respected, and its expertise and independence are an asset to the country. It does not play politics on the issue, nor does it ignore its responsibility to help the country to navigate a way to net zero.

There are two tests that I believe the UK and Scottish Governments both currently fail. To make real progress on carbon emissions from oil and gas, we need to grow the renewable alternatives and reduce demand. On that, the SNP has emphatically failed. Transport is an example. It is Scotland's single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and in 2018, it accounted for 36 per cent of total emissions, having barely reduced since 1990. Car travel has been on the increase since the end of world war 2, and the SNP's active travel targets have crumbled. Without a real reduction in demand, it does not matter whether we license more projects, because our country will continue to run on fumes. The only question will

be whether they come from the Cambo oilfield or from Russia.

That is why the UK Government's decision to abandon the climate compatibility checkpoint is so difficult to understand. If communities that depend on oil and gas are to navigate their way towards a net zero future, the questions that climate checkpoints and other such mechanisms must reasonably pose must be handled properly, drawing out answers grounded in science. If the Cambo licence cannot pass the basic tenets of the checkpoint, there are reasonable questions to be answered about whether it should be granted. Politicians ignoring the rising seas will not do the industry or the people behind it any good.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mercedes Villalba will wind up for Labour. You have up to four minutes, Ms Villalba.

16:21

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): With this motion, the Scottish Tories seek to exploit workers and communities who are concerned about their future. The motion is unrealistic, lacks credibility and offers no new ideas on how we tackle the climate emergency and deliver a just transition for those most affected by climate change. In just a few weeks, Scotland is due to host COP26, and the eyes of the world will be upon us. How could we vote to back the Cambo oilfield—[*Interruption.*]—when all the signs point to it having a hugely detrimental impact on our environment?

Passing the Labour amendment would signal a clear intention to take decisive action on climate change, create green jobs and develop a green industrial base. We can no longer accept Scottish Government inaction in the face of the escalating climate emergency. Years ago, the Scottish Government promised to deliver 130,000 green jobs by this year, but it has delivered only just over 21,000; it also pledged to create a publicly owned energy company, but it has now backed out of that as well. For all the talk of investment, the Scottish Government has failed to develop the green industrial base that we need; and despite its commitment to achieve net zero by 2045, it continues to refuse to clarify its position on Cambo.

I was pleased to hear Jenni Minto express in her speech her personal opposition to Cambo. Like her, I attended the Rainbow Warrior event by Greenpeace in July, where her colleague Paul McLennan also voiced his opposition to Cambo. The Scottish Government and its ministers need to make a choice: to stand with the Tories and the multinational companies that pollute our planet for private profit; or to stand with climate

campaigners, workers, its own back benchers and its co-operation partners in calling for a just transition.

At First Minister's question time last week, the First Minister expressed her willingness to consider developing an offshore training passport for oil and gas workers. However, last night, I received a response from the just transition minister that appeared to suggest that there is no desire to introduce an offshore training passport as part of the just transition fund. To be honest, we are all sick of empty rhetoric that never matches reality. Now is the time for the Scottish Government to get off the fence, oppose Cambo and support the Labour amendment for a worker-led transition.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Richard Lochhead, the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work will wind up for the Scottish Government. You have up to five minutes, minister.

16:24

The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead): I welcome the Conservative Party bringing the debate to the Parliament. The debate is about a major sector in Scotland, the future of the Scottish economy and the fortunes of many families and individuals in our country, as well as the future of humankind and our planet.

The recent scientific report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change shows the very real threat and heightened risk that the climate emergency poses to the planet. It also makes it clear that, with immediate concerted international action to reduce emissions, the global temperature rise could still be limited to the Paris agreement aim of 1.5°C in the longer term. That is an urgent call to action for all and it simply cannot be business as usual. Therefore, it is disappointing to read the terms of the motion that has led to the debate because, a few weeks before COP26 comes to Scotland, the Conservative Party has lodged a motion that says that we should support the extraction of fossil fuels, irrespective of whether that is compatible with Scotland's net zero ambitions and targets. It is an embarrassment to the Conservative Party.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Given the on-going need to heat our houses in Scotland, there will be demand for fossil fuels in the future. Would he rather that those fossil fuels were taken out of the ground in Scotland or taken out of the ground elsewhere in the world, where that would have a higher carbon footprint?

Richard Lochhead: [*Inaudible.*]—the just transition to our 2045 net zero targets and make sure that it is a just transition that addresses issues that the member raises.

I do not understand Liam Kerr's position; he seems to be all over the place. Just couple of days ago he asked me a written question:

"To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to establish a fund to support island and rural communities to end their reliance on fossil fuels".—[*Written Answers*, 26 August 2021; S6W-02566.]

On the one hand, the motion that says that new developments should get the green light and go ahead irrespective of whether they are compatible with the 2045 net zero target and, on the other hand, he supports communities that want to end their use of fossil fuels to help save the planet and their future. We should be focusing on the just transition and the energy transition, which is the biggest part of that just transition, given the reliance on jobs in the energy sector in this country. A number of announcements have been made, and there are signs that hundreds of thousands of green jobs can be created in our country, so that we can make sure that we have that just transition.

Maurice Golden: Will the minister take an intervention?

Liam Kerr: Will the minister take an intervention?

Richard Lochhead: I will take an intervention from Liam Kerr, because it is his debate.

Liam Kerr: I am very grateful and I apologise to my colleague, Maurice Golden. The Green Party manifesto wanted to stop carbon capture and funding for things such as the Net Zero Technology Centre. Now that they are part of a coalition Government, is that the minister's position?

Richard Lochhead: Liam Kerr will be familiar with the SNP-Green co-operation agreement, which clearly outlines the position on that; he should read the agreement, because that is the Scottish Government's policy. With regard to the number of jobs that could be created in Scotland, it is exciting; it is a massive opportunity for our economy and the future of Scotland, not only to create hundreds of thousands of green jobs here but to export our expertise and knowledge, particularly from the oil and gas industry, to the rest of the planet and economies around the world. [*Interruption.*] I have already taken two interventions.

We have to make the most of the transition and focus on that, because that is the key to reaching our net zero targets. The Robert Gordon University "UK Offshore Energy Workforce

Transferability Review” said that by 2030—not 2045—200,000 jobs could exist in the offshore energy sector, with the number of jobs in the decarbonised part of that sector rising from 20 to 65 per cent; in addition, 90 per cent of those jobs can come from people who work in oil and gas and have transferable skills. The Scottish Government’s “Scottish hydrogen: assessment report” says that the number of jobs that could be treated to hydrogen could range from 70,000 to 300,000. Just recently, the First Minister visited Scottish Power, which announced more green jobs in Scotland; the oil and gas industry, which is at the heart of success for a just transition, is planning to create tens of thousands of green jobs in the Scottish economy between now and 2030 and between 2030 and 2045. Just a couple of days ago, I met senior management at TotalEnergies in Aberdeen, and the company has really exciting plans for the future. Its website says:

“We are reinventing and diversifying our energy offering to promote renewable and decarbonized energies”

and that

“we are also encouraging our customers to change their consumption habits, prefer energy efficiency and turn to low-carbon solutions first.”

If TotalEnergies is reinventing itself in light of the climate emergency, I suggest that the Scottish Conservative Party also reinvents itself, gets behind the national effort to have a just transition and create hundreds of thousands of green jobs in this country, work in partnership and help save humankind and the planet.

16:29

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): This is a vital debate, especially for the north-east of Scotland. One reason why it is so important is that the public can see what all the parties’ positions are in relation to supporting the energy industry and the vital jobs in the north-east. The amendments that have been lodged make the position of most of the other parties pretty clear.

With Monica Lennon’s amendment, we can see that, although Labour has readmitted its nine Aberdeen councillors, it has turned its back on the rest of the north-east. Similarly, the Liberal Democrats have also abandoned places such as Aberdeen, Montrose and Lerwick, which rely heavily on the oil and gas sector. However, to be fair to Labour and the Liberal Democrats, at least we know where they stand.

From the SNP, we see deflect, dither and delay. The cabinet secretary is sitting on what must be an uncomfortable fence, trying to please everyone but pleasing no one. The aim of the SNP amendment is to appease the Greens and nothing

else. It sells out Scotland and it sells out Aberdeen. It will please China and Russia, which will benefit no end, as Liam Kerr pointed out in his speech.

The oil and gas industry has been and continues to be the lifeblood of Aberdeen’s economy, and the north-east is at the cutting edge of good practice and technological excellence in oil and gas recovery. The engineering and manufacturing talents cannot be allowed to go to waste.

Aberdeen is the energy capital of Europe, powering our industry, lighting our businesses, warming our homes and making sure that our trains run on time—unless it is a Sunday. The sector also plays a leading role around the world, with personnel from Aberdeen leading development projects throughout Europe, Africa and Asia, sharing best practice and technological excellence across the globe.

As a result, the oil and gas industry has been one of the most important contributors to the Scottish economy. However, the industry is not just a success story of the past; it has a bright future in a more eco-conscious world.

The UK was the first major economy to embrace a legally binding obligation to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Scotland’s oil and gas industry is fully committed to supporting the Scottish Government in meeting its ambitious net zero goal by 2045.

Companies in Aberdeen are changing and adapting, investing millions of pounds in cleaner technology and leading the world in that field. They should not be stamped out of business before that can happen. The engineering capabilities and essential expertise is too valuable to lose—even the cabinet secretary recognises that.

If we were to close the North Sea fields and end the energy industry in Aberdeen, as some in the Scottish Government are now calling for, what would be the alternative? [*Interruption.*] The SNP’s Green colleagues seemed to suggest that.

As Liam Kerr said, 75 per cent of our current energy needs are met from oil and gas. Renewables would not be able to close the gap fast enough, especially if we cause economic carnage to our engineering base in the north-east. We would be forced to rely on imports, increasing our carbon footprint as transport emissions leap up and increasing the energy bills of struggling families up and down the country.

If Scotland’s oil and gas industry was shut down immediately, as some new members of the Scottish Government wish, the result would be nothing short of catastrophic.

Gillian Martin: I am really concerned about Douglas Lumsden's assertion that members of the Scottish Government have said that the oil and gas industry should be shut down. I would like him to point to quotes that show that that is the case, if he is going to make such assertions.

Douglas Lumsden: I think that Patrick Harvie is on record saying that the oil and gas industry needs to "transition or die". That type of language is not helpful to the industry.

If Scotland's oil and gas industry was shut down immediately, hard-working men and women, who are highly skilled and capable, would be left with no hope of work, made redundant long before any greener job alternatives were made available to them. Those are the workers we need for transition.

Let us look at what the Cambo development in particular means to the Scottish economy. It would mean 1,000 direct jobs—Labour is obviously against those jobs. It would mean thousands more jobs supported through the supply chain, more than £1 billion of capital investment in the UK over the next five years and an extra £1 billion in additional support costs over the life of the field. Some £140 million has already been invested. The Scottish Government wants to flush all that down the drain. It is not just people who are employed directly through the supply chain who benefit from such investment, given that taxi drivers, restaurants, hotels and shops all depend on it.

Richard Lochhead: Is it not best to protect those jobs and create new jobs by having a just transition between now and 2045? Can the member tell Parliament where the Conservative Party's concern for jobs was when it shut down the coal mines?

Douglas Lumsden: I am coming on to parts of that.

We are not voting on our ambition to become a net zero nation. As Maurice Golden said, we are all agreed on that. Instead, we are voting on where the oil and gas will come from. We need that oil and gas now, and we will need it for the next 20 years. The UK is a net importer of oil and gas. We are transitioning to renewables, but that takes time and investment. I welcome the UK Government's £16 billion North Sea transition deal, which the Scottish Government should perhaps match.

Just now, we have a choice. We can produce the oil and gas ourselves—thereby protecting thousands of jobs in this country—but regulate how it is produced and the impact on the environment, and ensure that the production is carried out with the lowest possible carbon footprint. We can invest in developing new technologies and we can innovate and learn how to do things differently. We can lead the way on

cleaner energy production, share that learning internationally and become a world leader in transition.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Lumsden, will you please bring your remarks to a close?

Douglas Lumsden: I will.

Alternatively, we can do what other parties are proposing and protect jobs in China and Russia, transport oil and gas halfway round the world—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I meant what I said—please bring your remarks to a close.

Douglas Lumsden: That is why I support the motion in Liam Kerr's name. It sends a clear message that we will support jobs and welcome investment, that we support a cleaner and greener energy sector, and that we will not abandon the people of the north-east of Scotland.

General Practitioner Services

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): I am required to remind members that social distancing measures are in place in the chamber and across the Holyrood campus. I ask that members take care to observe those measures, including when entering and exiting the chamber. Please use the aisles and walkways only to access your seat and when moving around the chamber.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-01217, in the name of Annie Wells, on the return to normal general practitioner services.

16:37

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): I am delighted to open the debate for the Scottish Conservatives on a motion on the return of normal GP services. We on these benches have called for this debate on an issue that is causing serious concern in communities across Scotland.

Let us be clear that national health service staff, including GPs, have worked flat out every single day to keep our services afloat. Throughout the pandemic, GPs have demonstrated their incredible resilience, whether in adapting to virtual settings or continuing to see the most vulnerable patients face to face. However, it is important to be clear that the NHS continues to be at crisis point. Whether it be enormous accident and emergency delays, ambulance services stretched to the limit or waiting times for diagnostic tests going through the roof, many services are completely overwhelmed.

I am sure that we were all astounded to hear the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care declare just this morning that people should think twice before calling an ambulance.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Annie Wells says that she is astounded. A tweet by the Scottish Ambulance Service yesterday said:

“We’re facing an unprecedented period of significant and sustained pressure on our services, so please call NHS24 on 111, or call your GP during the day, unless it’s an emergency.”

That is what I said. Is Annie Wells right, or should we believe the Ambulance Service?

Annie Wells: As the health secretary, Humza Yousaf has influence in this country—people listen to him. What happens if someone has a medical emergency? Do they remember what the health secretary said and think, “Maybe I’ll think twice about phoning”? Thinking twice is not the solution to the crisis for our Ambulance Service.

We must also acknowledge the severe staffing shortages that currently exist across much of Scotland’s health system.

Only last week, the head of Macmillan Cancer Support services in Scotland warned that, as the number of people who are diagnosed with cancer is set to soar in the years ahead, we simply do not have enough specialist cancer nurses to meet demand. For many who are battling cancer, having a nurse is a tremendous source of support, comfort and encouragement, so it is extremely concerning to hear warnings that we are set for a perfect storm of a shortage of nurses coupled with growing demand.

Despite the array of challenges that NHS Scotland faces, Conservative members are today urging the Government to act on the return of normal GP services. I am sure that most members have had concerned constituents get in touch to inform us that they—or someone they know—have struggled to access GP services, particularly those who would like a face-to-face appointment.

It is no secret that, even before anyone had heard of Covid-19, general practice in Scotland was not exactly in peak condition, as the British Medical Association Scotland highlighted last month. Between 2010 and 2020, there was a gradual decrease in the number of GP practices across Scotland. Meanwhile, the average practice’s patient list went up. That suggests that, in the decade prior to the pandemic, general practice had been under increasing pressure to meet the needs of Scots.

The pandemic has placed untold pressure on NHS services, which is forcing more people to go to their GP. One GP contacted me to explain the sheer pressure that they are experiencing because of unprecedented demand, which has been exacerbated by staff shortages across primary care. They told me that primary care is broken due to the increased and unsustainable pressure resulting from Scots waiting longer for secondary care.

In last week’s debate on the programme for government, I made the point that, although more funding for the NHS is welcome, the NHS recovery plan is, in many ways, limited in how it will tackle the huge issues that our health service faces. Not least, it fails to deliver a network of long Covid clinics. That awful aspect of the virus has the potential to place further pressure on front-line services if it is not properly addressed.

If we do not do what is necessary to get hospital, clinic and surgery waiting times under control, GPs will continue to be overwhelmed with patients. Desperate patients will attend A and E departments to get treatment, as many feel that

they are left with no other choice, and that could severely compound the pressure.

People need help today. They need help now. As I am sure my colleague Dr Sandesh Gulhane will say in his speech, the situation has all the components to generate a brutal domino effect across the NHS in Scotland. Many medical conditions will continue to go undiagnosed and untreated, which will lead to tragic yet entirely avoidable consequences. Leading health professionals have admitted that the current pressures on the NHS are akin to those faced during the harshest months of winter, so the domino effect could soon worsen if warnings are not heeded. Therefore, the NHS needs a proper recovery plan—one with real substance and teeth—to get it back on track and to reduce pressure on general practice and our front-line staff.

As I said, GPs face overwhelming demands, but it is also true that video consultations should not become the default for patients who need to be seen face to face. Many people in communities across Scotland desire face-to-face GP consultations over appointments via telephone or the Near Me service, and that must be respected.

With the motion in my name, the Scottish Conservatives are clear that we will support patients who need to get back to seeing their GP in person. If the Government is confident that its NHS recovery plan will help to tackle the backlog and waiting times, it will have no issue in supporting our motion and committing to setting a target date for the return of normal GP services.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that patients have a right to treatment by GPs, and calls on the Scottish Government to set a target date for a return to normal activity in practices, including face-to-face consultations.

16:44

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): The past 18 months has been a time of unprecedented pressure in the NHS, as it has faced the biggest challenge of its 73-year existence. Cleaners adopted new cleaning regimes. Receptionists adapted to a more virtual way of supporting patients. Primary care teams of nurses, physiotherapists, optometrists and others helped to ensure a successful vaccination programme. GPs helped to staff Covid assessment services and, with their teams, led their practices through the pandemic.

We owe them all a huge debt of gratitude for stepping up when it really mattered, which is why the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care wrote to all general practice staff last week to

thank them personally for their efforts. In giving our thanks, we should also recognise the significant contributions of other parts of the primary care system, which include dentists, optometrists and community pharmacists, who adapted to new and safer ways of working to ensure that patients could access the treatments that they needed.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): During the pandemic, many other healthcare professionals—optometrists, pharmacists, nurses—saw patients face to face. Does the minister not believe that now is the time that GPs started doing the same?

Maree Todd: Let me be clear that any suggestion that GPs are not seeing people face to face because they do not want to is false, and I absolutely reject it. As our recovery plan set out, GP teams have often been working in constrained circumstances throughout the pandemic, but they have seen patients face to face when there was a clinical need to do so.

As we recover from the worst of the pandemic, I completely understand that some people, particularly in our elderly population, want to see a GP face to face. Having patient choice in a clinically safe and appropriate way is a critical part of our recovery. Public Health Scotland has recently published guidance on distancing and infection control measures in health settings that changes the 2m rule to a 1m rule, and further operational guidance that was published last week also makes it clear that there is no longer a need to triage every patient, although GPs and clinicians should continue to screen patients for Covid before seeing them face to face. I expect those actions to lead to an increase in the number of face-to-face consultations. Some people will still prefer to have a Near Me video consultation or a telephone consultation, so we will continue to promote choice.

I accept that there is a need to rapidly increase the availability of face-to-face appointments in partnership with the profession. I firmly believe that the steps that we have taken in the NHS recovery plan, the revised physical distancing and infection prevention and control guidance and the whole-hearted support of the BMA, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the wider profession will allow us to do that as quickly as possible and, more importantly, as safely as possible.

Of course, it is not just about ensuring access to services but ensuring that those services are high quality and inclusive for all communities across Scotland. We are working with our expert group to develop practical and innovative ways to improve access and care, including in our most vulnerable communities. We are considering how we can bring more healthcare workers to vulnerable

communities, which will help to address issues around poverty, discrimination and injustice in access to and provision of care.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

The minister has spoken a lot about communities. She wrote to me earlier this summer to say that the independent review of maternity services at Dr Gray's hospital in Elgin would be with her in a number of weeks, but we are still waiting. Has she received that report and when will the local people in Moray hear its recommendations?

Maree Todd: I have not received that report yet, but I will organise meetings with Douglas Ross, Richard Lochhead and other interested local MSPs as soon as I do. We will of course relay that information to the community, who are rightly concerned about the services that they receive.

Similarly, the health and care needs of our remote and rural communities need to be supported, which is why we are developing a rural centre of excellence to provide expertise and advice on the delivery of care in different rural, island and remote settings in Scotland.

People need access to a wide range of services in their community through general practice for both their physical and mental health. Our GP contract plans, which we developed jointly with the profession, focus on recruiting a range of healthcare professionals in the community, such as pharmacists, nurses and physios, and are backed by £155 million of funding this year.

During the current parliamentary session, we will also create a network of 1,000 additional link worker staff who can help to grow community mental health and social prescribing.

In summary, our pandemic response has driven the agenda on access forward at speed and, as with any change, it takes time to adjust and adapt to it and to find the right balance. The Government is committed to working with members, the public, the British Medical Association and the Royal College of General Practitioners and other professional bodies to recover from the pandemic and strengthen our primary care services. They are the bedrock of our NHS.

I move amendment S6M-01217.2, to leave out from “, and calls” to end and insert:

“and other appropriate primary care health professionals, such as dentists, nurses, optometrists and pharmacists; appreciates that GPs and primary care staff were asked to change the way that they worked in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic; thanks GPs and primary care staff for keeping practices open and their hard work during the pandemic; recognises that, for many patients, the choice of using ehealth and telehealth solutions to initially contact their GP has been convenient, but that it is not a solution that is appropriate for all; believes that face-to-face consultations will continue to be necessary and that they should be taken forward in line

with clinical guidance and in a manner that is as safe as possible as quickly as possible, and welcomes the Scottish Government commitment to work with the Royal College of General Practitioners, British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing and other stakeholders to deliver this.”

16:50

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Yesterday, we debated the extent of the crisis that is being experienced by the NHS, with services struggling to meet demand and waiting lists at a record high. Today, we are talking about GPs.

Much of the attention so far has focused on acute care in our hospitals and with emergency services, but the truth is that, if we are to resolve some of those problems, we need to mobilise and resource primary care. We all value our GPs. In fact, we value the entire primary care team—practice nurses, health visitors, dentists, pharmacists, and optometrists. They all do an important job in preventing and dealing with ill health, but they are often the first and most enduring contact in a patient's journey.

It is unfortunate that the messaging from the Government has so far been confused, suggesting that somehow GP surgeries have been closed. In fact, GPs and their teams have been working really hard—[*Interruption.*] The minister might have got to the right message today, but in her previous appearances on media, she has suggested that surgeries have been closed.

GP teams have been working really hard. They are the ones at the vaccination centres, helping colleagues in hospitals with Covid patients, all while dealing with their own patients. Primary care has adapted and evolved, and yes, there might be more telephone or virtual consultations, but if someone needs to be seen, they should be given a face-to-face consultation.

I recognise that parents want the reassurance of a face-to-face consultation with their GP. Clinically, it is important, as some conditions need to be seen to be diagnosed, so virtual consultations should not be the default. However, GPs are operating to Scottish Government guidance, which wants a model of telephone consultations first. That has not changed, so it is ultimately up to the Government, and transferring blame to GPs is neither right nor appropriate.

Although I recognise the frustration that is felt by people over their access to a range of services, that is never a reason to be abusive to staff, who are doing their very best to help us to keep safe.

We all need to acknowledge the failure of the Government to support staff in primary care. That is not just a pandemic problem; it has been building for the past 14 years of the SNP's mismanagement of the health service. The NHS

recovery plan fails to address the pressure on staff, and the lack of a coherent workforce plan to build capacity to match demand is more than disappointing; it is a dereliction of duty.

During the previous parliamentary session, a promise was made to recruit an additional 800 GPs, but there is an urgent need for them now, not in 2027. Many are retiring early because they feel burnt out. What progress has been made on that? Multidisciplinary teams in GP practices were also promised, but progress on that has been, at best, extremely patchy. There are simply not enough physiotherapists or pharmacists in general practice. That is another pre-pandemic promise that has not been fulfilled. Mental health workers are also unlikely to be in place until 2026, which is five years from now.

Pharmacists have a contribution to make to NHS recovery, but the Government appears to be resistant to the opportunity, and I hope that that is not the case. If the Government extended the pharmacy first service, pharmacists could be the first port of call for many people. They could help with diagnostic testing to reduce antibiotic use, and deal with blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and cholesterol testing. That would help to alleviate some of the load on GPs. Equally they could play a key part in helping with the management of those who have long-term conditions—*[Interruption.]* I genuinely do not have the time; I am in my final minute.

Pharmacists could provide pharmaceutical care and create the capacity for GPs to focus on acute presentation and reduce hospital admissions. More of that needs to be happening, so that we use appropriately the entire primary care team.

I will make equally brief mention of dentists. Patients are told that dentists are open for business, but Government guidance means that they are able to offer appointments to only a small number of patients. Again, there is mixed messaging from the Government, which leads to frustration for dentists and their patients alike. *[Interruption.]* The ministers may be laughing, but this is the truth. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: The member is in her last minute.

Jackie Baillie: More and more people are going private. In effect, the Government is privatising the dental service by the back door.

We all value the primary care team, which has GPs at its heart. I think that primary care is key to the recovery of the NHS, but it needs to be resourced. So far, the SNP has failed to do so adequately. It is true that we need to remobilise and that patients want more face-to-face consultations, but the Government needs to be honest and manage expectation. Above all, it

needs to resource GPs and primary care so that they can play their full part in the recovery of the NHS. As the BMA said,

“we are open for business, but it’s not business as usual.”

I move amendment S6M-01217.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises the important contribution that GPs have made throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including stepping up to support colleagues in acute care and administering vaccinations across the country, and regrets the Scottish Government’s failure to remedy the alarming shortage of GPs and staff in the wider primary care team, with the current workforce feeling overworked and undervalued, all of which will severely undermine a sustainable future for primary care in Scotland.”

16:56

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): As my colleagues across the chamber have done, I start by paying tribute not just to our GPs but to their practice managers, their nurses and everyone who supports them. In particular, I pay tribute to them for their role during the pandemic. Many GPs I know personally volunteered in the red zones of the Covid hubs, and they were instrumental in the foothills of the vaccine roll-out.

Seeing their GP is often the first stage on a patient’s journey of receiving a diagnosis for a mental, physical or chronic health condition. As with every other sector in our health service, the challenges that GPs have faced throughout the pandemic have been unprecedented. Their ability to deal with pressure and to use their skills to make a diagnosis and prescribe a course of action, largely over the phone or through video consultation, cannot be overstated. While that was necessary during the height of the pandemic, it is absurd that we cannot at least set a date for pre-pandemic activities to resume in practices. If people can go to a nightclub, an optician or a massage therapist, logic would suggest that it is safe enough for them to have an in-person consultation with their GP. I know many GPs who want to get back to that position, too.

The Scottish Liberal Democrats welcome the Conservative Party’s motion, because it highlights a problem that the Lib Dems are becoming increasingly concerned about. Last week, my colleague Willie Rennie asked the health secretary whether he would look again at the physical distancing requirements in primary care settings, and he was assured that the Government would do just that. The Government’s amendment is typical of its approach to our health service—there are plenty of warm words but an absence of action. Where is the evidence of that commitment?

Humza Yousaf: I have two points to make. As the member knows, Public Health Scotland

published guidance, probably last week, that reduced the physical distancing measures.

The member said that we will not give a date for the resumption of face-to-face consultations. Does he recognise that GPs are seeing patients face to face and that the BMA says that it would be absolutely wrong to set an arbitrary date? Who should we believe—him or the BMA?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I absolutely welcome the intervention of the BMA on that point. It is the interruption in the flow of face-to-face consultations that is causing a backlog and perhaps resulting in the missing of clinical signs, which could lead to far more acute conditions. That is why the GP workforce is so keen to get back to working as normal. I recognise that people are being seen, but they have not been seen in non-emergency situations.

I am as cautious about Covid as any minister in the Government is, but I am deeply worried about the long-term and deep-seated problems that continue to exist in the NHS. The BMA has described GPs as being under huge and unrelenting pressure, and has said that the workforce has a real feeling of demoralisation. That is because of not just the pandemic but the Government's long history of poor workforce planning. It is all well and good for the Government to promise the introduction of more GPs to alleviate the strain, but those GPs cannot be magicked out of thin air. It takes the best part of a decade to train a GP. The seeds of the workforce crisis were sown upstream by the Government a long time ago.

We all know that the Government likes to create the impression that all the problems are new, but the problems in primary care were well established before the pandemic started. Recognition from the health secretary of the long-term nature of the problems would not go amiss.

The Government must set a date for the return of face-to-face services for GP practices, but it must also seek to improve the state of the services that were offered pre-pandemic. Long waits and a high-stress work environment might be normal in a public sector that is stewarded by this Administration, but that does not mean that it is good enough.

Increasing the workforce is part of the answer, but reducing the downward pressure on GP surgeries is also key, particularly around mental health.

The Scottish Government needs to increase the number of trained GPs in Scotland and embed more nurses, dieticians, physiotherapists and, crucially, mental health practitioners with GPs so that people can get a wider range of diagnosis, treatment and follow-up care within their

community. That is how to reduce the burden on current staff and, crucially, offer the level of care that everyone across Scotland deserves.

17:00

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): Our NHS is in crisis. It is not simply under extreme pressure, as the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care say. The NHS in Scotland is overrun. It is crumbling from historical and systemic failures of Government to plan, resource, manage risk, listen and act. The writing on the wall was clear before the pandemic.

Let us be frank. We need to accept the extent of the crisis, we should deploy strategies for learning from failures and we need a plan. I do not mean a headline number or a sum of cash but a detailed plan that is underpinned by credible clinical pathways. I appreciate that that is no easy task, and I will illustrate why.

Behind the stats on A and E waiting times and patients trying to get through to their GP and beyond the unedifying comments from the health secretary advising sick patients to think twice before calling for an ambulance, endangering life—cabinet secretary, your words matter in medicine—this is what is happening. This week in my GP practice, the phones were as usual ringing off the hook. We have calls from patients who need to be seen in the pain clinic or to get an operation, but with no appointment date in sight, they are quite rightly ringing up, desperate and pleading for help. There are also new patients who have developed a lump or bleeding, and they are also trying to call us. It is demand on top of demand.

Let us be clear that GPs are working hard. GPs are seeing patients. GPs up and down the country are pulling out all the stops. However, they are overrun because the system is failing them. We need the capacity to be able to see more patients face to face. We never stopped seeing patients face to face, but we want to see more. GPs see patients whose management would change from being seen, but there are other patients we would love to bring in, such as an elderly patient who just wants to come in and be seen. However, the system is failing us and we are being overwhelmed.

Beyond my own practice, the picture across the NHS is shocking. More than 600,000 patients are waiting on hospitals. Those are the same folks who are calling wanting to know whether their family doctor can do more—something, anything—to help. I am afraid that, sometimes, they cannot, so patients go on suffering.

That has a knock-on effect on accident and emergency, which faces huge demand, such as

from a patient with persistent abdominal pain who just wants—needs—to be seen by a specialist. All the while, Covid cases are soaring, piling even more pressure on to our fragile system and its exhausted staff in wards and intensive care departments.

Let us be frank—this is not a system that is simply under extreme pressure. It is an NHS in deep crisis. Two years ago, before the pandemic, morale was low. Healthcare workers struggled through the winters, but things got a bit better in the summer, and we just coped. The pandemic has exacerbated the problems and brought them into sharp focus. There is a perpetual state of winter crisis. The conveyer belt is jammed.

Let me explain. The NHS is a conveyer belt. As a GP, I see a patient and either treat them or put them on the conveyer belt to be seen in secondary care by the hospitals. They are then treated and drop off the conveyer belt. However, what is happening just now is that I am putting patients on the conveyer belt and they are going nowhere. They are still suffering, so they quite rightly come back to me again and again. They are not getting the help that they need. We need hospitals to start running at capacity again—in fact, we need them to run at more than capacity to catch up. We need more staff.

As NHS professionals, we have no choice but to carry on, because our patients' lives depend on us. However, as a parliamentarian, I call on the Scottish Government to start producing details on how it plans to save the NHS under its watch. The system is failing our GPs and we need help.

As a declaration of interest, I note that I am a practising doctor. I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

17:04

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): The Conservative motion is very short and simple. It says:

“That the Parliament recognises that patients have a right to treatment by GPs, and calls on the Scottish Government to set a target date for a return to normal activity in practices, including face-to-face consultations.”

That chimes with what Douglas Ross said in the chamber on 1 September:

“People cannot see their general practitioner in person”.—[*Official Report*, 1 September 2021; c 30.]

That statement was inaccurate, as we heard this afternoon and have heard before. Some would suggest that it was a complete fabrication even.

It surprised me that, on the very same day, Dr Gulhane MSP—someone whom I greatly respect—accused the health secretary of “attacking general practitioners” and causing his

colleagues “a lot of distress”. He went on to ask the First Minister to ensure that his colleagues did not leave their posts, which would be an “unmitigated disaster”. I agree with Dr Gulhane—it would be a disaster if GPs left. I therefore suggest that the Scottish Tories, including their leader, stop spreading mistruths about patients not being able to see their GPs.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am sure that the member will join me in giving heartfelt thanks to our GPs right across the country. In Dumfries and Galloway, GPs are seeing more patients face to face than they did pre-Covid. General practice is the front line of our NHS. Does the member agree that Nicola Sturgeon, who was warned about GP shortages as far back as 2008, has failed to adequately resource general practice?

Stuart McMillan: I certainly disagree with Mr Carson—I am sure that he will not be surprised by that.

In his comments earlier today and yesterday, Dr Gulhane indicated that he had been seeing patients in his practice on Monday. I welcome the fact that Dr Gulhane is doing that, but GPs have been working tirelessly throughout the pandemic. They have been seeing patients face to face, and to suggest otherwise is unfair to GPs and their staff.

GPs are not happy with that characterisation. I will read a short extract from a reply that I received from a GP in my constituency after I wrote to them on behalf of constituents. They said:

“My complaint is that I feel you and your colleagues are engaging in lazy politics. You know we are working in a pandemic and you must be aware of the demands but yet regularly we receive emails from yourselves (and I know from other practices they have the same issue) going over the same issues ie when will you see patients face to face. We do see patients face to face and have always been doing so.”

[*Interruption.*] Sorry, but I cannot give way—I have already taken one intervention.

That goes back to the comments that Sue Webber made earlier and the comments of Douglas Ross on 1 September. The conversation continued for a couple more emails and then ended.

The email from that GP clearly shows frustration at MSPs spreading mistruths, and it does no one any favours to perpetuate that myth. Hearing the Tories in this chamber making those claims again today highlights yet again the lack of regard that they have for GPs. On how the debate should be framed, the argument about GPs seeing the same number of patients face to face is different from what the Tories are attempting to argue.

I know that the current situation does not suit everyone and that there is a demand to return to GPs seeing people face to face more regularly. However, I also know that some constituents have appreciated and like the telehealth and e-health that have been offered, although I accept that they do not suit everyone. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: The member is winding up.

Stuart McMillan: It is clear that face-to-face appointments will be better for many patients, but the NHS Near Me video consultations will be better for others.

It was not that long ago that we were all clapping for the NHS. Sadly, the Tories have moved on to badmouthing our NHS and our GPs.

17:09

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): Like many members, I have been inundated with requests from constituents who want to return to face-to-face GP consultations. For the most part, people simply want a feeling of assurance from a friendly face. After all, so many of our constituents, particularly older people, receive a great deal of social as well as medical support from their local GP practice. It is understandable that losing that has been a real drain on so many lives.

Given all that, I think that, within the sensible confines of Covid regulations, we should be returning to face-to-face appointments. We do not expect that to happen immediately; the public are simply asking for clarity about when it might happen, and at the moment there is little that I can tell people—I can only calm their concerns.

Equally, I understand why, with Covid cases rising and fears about the approaching winter, many people still have concerns about returning to some form of normality. We must be led by the science and a disciplined focus on utilising the proven methods that limited the spread of cases in the past.

In doing that, we must be clear with the public about what it means. Thousands of people have been patient and have stayed away from the NHS unless they thought that their cases were urgent, but that will undoubtedly mean that serious illness has gone undetected. We have to let people know—sooner rather than later—when they can get back to their doctors. I want to work with the Government on that, as I am sure all members do. We will get the message out, but there has to be some direction from the top.

In chorus with other members, I emphasise the amount of pressure and uncertainty that GPs and practice staff have been dealing with since March 2020. Public criticism of GPs is perhaps due to

unclear communication, and the current situation is making things worse. No one should be under the illusion that care is not being provided. GPs, practice staff and their colleagues in wider primary care teams are supporting colleagues in acute care and are administering thousands of vaccine doses. In most cases, GPs and practice staff are working more than they have ever worked, and with that come fatigue, burnout and serious stress.

In a recent BMA survey of GPs, two thirds of respondents said that their current workload is unmanageable, and more than half said that their workload had got worse during the pandemic. In what sense does that suggest that the problem is under control? We seem to have stressed staff, patients who are worried that they will not receive the care that they need and ministers who are unresponsive to people's plight. If we do not deal with the problem now, it will damage the NHS not just during the Covid period but for years to come.

Let us be honest. Staffing levels in local practices were a concern long before Covid became a part of everyday life. This is just one chapter in 14 years of SNP mismanagement of the NHS. A great many staff expressed concern about staffing levels in the years that led up to the pandemic. Had we listened, we might have a much easier road to recovery now.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Carol Mochan: I will.

The Presiding Officer: The member is closing.

Carol Mochan: Sorry, Presiding Officer.

This should be a lesson about proactivity rather than reactivity. Let us not wait until something becomes a media scandal before we tackle it. I am not sure that Scotland can take the situation for much longer. We need to deal with it now, because a crisis could become a catastrophe.

17:13

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I congratulate Carol Mochan—she gave a fantastic speech, as did all the other Opposition speakers. It seems that SNP members have no idea what is going on out there among their constituents.

Rural constituencies such as mine have been let down badly for years by the SNP Government. There is a lack of urgency in responding to the GP and health recruitment crisis—on top of the pandemic, of course, which has affected face-to-face consultations.

Bob Doris: Will the member give way?

Rachael Hamilton: Will the member just allow me to finish my first paragraph?

It is no wonder that I am contacted regularly, particularly by old and vulnerable constituents who are anxious about their worsening health conditions.

Bob Doris: I wanted to make this point during the previous speech. Recruitment, retention and support for GPs have been on-going issues for some time, not just in Scotland but across the UK and internationally. What suggestions does the member have for action to address those issues in a collegiate approach to supporting the NHS?

Rachael Hamilton: If that is all that Bob Doris has, the situation is desperate.

We know that GPs have done a tremendous job throughout the pandemic and I thank them, as other members have today, for their wonderful work. However, there is an inescapable problem, and it is not new. Even before the pandemic, the SNP was failing general practice with underfunding and a lack of workforce planning.

Humza Yousaf: Will the member give way?

Rachael Hamilton: I will give way to the cabinet secretary on workforce planning, to give him the opportunity to tell members how his Government is progressing with GP recruitment.

Humza Yousaf: I am happy to do so. We have a target of 800 additional GPs by 2027, and I am pleased to say that we are on track to meet that. I am delighted with our record investment in the NHS, which is £400 million more than the Tories pledged in their manifesto.

Rachael Hamilton: On track? I can tell members that the figure is 237—

Humza Yousaf: That is on track for 2027.

Rachael Hamilton: The target is 800 additional GPs by 2027, and the cabinet secretary says that we are on track with 237—that is interesting.

There are also substantial issues with a higher than usual number of A and E presentations. Patients' conditions are worsening, and GPs tell me that they are getting phone calls from patients who are fed up because they cannot be seen by the hospital. The sheer volume of correspondence that I receive from constituents on that subject concerns me greatly. It is vital that we give our constituents the opportunity to return to person-to-person consultations. One of my constituents said:

"For me, it is wholly unacceptable that representatives of medical practices can tell me that a medical practitioner will call me back at some time during the day without telling me when. Hanging around waiting for that call, which may not come until later in the day, is preposterous."

That constituent is just one of many who have shared with me their frustration about a lack of access to appointments, which is having an impact on them and causing their health to deteriorate. For the past 18 months, GPs have not been able to eyeball their patients. I believe, although it is not proven, that the lack of early intervention must be contributing to increased presentations at A and E.

In addition to a lack of face-to-face appointments, there is the constant threat of rural GP practice closures as a result of this Government's failure to properly conduct workforce planning and its obsession with centralisation. Just two weeks ago, Coldingham practice, in the east of my constituency, was branded "not fit for purpose", with challenges around recruitment, the retention of staff, health and safety and lone working.

For the benefit of those members in the chamber who have their fingers in their ears, I remind them that, in 2008, the British Medical Association warned Nicola Sturgeon that Scotland was facing severe shortages of GPs. That was 13 years ago—it is absolutely disgraceful that that has not been addressed.

I have taken a number of interventions, so I will conclude. We all know that it will be a long winter, and Scotland's people want a pragmatic solution to the health crisis. Is it too much to ask the health secretary to set a date for returning to normal activity and, furthermore, to pledge that GP services will be protected and recruitment targets will be met?

17:17

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in the debate on behalf of my constituents—very few of whom have contacted me on this issue. I have listened to some of the—*[Inaudible.]*—today who appear to believe that although Covid-19 is undoubtedly a disaster of unprecedented proportions it should somehow not really have an impact on services. That is a weird position to take, and it is alienated from reality and, to some extent, from honesty. It is also extremely disappointing to hear members make assertion after assertion based on extremely flimsy evidence, but not taking the ministerial interventions that came in response.

The Covid-19 pandemic changed what was considered to be the safest way for GPs to operate. Surgeries are places where potentially ill people congregate in waiting rooms, so it made perfect sense, in the early stages of the pandemic, to switch to more use of remote and telephone appointments, where possible. The implementation of telehealth technology was a long time coming; as in so many walks of life, the

gains from it should not now be cast aside in the rush to return to what was once considered to be normal.

I have used the telehealth method during the past two years—on far too many occasions; that is one of the benefits of ageing—and I have found it to be nothing but reassuring, speedy and efficient, at a time when I feared the exact opposite because of the unavoidable pressures that were being placed on our NHS, including our GPs, during the pandemic. However, I have also been seen face-to-face on more than one occasion because—despite what some members would have us believe—doctors can, and will, see a person if they have the slightest concern about their condition.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care set out the NHS recovery plan last month; I draw members' attention to it. It is an ambitious document that is backed by real investment in our health service, to the tune of £1 billion over the next five years. An important part of that will be the recruitment of more than 1,000 new mental health link workers in our communities to take some of the pressure off front-line general practices. I am glad that mental health continues to get the focus and resources that are needed for it to provide better help to people in communities across Scotland.

I also welcome the assurances in the document that, where possible, there will be a return to face-to-face GP services as soon as it is practical and safe to do so. I have been contacted by some—just a few—constituents who have been having difficulty getting appointments. Although innovative telehealth solutions like NHS Near Me video consultations are welcome, they do not always reach all the people in areas of higher deprivation, where access to the internet and to internet-enabled devices might be harder for some people to come by. It is clear that there are still parts of the population who are not yet able to access telehealth, so I would welcome an assurance that priority for face-to-face GP appointments will be given to people who are unable to access the other means of obtaining GP assistance.

The BMA believes that the demand for GP services has been pushed to record levels during the pandemic, so I am pleased to welcome the additional investment by the Scottish Government of £155 million to provide general practices and their patients with support from a range of healthcare professionals in the community, including community pharmacists so that people can have their prescriptions filled faster.

This has been a time of tremendous pressure on GP surgeries across the country; we all owe them a huge debt of gratitude for their work and their contribution to steering Scotland through the

pandemic. GP surgeries in Scotland have done remarkably well in coping with the upsurge in demand for their services while having to adopt new ways of working to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and patients during this unprecedented and difficult time. They deserve more than being criticised and used as a political weapon by some members of the Opposition.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. It was not possible to intervene on Mr Dornan when he was speaking. It is surely unparliamentary behaviour to cast the charge of dishonesty upon one's opponents in the chamber.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Although members are responsible for the content of their contributions, I urge them to remember that the code of conduct requires members to consider one another with courtesy and respect at all times.

17:22

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): I, too, pay tribute to Scotland's incredible GPs, who have worked in extremely pressured and fast-changing conditions during the pandemic. The contribution of all practice staff has been immeasurable, so they deserve our sincere thanks.

They do not deserve the suggestions that general practice has been closed during the pandemic and that GPs have not been offering face-to-face appointments. I am seriously concerned about the tone of the Conservative motion in that respect. GPs have continued to deliver a 24/7 service, including out of hours services, and have always offered face-to-face appointments when they have been clinically necessary.

As the Government amendment notes, GPs

“were asked to change the way that they worked”

due to Covid and they rose to that challenge. They rapidly adapted their ways of working while also stepping in to help with vaccine roll-out and staffing at Covid assessment centres.

There were GP workforce shortages prior to the pandemic and, as we know, demand for GP services has risen considerably in recent months. People are now coming forward with conditions that emerged during lockdown and GPs are caring for patients who are on long waiting lists for secondary care. Contrary to what some people might think, remote working does not reduce people's workload. Practice staff are tired, overstretched and demoralised, so I am seriously concerned about the impact of the debate on their morale.

We cannot afford to undermine GP recruitment and retention, but the Conservative motion has the potential to do just that. Instead of demanding that GPs return to doing something that they have been doing throughout the pandemic, we should be talking about how we can recruit more GPs and other members of the primary care team, and how we can best support practice teams' mental and physical wellbeing in order that they can continue to deliver excellent patient care in difficult circumstances.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Does Gillian Mackay agree that the Scottish graduate entry medicine programme is a unique way that the Scottish Government is taking forward GP recruitment and training?

Gillian Mackay: I absolutely accept that, and I thank Emma Harper for that intervention.

Of course, patients should be able to get a GP appointment when they need one, and that appointment should be face to face if that is clinically appropriate. No one is denying that. Remote consultations are not appropriate in all circumstances, which is recognised by GPs. However, for many patients, they offer more flexibility and reduce the need to travel.

According to the BMA, before the pandemic approximately 20 per cent of GP appointments were by telephone or video, so the presumption that a return to normal equates to a return to all appointments being face to face does not reflect the reality of general practice before Covid. There should not be a one-size-fits-all approach, and the Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland is clear that a mix of telephone, face-to-face and virtual appointments is the future of general practice.

We must also acknowledge that, due to on-going Covid protections, the physical capacity within general practices is limited. If we rapidly increase face-to-face appointments, patients could face longer waits for appointments due to reduced numbers of people being able to enter the building.

Patient safety is a serious consideration. For example, Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation in Scotland do not support setting a target date for a return to majority face-to-face appointments because of the on-going risk from Covid-19 to people who are living with lung conditions. They have said that being worried about mixing with others in waiting rooms could force people to miss out on treatment.

I will end with a quote from a GP that has been provided by the BMA, which I think sums up why I have such serious concerns about the motion. The GP said that they have had a

“barrage of negativity from policy makers and smears from the media. General practice has been open all throughout the pandemic and yes, we are seeing patients face to face every day—examining, investigating, immunising, and treating.”

GPs deserve better and so do patients. They need us to be honest about the pressure that general practice is under and about why services are being delivered as they are. I hope that members will reflect on that at decision time.

The Presiding Officer: I call Clare Adamson, who is the last speaker in the open debate.

17:26

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): The pandemic has been with us for 18 months now but, for some people in the chamber, it seems to matter to them only when it is politically convenient. Colleagues on the Tory benches blithely switch between saying that the health service is in crisis and, at the same time, furiously opposing public health measures that the Scottish Government enacts to help that same health service at this time. They cannot sit both ways on this issue.

In a speech yesterday, I said that we cannot get “back to normal” and that we have to get “back to better”. That is what we should be doing. However, the motion epitomises an attempt to make political capital out of a deeply complex and precarious situation. As legislators and policy makers, we need to allow for nuance, we need to consider consequences, and we need to seek expert opinion and listen to advice.

“Set a target date” might sound good for a soundbite, but there is one thing I am sure of: the Covid virus is not working to a Google calendar.

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con): Does the member agree, however, with BMA Scotland's comments in relation to not having enough GPs before the pandemic? Does she agree with that statement?

Clare Adamson: I do, and that is why we have set recruitment targets. However, as Mr Doris pointed out, the problem does not exist just in Scotland; it exists throughout the UK, and the recruitment of GPs is a global crisis. The BMA has said that, but it has also referred to

“the clinical problem, the ongoing need to protect vulnerable patients and staff from risk of Covid19, and current workload pressures within GP which mean that GPs, like the rest of the NHS have to prioritise their time to meet the most urgent clinical need. BMA Scotland would not welcome an arbitrary target date set by the Scottish Government”.

The Royal College of General Practitioners has said that it refutes in the strongest possible terms any suggestion that general practice has not been

delivering face-to-face consultations throughout the pandemic. That has been said many times but, as some interventions would indicate, people have not read the briefings, so I feel that I have to repeat them. The royal college's briefing says that face-to-face consultations have been provided to patients where they are deemed clinically necessary, usually following a telephone or video consultation. That has ensured that general practice can continue to provide care to patients to help protect the most vulnerable of them. The royal college goes on to say that it would not welcome an arbitrary target set by the Scottish Government to reach such a position.

That is from the BMA and the Royal College of General Practitioners.

I am the sister of a retired GP and fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners who still examines with it, so when I was invited to take part in projects with my local training GP practice, I was delighted to do so. For a number of years, I have been working with my local practice, which has included bringing GP trainees into the Parliament when it was possible to do so, to visit the Health and Sport Committee, have a cup of coffee or lunch, and speak about how the work that we do here influences their work in the future. I was also able to show them the open and welcoming interaction that we want to have with our colleagues in the health service.

During the pandemic, I was involved in a video call with the local and other training practices. Dr Logan, who was also involved, is the NHS lead clinical tutor in primary care. I learned that, in 2019, of the 300 medical students at the University of Glasgow, only 19—6 per cent—were choosing an elective in general practice.

It is an incredibly difficult, nuanced situation, and for members on the benches opposite to make political capital from it this afternoon is lazy politics that does no good for the health service.

17:31

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): In closing for Scottish Labour, I echo the comments of colleagues across the chamber, and pay tribute to the GPs who are working in our NHS across Scotland. In particular, I recognise their dedication throughout the pandemic, their support of colleagues in acute care and the help that they provided to administer the vaccination programme, most notably to the oldest and most vulnerable in our communities.

We should also take a moment to pay tribute to all those who support GP practices, including the practice managers, practice nurses, healthcare assistants and admin staff. Those teams working together and knowing their communities makes a

real difference to the health and wellbeing of us all.

In the debate, we have heard about some of the frustrations and worries that patients have experienced, particularly when they have been unable—or have felt unable—to access face-to-face appointments. In her opening remarks, Jackie Baillie referred to the frequent confusion in communications about whether GPs are open. Carol Mochan said that some of her constituents feel that they should stay away from their GP and the NHS.

From Sandesh Gulhane's first-hand experience, we heard about the capacity that is required in order to support GP practices, and the current pressures on all parts of the system. We have to recognise that, for many elderly patients and patients with a learning disability, or perhaps due to communication or language barriers, digital is not always accessible or appropriate. Virtual GP appointments should not be the default position. Patients and clinicians must have the option to have face-to-face appointments when it is safe to do so.

Of course, we acknowledge that technology has its role to play, but we need to consider, along with clinicians, the appropriateness of when digital appointments are offered. In her contribution, Gillian Mackay spoke about Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation, which have pointed out the importance of ensuring that diagnostic GP appointments, such as those for people who have lung condition symptoms, take place in person as soon as possible, to allow a holistic view to be taken of what is going on in that person's life. Therefore, we call on the Government to make clear what more can be done to support GPs to see more patients face to face.

I highlight the issues that were raised by Alex Cole-Hamilton, and previously by Willie Rennie, around physical distancing, particularly in smaller and more rural practices, where space in waiting rooms is a concern, and the possible need for improved ventilation.

Humza Yousaf: The member will know that, last week, Public Health Scotland published guidance around reducing physical distancing. Is he suggesting that we should not listen to the experts, but eliminate physical distancing altogether, which would be the concern?

Paul O'Kane: My point, and the point that was made by other members, is that we need to look at the package of measures that can be put in place. For example, in smaller practices, we need to look at where people are waiting, where it is acceptable to wait and what ventilation is put in place. We need to consider how we can increase capacity by doing a variety of things.

It is clear that GPs and their teams are stressed and undervalued, and we must recognise that. We have heard about the survey by the Royal College of General Practitioners, which reported that 57 per cent of GPs who have been working during Covid-19 said that it has negatively impacted their mental health, and 58 per cent of respondents to its annual tracking survey reported that they are so stressed that they cannot cope at least once a month.

Many are leaving front-line practice altogether: they are leaving a job that they love, because they just cannot do it anymore. However, we know that, as with other crises in our NHS, those challenges existed before the pandemic and have been exacerbated by it. Indeed, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the BMA and others have pointed out that the on-going crisis in GP recruitment has been around for some time; that has been referenced today by colleagues.

The Presiding Officer: Will you wind up, please?

Paul O’Kane: Certainly.

Rachael Hamilton and Jackie Baillie made the point that the promise to recruit 800 new GPs is nothing new and has not yet been delivered.

We point again to the Government’s thin recovery plan and ask where the detail is to support retention and increase capacity to ensure a sustainable future for primary care in Scotland, with the wellbeing of patients and staff at its heart.

The Presiding Officer: I call Humza Yousaf, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care. You have up to five minutes, cabinet secretary.

17:35

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): I have listened closely to the debate, and it is clear to me that one point of consensus is that we all place a high value on access to our GP teams, those across primary care and, indeed, those who work within GP clinics up and down the country. Primary care teams have responded magnificently to the pandemic, ensuring that care is provided to those who need it, when they need it. I add my voice to the tributes rightly being paid to our GPs and other primary care staff. I also unequivocally say that any abuse aimed at our primary care staff is utterly unacceptable.

I understand the frustrations of a number of colleagues across the chamber who have spoken about the emails in their in-boxes from constituents. I too have received such emails and I completely sympathise and empathise with the frustrations that some patients might feel at not being able to see their GP face to face. Patient

choice is crucial in accessing GP services, but it must be informed by the best and latest clinical guidance.

We must be mindful that we are still in the midst of a global pandemic and contending with a highly transmissible variant of the virus. However, that seems to have been ignored again by a number of contributors to the debate. In fact, the Tory motion itself speaks of a “return to normal activity” on the day that we have registered a further 30 Covid deaths. Such talk is as reckless as it is premature. Nevertheless, we share the desire of colleagues across the chamber to increase the number of face-to-face GP consultations.

There has been some significant disinformation during the debate on the scale of the Scottish Government’s investment in our primary care workforce, so I will correct some of those inaccuracies. It is the SNP that promised to deliver, and is delivering, record funding for our NHS.

Finlay Carson: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Humza Yousaf: I will do so shortly.

It is the SNP-led Scottish Government that has committed to primary care and GP services receiving a greater share of NHS front-line investment over this parliamentary session—an increase of 25 per cent—and it is this Government that has increased that spending to £250 million.

Finlay Carson: We have focused a lot on recruitment, but does the cabinet secretary recognise the comment from the BMA that the NHS recovery plan “contains ... worrying gaps”, including the “crucial omission” of

“any plan to retain current NHS staff”?

Humza Yousaf: I thank Finlay Carson for raising that important point. I had a good conversation with the BMA about retention and we have decided to continue to work together to see how we can retain the workforce. Finlay Carson has made a good point, because recruitment is important, as is retention.

We are, of course, increasing our workforce: we are increasing the number of GPs, paramedics, mental health workers and community link workers. All of that is backed by Scottish Government investment. Further, our GP workforce is at record levels. We have more GPs per 100,000 of the population than any other part of UK—the figures are quite stark. We have 94 GPs per 100,000, England has 76, Wales has 75 and Northern Ireland has 72. We are continuing to invest in our GP workforce.

As I have already said, I met the BMA and the Royal College of General Practitioners recently.

Sandesh Gulhane: Does the cabinet secretary agree that the SNP's GP contract not only harmed rural practices, reduced the help that they got and made patients travel extraordinary distances, but has not been delivered in areas around the country and has made things worse?

Humza Yousaf: I do not agree with that characterisation at all. Again, Dr Gulhane forgets that we are in the middle of a global pandemic. Some of those issues around the GP contract have undoubtedly been affected by the global pandemic. *[Interruption.]* I ask members to listen if they can, as opposed to shouting from a sedentary position.

I have met representatives from the BMA and the Royal College of General Practitioners and, although Dr Gulhane's entry in the register of interests shows that he is a member of both professional bodies, he has been conspicuously silent about what they have said, unequivocally, about the Tory motion that is in front of us, which is that the Tory demand to set an arbitrary date for increasing face-to-face appointments is wrong. When it comes to decision time tonight, will Dr Gulhane side with the professional bodies of which he is a member or will he toe the party line? In fact, he said:

"We have phones, videos and can be sent pictures. That means if you are a working person you don't need to waste your morning coming in to see me; we can be in touch remotely and I can give you the help you need remotely."

When talking about that technology, he said:

"because it happened so quickly that has led to consternation and people asking 'Why can't I see my GP this week?' 'Well, you can.'"

Do we believe the August edition of Dr Gulhane or the September edition of Dr Gulhane? He cannot have it both ways.

The Presiding Officer: I ask the cabinet secretary to round up, please.

Humza Yousaf: This winter will undoubtedly bring its share of new challenges, but I am confident that, collectively, we can meet them, and I thank all our NHS and primary care staff for their incredible efforts during the pandemic.

The Presiding Officer: I call Craig Hoy to wind up the debate.

17:41

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): The debate has shone a stark light on the problems that face Scotland's hard-working and dedicated GP surgeries. Too many patients cannot contact their local surgery, let alone get an appointment with their GP, and when they get an appointment, too often, that appointment is virtual, even when the patient would like a face-to-face consultation.

Years of chronic underfunding and the Government's total disregard for workforce planning have led to a systemic failure that has now come back to bite SNP ministers. Covid has given the SNP a cloak to hide behind but, as many patients and front-line practitioners are well aware, the problems that face GP provision in Scotland predate the pandemic.

Years of SNP cuts have eroded morale among general practitioners and their staff. *[Interruption.]* I have just started, so I will not take an intervention.

The on-going failure to train and recruit GPs into the service has created the perfect storm that we see today. Pressure has grown to the point where many GPs want to leave the system entirely, sometimes only a few years into their new careers.

However, today, there is no hint of an apology from the Government. It has an army of over 50 spin doctors, funded by the public purse, and more ministers than ever before, but not one of them has the word "sorry" in their vocabulary.

Today, we have heard valuable and insightful contributions. My colleague Sandesh Gulhane, who is a GP, told the Parliament that the Government's mismanagement of primary care is shocking. Jackie Baillie said that we urgently need to remobilise and resource primary care services. Annie Wells warned that the Government must now do whatever is necessary to get hospital, clinic and surgery waiting times under control—otherwise GPs will continue to be overwhelmed. Alex Cole-Hamilton noted that many GPs wanted to get back to routinely seeing their patients.

Emma Harper: Will Mr Hoy take an intervention?

Craig Hoy: I will give way.

Emma Harper: I appreciate Mr Hoy giving way. The cabinet secretary talked about Dr Gulhane saying:

"We have phones, videos and can be sent pictures."

Does Craig Hoy agree with Annie Wells's motion, which says that we need to get back to the normality of face-to-face appointments or does he agree with Dr Gulhane that we need to have a mixed model going forward?

Craig Hoy: Forgive me; I thought that Emma Harper might be getting up to apologise on behalf of the cabinet secretary but, clearly, she was not.

The solution is a hybrid system and that is what we are arguing for.

Sandesh Gulhane: Does Craig Hoy agree that we need to have telephone, video and face-to-face appointments and that we GPs would love to see more people? Does he also agree that the GP

contract was in place in 2018, way before the pandemic started?

Craig Hoy: Thank you, Dr Gulhane.

I will speak directly to GPs. We are not blaming GPs for not seeing enough patients face to face; we are blaming the SNP Government for saying that GPs do not have enough capacity to see their patients face to face. However, this is not just a capacity issue. GPs are not being given clear guidance on how and in what circumstances face-to-face appointments can routinely resume.

GPs and their patients up and down the country urgently want to know when something resembling normality will resume. When asked whether patients have the right to see their GP face to face, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care said that that should be only when that is clinically appropriate. Perhaps he can tell the elderly man worried about his wife who is writhing in pain what “clinical appropriateness” actually is. When will ministers realise that their job is to give leadership and confidence to patients and practitioners as we emerge from the Covid pandemic?

Prior to the pandemic, around 1,200 video consultations took place each week on the Near Me platform; that is now running at 12,000 a week. We should be in no doubt that tele and videoconferencing suits many patients and practitioners.

The Presiding Officer: Can I ask you to pause for one moment, Mr Hoy? I am aware that conversations are taking place around the chamber. I ask that members remain in their seats while the debate continues.

Craig Hoy: Although the system is called Near Me, for too many vulnerable and elderly people, that model of healthcare is simply too impersonal and too far beyond their reach. [*Interruption.*] I will not give way.

At the height of the pandemic, people were rightly anxious about the prospect of in-patient appointments. As other services shut their doors to patients, GPs worked on and demands on their surgeries and staff reached record highs. However, many patients dropped out of the system, were unable to get an appointment or were reluctant to e-consult. Now they are presenting with significantly more serious health conditions only a matter of months later.

The Government’s feeble and flimsy NHS recovery plan fails to get to the heart of the problems that are facing our NHS today. The Government is in denial about the problems that it has created and is in denial about the critical recruitment and retention crisis across our NHS.

Our NHS needs a bold, wide-ranging, ambitious and urgent recovery plan, not the back-of-an-envelope effort that we have seen from ministers. Our health service needs significant investment and greater understanding of workforce challenges, but after 14 years of SNP neglect, we will not get that from these ministers; nor will we get that from this failing SNP Government. I urge the Parliament to support the motion in the name of Annie Wells.

Business Motions

17:47

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-01258, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a change to tomorrow's business.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 16 September 2021 - after

followed by Scottish Government Debate: A Land of Opportunity - Supporting a Fairer and More Equal Society

insert

followed by Legislative Consent Motion.—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-01231, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 21 September 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by First Minister's Statement: COVID-19 Update

followed by Scottish Government Debate: A Net Zero Nation

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 22 September 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Covid Recovery and Parliamentary Business; Net Zero, Energy and Transport

followed by Ministerial Statement: Diversion from Prosecution

followed by Scottish Labour Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.40 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 23 September 2021

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Affairs and Islands

followed by Ministerial Statement: Decarbonising Scotland's Transport

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Carers Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Carers Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 28 September 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by First Minister's Statement: COVID-19 Update

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Environmental Standards Scotland: Appointment of the Chief Executive

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 29 September 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Health and Social Care; Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 30 September 2021

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm	First Minister's Questions
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
2.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.30 pm	Portfolio Questions: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Government Business
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 28 September 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.—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:48

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of 10 Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S6M-01232 to S6M-01239, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments; S6M-01240, on parliamentary recess dates; and S6M-01242, on suspension and variation of standing orders.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 3) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/254) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 14) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/256) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 4) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/261) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 5) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/264) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 6) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/265) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 15) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/275) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 7) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/278) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 16) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/290) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 12 to 20 February 2022 (inclusive), 2 to 17 April 2022 (inclusive), 2 July to 4 September 2022 (inclusive), 8 to 23 October 2022 (inclusive), 24 December 2022 to 8 January 2023 (inclusive).

That, subject to the Parliament's agreement to the general principles of the Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill, the Parliament agrees, for the purposes of further consideration of the Bill, that:

(a) Rules 9.5.3A and 9.5.3B be suspended;

(b) Rule 9.7.8A be varied to replace the word "fourth" with "third", so that the deadline for lodging revised or supplementary Explanatory Notes will be the third sitting day before the day on which Stage 3 is due to start;

(c) in Rule 9.7.8B, the words "whichever is the earlier of" be suspended;

(d) Rule 9.7.8B(a) be varied to replace the word “tenth” with “second”, so that the deadline for lodging a revised Financial Memorandum will be the second sitting day after the day on which Stage 2 ends;

(e) in Rule 9.7.9(a), the words “whichever is the earlier of” be suspended;

(f) Rule 9.7.9(a)(i) be varied to replace the word “tenth” with “second”, so that the deadline for lodging a revised or supplementary Delegated Powers Memorandum will be the second sitting day after the day on which Stage 2 ends;

(g) Rule 9.10.2 be varied, in so far as it applies to an amendment at Stage 2, to replace the word “fourth”, in both places it occurs, with “third”, so that the deadline for lodging a Stage 2 amendment will be the third sitting day in advance of proceedings; and

(h) Rule 9.10.2A be varied to replace the word “fifth” with “third”, so that the deadline for lodging a Stage 3 amendment will be the third sitting day in advance of proceedings.”—[George Adam]

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

Decision Time

17:49

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

There are up to eight questions to be put as a result of today’s business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Michael Matheson is agreed to, the other amendments to the same motion will fall, and, if the amendment in the name of Monica Lennon is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Liam McArthur will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-01193.3, in the name of Michael Matheson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01193, in the name of Liam Kerr, on the future of North Sea oil and gas, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:50

Meeting suspended.

17:54

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Michael Matheson is agreed to, the other amendments to the motion will fall.

We move to the vote on amendment S6M-01193.3.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (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)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)

Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (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)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Choudhury, Foysof (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowe, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)

Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on—[*Interruption.*] Members, can I please have silence? Thank you.

The result of the division on amendment S6M-01193.3, in the name of Michael Matheson, is: For 68, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The other amendments to the motion are therefore pre-empted.

The next question is, that motion S6M-01193, in the name of Liam Kerr, on the future of North Sea oil and gas, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (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)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)

Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (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)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caitness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-01193, in the name of Liam Kerr, on the future of North Sea oil and gas, as amended, is: For 68, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises how important the oil and gas industry, infrastructure, highly-skilled workforce and supply chain are to Scotland; agrees that countries around the world cannot continue to maximise recovery of hydrocarbons if the aims of the Paris Agreement are to be met; believes that Scotland and the UK cannot ignore the concern that unlimited extraction of fossil fuels is simply incompatible with protecting the planet; understands that the Scottish Government will undertake analysis to understand Scotland's energy requirements as the country transitions to net-zero in line with the aims of the Paris Agreement; recognises the role that hydrogen, carbon capture, utilisation and storage can play in a just transition, so long as they are not used to justify unsustainable levels of fossil fuel extraction; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to working with communities and those most impacted across Scotland, including the highly-skilled oil and gas workforce, to co-design the Transition Plan for Energy, and to taking forward a 10-year £500 million Just Transition Fund for the North East and Moray, and calls on the UK Government to match this investment, as well as reassess all existing licences for undeveloped fossil fuel extraction in light of the climate emergency.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-01217.2, in the name of Humza Yousaf, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01217, in the name of Annie Wells, on the return to normal general practitioner services, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (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)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 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)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)

Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01217.2, in the name

of Humza Yousaf, is: For 67, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-01217.1, in the name of Jackie Baillie, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01217, in the name of Annie Wells, on the return to normal GP services, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (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)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (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)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01217.1, in the name of Jackie Baillie, is: For 56, Against 65, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-01217 in the name of Annie Wells, on the return to normal GP services, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My phone lost its connection during the vote so I was unable to vote, I would have voted for the motion as amended by Humza Yousaf, so that would have been a yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms Constance. We will ensure that that is recorded.

I call Collette Stevenson for a point of order. I apologise to Collette Stevenson but, at the moment, we are unable to connect to her.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (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)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)

Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-01217, in the name of Annie Wells, as amended, is: For 89, Against 30, Abstentions 0. [*Interruption.*] I am afraid that the result of the division has been called, Ms Villalba.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that patients have a right to treatment by GPs, and other appropriate primary care health professionals, such as dentists, nurses, optometrists and pharmacists; appreciates that GPs and primary care staff were asked to change the way that they worked in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic; thanks GPs and primary care staff for keeping practices open and their hard work during the pandemic; recognises that, for many patients, the choice of using ehealth and telehealth solutions to initially contact their GP has been convenient, but that it is not a solution that is appropriate for all; believes that face-to-face consultations will continue to be necessary and that they should be taken forward in line with clinical guidance and in a manner that is as safe as possible as quickly as possible, and welcomes the Scottish Government commitment to work with the Royal College of General Practitioners, British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing and other stakeholders to deliver this.

The Presiding Officer: Colleagues, with regard to the division on motion S6M-01193, in the name of Liam Kerr, as amended, I apologise. I was passed the wrong information on the division on that motion.

The result of the division on motion S6M-01193, in the name of Liam Kerr, as amended, is: For 66, Against 55, Abstentions 0. Nonetheless, the motion, as amended, is agreed to.

I propose to ask a single question on 10 Parliamentary Bureau motions. Does any member object?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motions S6M-01232 to S6M-01240 and S6M-01242, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 3) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/254) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 14) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/256) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 4) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/261) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 5) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/264) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 6) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/265) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 15) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/275) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) (No. 7) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/278) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 16) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/290) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 12 to 20 February 2022 (inclusive), 2 to 17 April 2022 (inclusive), 2 July to 4 September 2022 (inclusive), 8 to 23 October 2022 (inclusive), 24 December 2022 to 8 January 2023 (inclusive).

That, subject to the Parliament's agreement to the general principles of the Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill, the Parliament agrees, for the purposes of further consideration of the Bill, that:

(a) Rules 9.5.3A and 9.5.3B be suspended;

(b) Rule 9.7.8A be varied to replace the word "fourth" with "third", so that the deadline for lodging revised or supplementary Explanatory Notes will be the third sitting day before the day on which Stage 3 is due to start;

(c) in Rule 9.7.8B, the words "whichever is the earlier of" be suspended;

(d) Rule 9.7.8B(a) be varied to replace the word "tenth" with "second", so that the deadline for lodging a revised Financial Memorandum will be the second sitting day after the day on which Stage 2 ends;

(e) in Rule 9.7.9(a), the words "whichever is the earlier of" be suspended;

(f) Rule 9.7.9(a)(i) be varied to replace the word "tenth" with "second", so that the deadline for lodging a revised or supplementary Delegated Powers Memorandum will be the second sitting day after the day on which Stage 2 ends;

(g) Rule 9.10.2 be varied, in so far as it applies to an amendment at Stage 2, to replace the word

"fourth", in both places it occurs, with "third", so that the deadline for lodging a Stage 2 amendment will be the third sitting day in advance of proceedings; and

(h) Rule 9.10.2A be varied to replace the word "fifth" with "third", so that the deadline for lodging a Stage 3 amendment will be the third sitting day in advance of proceedings."

Just Transition for Torry

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-01071, in the name of Maggie Chapman, on a just transition for Torry. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak button now or to type R in the chat function if they are joining us online.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the reported proposals to re-zone St Fittick's Park in Torry, Aberdeen, currently designated urban green space, and Doonies Rare Breeds Farm, currently part of the green belt, to facilitate port expansion as part of a larger industrialisation plan to create an energy transition zone; recognises what it sees as the importance of transitioning away from fossil fuels, but also what it considers the negative impacts that over-industrialisation can have on resident communities, such as poor air quality, loss of greenspace and various forms of pollution, including noise; believes that community green spaces are positive for mental wellbeing and people's right to a healthy environment; appreciates the value of having an award-winning, biodiverse area of woodland, wetland and recreational grassland in these areas, which it understands experience multiple social deprivation; acknowledges the reported opposition to the re-zoning by the community in Torry, including the Friends of St Fittick's Park campaign, on environmental justice and community wellbeing grounds; notes the view that these sites are valuable to the people and worthy of protection, and further notes the belief that their re-zoning is inappropriate.

18:14

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I thank Mercedes Villalba, Audrey Nicoll and the other MSPs who have supported the motion. I am very pleased to have lodged it, not just because it is my first ever members' business motion, and the first Scottish Green Party members' business debate in this session of Parliament, but because I think that it highlights so much of what we need to consider as we design and build a better, fairer and greener world.

The campaign to save St Fittick's park and Doonies Farm speaks to fundamental issues of power and democracy, inequality and deprivation. It speaks to challenges to the status quo, to business as usual and to the neoliberal economic model that has created both the climate emergency and the nature emergency. In short, it speaks to the inextricable links between social, economic and environmental justice, and it is that interconnected understanding of what justice is that must be at the heart of a just transition—for Torry, for the north-east and for Scotland.

St Fittick's community park, for those who do not know it, is an award-winning wetland and

reedbeds in the south of Aberdeen. The brainchild of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency as a way of making space for biodiversity and supporting local people, the park is a relatively small urban green space in Torry. The community neighbouring the park is one of the 10 most deprived in Scotland, with life expectancy 12 years lower than elsewhere in Aberdeen. Squished between industrial land and a sewage works, the park is the only accessible green space for that community. It is well loved and well used by people who live locally, mostly in tower blocks and flats.

Doonies Rare Breeds Farm, to give it its full name, is just a bit further down the coast road from St Fittick's. It is nationally recognised, having one of Scotland's largest collections of rare and endangered farm animal breeds. It is a favourite place for family days out, where children and young people can learn about farming, different animals and so much more.

Together, the two sites are the lungs of Torry. In stark contrast to the greyness of the heavy industry around them, including the current harbour development at Nigg Bay, St Fittick's park and Doonies Farm are vibrant, varied places with a range of habitats, species, facilities and amenities for all to enjoy. St Fittick's has what we might expect from a community park: play areas for children, a skate park and accessible paths for walking, wheeling and cycling. However, what makes it so special is that it also boasts areas of woodland, wet meadow, reedbed and diverse dry grasslands. Then there is the staggering biodiversity: more than 40 species of breeding birds, including nine red list species and eight amber list ones; more than 115 plant species, including a wonderful array of orchids; and hundreds of invertebrate species, many of which are still being documented. Also, as well as the great variety of dogs that have regular walks in the park, otters, deer and other mammals can be spotted in the reeds and woods. As we come into autumn, we will start to see some of the tens of thousands of migratory birds that stop over at those green spaces. Over the winter, we will see a substantial snipe population.

All the work that was done a decade ago by the Aberdeen ranger service and SEPA has really paid off. What was a polluted, poor-quality and inaccessible area is now an award-winning biodiverse wetland, which, just last year, won the biodiversity and climate change category in the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds nature of Scotland awards.

There really is nowhere else like it in the city of Aberdeen. Why are we even contemplating destroying it? Because that is exactly what is happening. Aberdeen City Council has proposed

rezoning those areas as “opportunity sites” for industrial development in the city’s new local development plan. Specifically, there are proposals for an energy transition zone—ETZ—to be sited on that urban green space and green-belt land. Their proximity to the south harbour development at Nigg, the sewage works and other encircling industrial estates means that developers such as Energy Transition Zone Ltd want to use the land for industrial purposes. That appears to be the settled will of the council, too.

Let me be clear: my opposition to the rezoning and development of both St Fittick’s community park and Doonies Farm in no way diminishes my passionate support for energy transition. I am, like everyone who is campaigning to save St Fittick’s park and Doonies Farm, only too aware of the need for an energy transition.

Torry, like other communities, has suffered as the oil and gas industry has declined. We understand that the climate emergency is affecting people and nature all over the world, but we also know that we can get the energy transition that we need without destroying valuable community green space. Other—brownfield—sites are available and other options possible. We must not concrete over the lungs of the community, which would result in poor air quality, pollution and noise, not to mention the loss of amenity and of valuable nature.

We know that we face a climate emergency and a nature emergency. The motion and the community campaign are clear that urgent action is needed, but we cannot tackle the climate emergency by compromising the health and wellbeing of biodiverse habitats. The health and wellbeing of communities, some living within metres of the proposed industry, would also be directly affected. We understand that climate justice cannot happen without environmental and social justice. Destroying nature cannot be the cornerstone of the energy transition we so desperately need.

We must encourage plans for the development of wind turbine manufacture, for a wind turbine parts assembly area and for de-commissioning. That work and the jobs that come with it are vital to our future. However, that work must be developed on sites that are not green spaces or in the green belt. Brownfield sites are available at east Tullos and Altens, which are less than a kilometre away and which have rail and road access.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): The member mentions brownfield sites nearby. When we talk about the energy transition zone, we are often talking about large wind turbines. Would it be feasible for those to be

transported to other sites half a mile from the harbour?

Maggie Chapman: It would be absolutely feasible. The possible sites at east Tullos and Altens are on good road and rail links and are less than a kilometre away.

Such brownfield site development would also result in lower carbon emissions than ripping up wetlands, which we know act as carbon sinks.

Communities should be involved in decisions about the siting of such development. Their voices have yet not been heard, and that must change. If we are serious about a just transition underpinning Scotland’s future, we must not only recognise the connections between environmental, social and economic justice but act accordingly. Therefore, I ask the Scottish Government to listen to the people of Torry and to the experts at the Scottish Wildlife Trust, who support the aims of the campaign, and to make any Government support for the energy transition zone conditional on both the use of brownfield sites and on genuine community engagement. Only then can we deliver a just transition for Torry that is genuinely just.

18:23

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I thank Maggie Chapman for her motion and draw members’ attention to my entry in the register of members’ interests: I am a councillor for the Torry/Ferryhill ward in Aberdeen, within which St Fittick’s park is located. The park is also in my constituency. I support a just transition. We are at an urgent point with climate change.

St Fittick’s park, as Maggie Chapman said, is the mother ship of Torry. Generations of families have gone there to play, exercise or hit the reset button. It hosts cultural heritage and supports carbon sequestration and flood control. It is an important local asset that has been restored and is valued by the community. The park is bounded by a harbour and an energy-from-waste plant, both of which are under construction, and a waste water plant. It is a precious green space for many.

In February 2020, St Fittick’s was included in the draft Aberdeen City local development plan, just weeks before the plan was approved, as an area supporting energy transition. I placed on record my support for an amendment proposing that the site be removed from the LDP and an alternative site found. The amendment was defeated in a vote. Literally hundreds of emails followed. Did I not realise that that was the last green space in Torry? Where are we supposed to go now? What is an ETZ?

The Friends of St Fittick’s Park and others have made a powerful case to save the park. I pay

particular tribute to Dr Ishbel Shand, Lesley-Anne Mulholland and Ian Baird, among others, for their campaigning efforts.

The media coverage created some confusion. The project was described as “shovel ready”, but other coverage quoted local politicians and reassured the community that, just because it was part of the local development plan, that did not mean that it would happen and the LDP was not the end of the line for the Torry green space campaign. Which was it? Where are we now with St Fittick’s park?

The proposed development plan currently sits with the independent reporter, and it will be for Aberdeen City Council to consider any forthcoming planning application. In the meantime, there is a wider context.

The north-east is rightly positioning itself as a centre for energy transition. However, to date, the debate on energy transition has derived from an industry context. Professor Tavis Potts, who is interim director of the centre for energy transition at the University of Aberdeen, has highlighted that there is now a need for a community-orientated perspective in which areas are developed in a consensual way and meet both community and industry needs. He has observed that his research has uncovered a strong feeling of dispossession in Torry and that the community has had development imposed on it.

The Scottish Government’s response to the net zero nation engagement strategy identified that participation should be

“inclusive, reflective of all parts of society and not tokenistic.”

An ETZ is an important economic opportunity for diversification from fossil fuels and could have real value for the workforce in Aberdeen, but it must be underpinned by broader just transition policy principles so that communities such as Torry are genuine partners and derive real and meaningful benefit.

I welcome the commitment of Energy Transition Zone Ltd to community engagement and constructive dialogue, and I very much hope that all the decision makers who are involved in the project embrace the principles of strong partnership—not just consultation—community wealth building and creative approaches that genuinely benefit the people of Torry. Options are available in that regard, but there is only one St Fittick’s park.

18:28

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland (Lab)): I thank Maggie Chapman for inviting me to second the motion, and I am grateful for the

opportunity to speak about the issue in the chamber.

In the summer, I visited Torry, where I met campaigners from the Friends of St Fittick’s Park. As Audrey Nicoll and Maggie Chapman have already said, they should be commended for fighting to protect a community green space for all residents of Torry. It has also already been said that that is a well-loved and well-used space.

I find Aberdeen City Council’s decision to rezone St Fittick’s park and Doonies Rare Breeds Farm as opportunity sites for industrial development to be clearly short sighted. As has been said, St Fittick’s park is an award-winning biodiverse area of woodland, wetland and recreational grassland. It is also currently designated as urban green space. Doonies Rare Breeds Farm is a key conservation site that houses 23 rare breeds. The Covid-19 pandemic has surely demonstrated the value of such assets to our communities. They are vital for mental and community wellbeing, and they ensure that local people can exercise their right to a healthy environment.

The energy transition zone project brings with it the risks of overindustrialisation for Torry. Overindustrialisation can lead to poor air quality and create various forms of pollution, such as noise pollution. It can also lead to the loss of green space, and to severe environmental and community wellbeing consequences.

With all that in mind, it is unsurprising that Torry residents and campaign groups such as the Scottish Wildlife Trust are opposed to the ETZ project. However, local opposition to the ETZ is not purely motivated by those environmental and community wellbeing concerns. Torry residents and campaigners are, rightly, frustrated by the lack of meaningful consultation. The Scottish Government says that it is for Aberdeen City Council and the developers, Energy Transition Zone Ltd, to engage with the community, but Aberdeen City Council and Energy Transition Zone Ltd say that a statutory consultation will be driven by the Scottish Government.

The game of shifting responsibility is unacceptable. The people of Torry should have been proactively engaged with from the start of the ETZ project. Residents feel that the lack of meaningful engagement reinforces their concerns that the decision has already been made to proceed with the project.

The Scottish Government seems unwilling to engage with the concerns of residents. I asked the cabinet secretary to outline how the proposed site for the ETZ was chosen, given the significant public investment that the project is receiving. He was quick to pass responsibility on to Aberdeen

City Council and the developers. When I pushed him on what the benefits would be for the people of Torry, he said that the ETZ should offer benefits such as the provision of open space for residents and improvements in biodiversity. However, I do not think that any Torry resident or campaigner believes that the ETZ can deliver such benefits.

It is important to know that nobody who is opposed to the ETZ project is refusing to recognise our need to transition away from fossil fuels, but we should not transition by sacrificing existing biodiverse green spaces that have strong community support, such as St Fittick's park and Doonies Farm. Those two sites are of great value to the local community and worthy of protection, which is why I support the motion and urge all members to do the same.

18:32

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to speak in the debate. Having lived in central Aberdeen for nearly two decades now, I am very familiar with the area and its facilities. I have spent many afternoons at Doonies with my family, and I readily acknowledge the importance of such facilities to the local and wider communities.

The motion rightly mentions the importance of our transition from fossil fuels, which speaker after speaker recognised in the debate earlier this afternoon. That is why I am particularly pleased that Energy Transition Zone Ltd, the not-for-profit business that was launched earlier this year to focus on the transition zone, has as its core aim to economically reposition the north-east by reducing its reliance on oil and gas.

There is a delicate balancing act, and, as Mercedes Villalba said, the local community and Friends of St Fittick's Park are to be commended for standing up to be counted when their green space and facilities appear to be threatened.

In the earlier local development plan consultation stage, I believe that a great many people submitted representations to the council. That having been done, there will be a formalisation of a proposal for an energy transition zone. Just last week, Ironside Farrar Ltd, which is described as a "multiple award-winning environmental consultancy", was engaged to lead the work on a master plan for the energy transition zone. Only when it has drawn up detailed proposals will there be an application for planning permission in principle.

I hope that the community is encouraged by that, because I understand that bids for the master plan contract, which Ironside Farrar Ltd won, were evaluated on a basis of 70 per cent quality and 30 per cent cost. I understand that the company is

backed by a Queen's award for enterprise for sustainable development. Apparently, it also won awards for environmental improvements in Fittie and Kincardine O'Neil.

Maggie Chapman: Will Liam Kerr agree that, however great the master plan might be, any development at all still represents a loss of green-belt land and urban green space?

Liam Kerr: Potentially, yes, which is exactly why I am encouraged that the people who are being appointed to assess the site and build the master plan have such a pedigree. Perhaps most important, according to Energy Transition Zone Ltd, Ironside Farrar will

"play a key role in engaging with the local community and other stakeholders through the various stages of the master planning process".

Neal Handforth, Energy Transition Zone Ltd's development and infrastructure director, says that Ironside Farrar has

"a proven track record of finding creative and sustainable solutions, and prioritising community participation as a key element of ... project delivery".

He goes on to say:

"Critical to the project's success is ensuring the local community is listened to throughout the process".

It is hugely encouraging that the very people who intend to make the proposals recognise how important it is to listen to the community. Handforth has also committed to

"explore with the community ideas around a number of specific projects and initiatives that would have the aim of developing local amenities",

while also paying heed to the importance of local "biodiverse areas".

Coupled with all that, Aberdeen City Council is on the record as recognising the climate and biodiversity emergencies. It was one of the first local authorities to sign the Edinburgh declaration on biodiversity, thereby committing to support local action on conservation of biodiversity. The aim is to send a strong message that supporting local action is key to protecting the natural environment—on which we all depend, as members have rightly pointed out. It should further be recognised that the natural environment is one of the six themes in the city-wide net zero plan that the city is developing.

We all understand that the community is concerned about the development, but the whole process is at a very early stage and I believe that it could be around a year before the master plan comes together. Safeguards for the environmental, biodiversity and community protections appear to be in place, and I look forward to seeing how the plans develop.

18:36

The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead): I thank Maggie Chapman for bringing the debate to the chamber and I congratulate her on securing her first members' business debate in Parliament. I am sure that all of us who have served as members of the Parliament for some time have experienced in our areas lots of cases like this one, where the interests of communities and planned developments appear to come into conflict with each other. It is part of our duty as parliamentarians to highlight such local campaigns and give them a national platform, so it is an important debate to have in this Parliament.

I will address the question of the development of the energy transition zone shortly but, first, I will set out the context for the debate and highlight aspects of Maggie Chapman's motion that I—and, I am sure, we all—agree with.

It is important to recognise that Scotland has already undergone the start of an impressive energy transition over the past decade, which we could all see as the first phase of the energy transition that we have to go through. For instance, emissions from our electricity system have reduced by more than 70 per cent since 1990. That is a world-leading achievement that we can all be proud of, but we know that there is still much more to do if we are to end our reliance on fossil fuels in the decades ahead, as the motion notes.

A lot of other things are happening. To give one example, which is very relevant to the debate, our offshore wind policy statement sets out the ambition of developing between 8GW and 11GW of new offshore generation capacity by 2030. I am sure that we all appreciate how vital it is that we continue our energy transition if we are to meet our climate change targets and avoid the damaging consequences of the climate emergency.

To get to the heart of the debate, there is no doubt in my mind that Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland can lead that transition. The components are there: we have a skilled workforce, a vibrant private sector and an infrastructure that can be repurposed to drive our transition to net zero. We have all the ingredients for Aberdeen and Scotland to show global leadership in the energy transition and the just transition.

With that context as the backdrop to the debate, I will also say a few words in support of the aspects of Maggie Chapman's motion that relate to the importance of delivering a just transition, which I whole-heartedly agree with. That is why we were the first country in the world to enshrine

in law our commitment to the principles of just transition. We want the outcome to be a fairer, greener future for everyone in Scotland, but the process must be undertaken in partnership with those who are most impacted by the transition to net zero. It is about how we get to a net zero and climate-resilient economy in a way that also delivers fairness and tackles inequality and injustice.

It is essential that the process is co-designed and co-delivered, and I can point to lots of examples of where we are putting that into practice. Our groundbreaking just transition commission was set up to engage people widely through the transition, and it travelled the country for over two years, listening to communities that will be affected by net zero transition. I should put on record that earlier today I announced the formation of a new commission to be chaired by the chair of the previous commission, Professor Jim Skea, and I expect the new group to continue to engage broadly—

Liam Kerr: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am quite enjoying the minister's speech, but the fact is that Maggie Chapman has lodged a very relevant motion and, with respect, I am not sure that the minister is directly addressing some of the key points that she has made.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much, Mr Kerr. I have been listening to the minister's speech and, although it has had a broad span, that is not unheard of as far as ministers are concerned. I encourage the minister to ensure that he addresses the motion, but I do not think that he is necessarily out of order.

Richard Lochhead: With all due respect to Liam Kerr, I have the motion in front of me, and I have made many references in my opening remarks to the points that it makes; the context of the debate, which is just transition; the factors that we have to take into account as we go on this journey; and the impact on communities over the coming decades.

The motion asks us to recognise the importance of green space to communities and of tackling the biodiversity crisis, and we agree with Maggie Chapman on that, too. The impact of Covid on all of us, which some members have highlighted, has led to renewed appreciation of green space, and as we move towards recovery, we should not forget the healing and restorative power of nature. Again, that is the message behind our statement of intent for biodiversity, which recognises the increasing urgency of tackling the challenge of biodiversity loss.

On the proposed siting of the energy transition zone in Torry, I am again grateful to Maggie Chapman for bringing the matter to our attention. I

must stress that it is inappropriate for ministers to comment on the specific case at this stage, but as minister for just transition, I will say that many powerful points have been made during the debate that I will want to reflect on as we move forward. After all, we are in the early stages of developing just transition in Scotland and, given that it will be with us for decades, some balances have to be struck that we should reflect on.

Maggie Chapman: I invite you in your ministerial role to visit St Fittick's community park and Doonies Rare Breeds Farm at some point to see exactly what the Torry community is at risk of losing here.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I assume, Ms Chapman, that you were extending the invitation to the minister rather than to me as Presiding Officer.

Maggie Chapman: I was, indeed, but you would be very welcome to visit, too.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am very grateful.

Richard Lochhead: You would be most welcome to join me on that visit, Presiding Officer.

I was about to say that I look forward to having the opportunity to visit the site at some point in the future, and I know that the local member would like me to do so. There is also a CLAN Cancer Support lighthouse not too far away at the Torry battery that my wife is desperate to see, so I am keen to visit at some point. Of course, the just transition issues are very important, and I will certainly reflect on the timing of a visit and whether I can do that soon.

The Scottish Government and the planning authority both have statutory roles, and any proposals have to follow due process. Although I cannot give a direct view on the planning issue, I can tell the chamber that our national planning policy is under review; the energy transition zone was received as one of approximately 250 suggested national developments, and we are all considering what those national developments should be with a view to laying the draft national planning framework 4 before the Scottish Parliament in the autumn.

Important messages have been sent and issues have been highlighted in the debate about some of the balances that we have to strike with just transition. Planning policies are in place at the moment to ensure that we take into account green spaces and biodiversity and that we are consulting local communities on these matters. I would, of course, expect all of that to be followed by the local planning authority in taking applications into account.

I thank Maggie Chapman for bringing the issue to the Parliament's attention and for highlighting the local community's concerns. I recognise many of the points that have been made about just transition, biodiversity loss and the importance of green space, and I will reflect on all of those issues, even though they are separate to the particular planning application that we are discussing today. I am sure that many more such issues will arise as we move forward to ensure that we have a productive and fruitful energy transition that helps Scotland play a leading role in the world's efforts to tackle the climate emergency.

Meeting closed at 18:44.

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