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Wednesday 6 October 2021

CONTENTS

	Col.
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	1
JUSTICE AND VETERANS	1
Fire Alarm Signals (Unwanted)	1
Prison Estate (Modernisation)	2
Post-mortem Reports (Delays)	3
Barnahus Model	5
Cybercrimes	6
Fatal Accident Inquiries	8
Veterans (Support)	10
Police Estate (Support)	11
FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY	12
Underemployment	12
Glasgow Life (Support)	14
Public Procurement (Sustainability)	15
Inverclyde (Development and Inward Investment)	16
Employment Gap (Monitoring)	17
North-east Economy (Support)	19
Digital Economy and Digital Single Market	19
Areas of Multiple Deprivation (Impact of United Kingdom Government Policy)	20
SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT	22
<i>Statement—[John Swinney].</i>	
The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney)	22
SCOTLAND IN THE WORLD	36
<i>Motion moved—[Angus Robertson].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Donald Cameron].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Alex Rowley].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson)	36
Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	41
Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	43
Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD)	45
Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP)	47
Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con)	48
Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP)	49
Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab)	51
James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)	53
Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con)	55
Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green)	56
Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)	58
Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab)	60
Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP)	61
Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab)	63
Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con)	65
The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth)	67
BUSINESS MOTIONS	72
<i>Motions moved—[George Adam]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS	75
<i>Motions moved—[George Adam].</i>	
Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD)	75
The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam)	76
DECISION TIME	78
REST AND BE THANKFUL	88
<i>Motion debated—[Donald Cameron].</i>	
Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	88
Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)	91

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)..... 92
Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con) 94
Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP) 95
Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green)..... 96
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab) 98
The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey) 99

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 6 October 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 Covid-related measures are in place. Face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The first item of business is portfolio questions, and the first theme is justice and veterans. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button or enter R in the chat function during the relevant question.

Fire Alarm Signals (Unwanted)

1. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service consultation on reducing unwanted fire alarm signals. (S6O-00235)

The Minister for Community Safety (Ash Denham): I welcome the consultation by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Addressing unwanted fire alarm signals is a priority in the fire and rescue framework for Scotland. Unwanted fire alarm signals are an issue for fire services throughout the United Kingdom. They place the public and firefighters at risk by causing unnecessary blue-light journeys and diverting resources away from genuine emergencies. The consultation seeks to understand stakeholders' views on the options that it puts forward. I would expect there to be further SFRS engagement to explore any significant concerns that are raised, before a final decision is made on the way forward.

Jamie Greene: One option that is being seriously considered in order to cut call-outs by up to 85 per cent is not mobilising blue-light services in response to an automatic alarm if a follow-up call fails to confirm or verify a fire or signs of a fire. Some organisations have expressed explicit concern about that approach, including Scottish Care, which is concerned about the effect that it might have on care homes, where the approach is simply not possible. I ask that both that sector and the wider public be reassured that, whatever the outcome of the consultation, no one will be put at risk and there will be no increased risk of there

being a tragedy anywhere in Scotland as a result of measures that are taken to cut call-outs.

Ash Denham: Jamie Greene is right to point that out. There are three options in the consultation; two of them exempt sleeping premises. That covers care homes, which the member rightly mentioned, along with hospitals, prisons and so on.

A reduction in unwanted fire alarm signals could release significant resources that could be deployed to more productive and beneficial tasks, including prevention and fire safety work. Although the SFRS remains committed to driving down the number of unwanted fire alarms, it will always respond to alarm signals immediately, with appropriate resources, if fire is confirmed or if signs of fire are reported.

It is worth noting that, as I said, two of the options that are set out in the consultation exempt premises such as care homes and hospitals from being call challenged, which means that an immediate response will be sent to investigate a call and the cause of the alarm. Any potential change in the response to such premises will be discussed thoroughly before any final decision is made on the way forward.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I thank the minister for outlining the work that is under way to drive down the number of unwanted fire alarms. Will the minister outline what work is under way to modernise the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to allow it to expand its work on fire prevention and fire safety with vulnerable households?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please be as brief as possible, minister.

Ash Denham: We are committed to modernising the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service so that it can do more to keep communities safe and contribute to better outcomes for the people of Scotland. That has been demonstrated through our continued investment in the SFRS, with a further uplift of £8.7 million in resource for 2021-22, which brings the total budget to £343 million. We are consulting on our fire and rescue framework for Scotland. Modernisation is at the heart of our priorities and objectives for the SFRS.

Prison Estate (Modernisation)

2. **Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its £500 million of funding to modernise the prison estate, including any updates to HMP Dumfries. (S6O-00236)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): Our on-going investment in our prison estate will ensure that it is

fit for the future. Our current priorities are the new female custodial estate, in which construction is well under way, and the much-needed replacements for HMP Barlinnie and HMP Inverness. The investment also includes on-going maintenance work across the estate, including at HMP Dumfries, which remains an integral part of the prison estate. Current improvement priorities for HMP Dumfries include the upgrading of flat roofing, increasing the number of accessible cells in the prison, the refurbishment of the gym facility and the replacement of cell furniture.

Emma Harper: As the cabinet secretary knows, HMP Dumfries is one of the oldest functional prisons in Scotland and has one of the smallest prison populations. Does HMP Dumfries have facilities similar to those of other prison campuses in Scotland, and can the cabinet secretary give a commitment that the welcome £500 million of investment in Scotland's prison estate will not leave out HMP Dumfries's staff and residents?

Keith Brown: All our prison establishments across Scotland have similar facilities. Although HMP Dumfries does not currently feature in the Scottish Government's infrastructure investment programme, it will continue to benefit from the general investment that is provided by the Scottish Government for the prison estate. Improvements to the capital infrastructure of our prisons will have benefits for prisoners, prison staff and wider communities.

Post-mortem Reports (Delays)

3. Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of reports of a backlog in toxicology analyses, how many final post-mortem reports following a sudden or unexplained death were not issued within the 12-week target in 2020 and 2021. (S6O-00237)

The Lord Advocate (Dorothy Bain QC): Post-mortem reports are issued by pathologists to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service at the conclusion of their investigations. Pathologists do not have a target to provide those reports within 12 weeks. The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service aims to conduct its investigation and advise the next of kin of the outcome within 12 weeks of the initial report of the death in at least 80 per cent of those cases.

In 2019-20, 70 per cent of cases were closed within the 12-week period, and in 2020-21 the figure was 59 per cent. Previous delays with toxicology analysis have played a significant part in that 12-week target not being met, but there are other legitimate reasons why it is not possible to conclude an investigation within 12 weeks, such as the need for further investigations with a view to determining whether a fatal accident inquiry should be held.

Significant work has been done by Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service toxicologists and pathologists to address the issue. Since the beginning of 2021, there has been no backlog of toxicology reports. All reports have been submitted to pathologists within agreed timescales, and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service has established a dedicated team to manage the final post-mortem reports, which have now been received and require to be considered.

Monica Lennon: I thank the Lord Advocate for the detail in her response and I welcome her to her new role.

I do not have time to respond to all of that answer, but I note that this has been a deeply upsetting period for many families, because before the pandemic bereaved families experienced long and agonising waits for final post-mortem reports. Instead of being told that it could take around 12 weeks to receive a report, many were told that it could take 12 months and some were told that it could take two years.

I am pleased that there have been improvements, but under the new service level agreement between the Scottish Police Authority's forensic services and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, what robust measures will be put in place, and are families being consulted? Will the Lord Advocate meet me and affected families to make sure that we never get the issue wrong again?

The Lord Advocate: I understand entirely what Ms Lennon has said and the impact that the history of the issue has had on bereaved families. I would be happy to meet and discuss the issue at significant length with Ms Lennon and those who have been profoundly affected, as she rightly described.

The success of the toxicology improvement plan has meant that pathologists have received delayed toxicology reports alongside toxicology reports from more recent cases. A significant number of final post-mortem reports have therefore been received by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service this year. That is set against a background of an increase of 40 per cent on the previous year's figure for the number of deaths that are being reported to the Crown, with a resultant significant increase in the number of post-mortem examinations requiring to be instructed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Lord Advocate, I have to cut you short. I know that you have offered to meet Ms Lennon; I am sure that you can pick the issue up then.

The Lord Advocate: Very well.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The Faculty of Advocates has said that

“delayed instruction of post-mortems is a direct result of a dearth of forensic pathologists”.

Does the Lord Advocate agree with that assessment, and if so, what is being done about it?

The Lord Advocate: The delay in the provision of toxicology services related to the fact that the University of Glasgow toxicology department was no longer capable of producing the necessary toxicology reports. In 2019, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service began experiencing significant delays in production of the reports, and the university indicated that it no longer wished to undertake the contract. Subsequently, there was a reduction in the number of staff available within the university to produce reports, although a toxicology improvement plan was put in place with the university that has directly targeted the backlog of cases.

Since the beginning of 2021, there has been no backlog in toxicology reports being provided to pathologists, who then need to conduct their final pathology analyses and reports. The difficulties arose because of the delay in provision of forensic services in the University of Glasgow, which had a knock-on effect. I do not understand the position to be as it has been described by Mr Greene and as reported by the Faculty of Advocates.

Barnahus Model

4. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its plans to implement a bairns’ hoose, or Barnahus, model for children and vulnerable witnesses in criminal proceedings. (S6O-00238)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): Last week, I announced a £2 million funding initiative to support the roll-out of the new Scottish child interview model, which protects children and reduces the stress associated with recounting their experiences. That is an important step towards creating the foundations of our bairns’ hoose vision in Scotland, which we are committed to delivering by the end of the parliamentary session.

On 14 September, we published “Bairns’ Hoose – Scottish Barnahus: vision, values and approach”, setting out in broad terms our vision of how the bairns’ hoose should be implemented in Scotland, the values that should underpin the model and the approach to its practical implementation. The vision has been welcomed by Children 1st and others, and our next steps will be to establish a national governance group to oversee the delivery of the bairns’ hoose in

Scotland and to bring forward standards for it. Further plans will be published by the end of 2021.

Fulton MacGregor: I thank the cabinet secretary for that response and his reference to the governance group. Will the governance group look at ensuring that children and young people who are involved in sexual abuse cases, for instance, will be prioritised through the system? Will there be scope for adult survivors of such crimes to access the facilities when cases of historical abuse are brought forward, even though they are adults and might not be vulnerable other than in terms of the crimes that have been committed against them?

Keith Brown: Bairns’ hooses will be available to all children in Scotland who have been victims of, or witnesses to, abuse or violence—including sexual abuse, to which Fulton MacGregor referred.

An interagency referral discussion is the start of the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis and decision-making, following reported concern about abuse or neglect of a child or young person up to the age of 18 years. It will be the role of the designated police, social work and health staff who are involved in those discussions to consider what action will be necessary and in the child’s best interests.

A referral to the bairns’ hoose will be one of the options that could be considered at an IRD. The professionals who will be involved in IRD discussions will decide whether that is appropriate and will prioritise the services that are provided by a bairns’ hoose, based on their judgment of the individual needs of the child and the concern that is under investigation.

Cybercrimes

5. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to statistics showing that the number of cybercrimes recorded has nearly doubled in the last year. (S6O-00239)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): We believe that the figure likely reflects the growing adoption of digital technologies in Scottish society, which has been accelerated by the pandemic. It is not unique to Scotland, and similar trends have emerged in England and Wales, where an increase in fraud has been linked to pandemic-related behavioural changes such as working from home and increased online shopping.

The Scottish Government is responding to the increased cyber threat through “The Strategic Framework for a Cyber Resilient Scotland”. Work is under way to share threat intelligence and mitigation measures, raise cyber-risk awareness

and deliver education and training. Earlier this year, the Government founded the CyberScotland Partnership, which includes Police Scotland and the United Kingdom's National Cyber Security Centre as founding partners.

It has to be recognised that efforts to raise awareness might in themselves be a factor in the increased reporting of cybercrime, although that is difficult to quantify. Within and outwith the partnership, the Scottish Government, Police Scotland and the National Cyber Security Centre will work together to protect people and organisations from cybercriminals.

Dean Lockhart: As the cabinet secretary indicated, the increase in cybercrime is largely driven by a rise in online fraud. Given the impact that online fraud can have on vulnerable people, in particular, we are calling for harsher punishments for those who target the vulnerable. Will the cabinet secretary back those measures to tackle the serious increase in online fraud against vulnerable people?

Keith Brown: I have said before to members throughout the chamber that we will listen to any sensible proposals that might help us to deal with—in this case—rising crime. Of all the different areas, cybercrime had the biggest increase over the recorded crime period that we last reported on, so I am happy to listen to any proposals from Dean Lockhart, if he wants to write to me with fuller details.

It is worth saying that the bulk of the responsibility for online activity rests with the UK Government, but we have to do our bit as well, and we are doing that with training, through the cyber-resilience partnerships that we mentioned. Earlier today, we addressed the issue in the serious organised crime task force that has been established. It will be the main focus of that group's next meeting, so we are taking the matter seriously. I am happy to listen to any suggestions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will take a couple of brief supplementary questions.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): In the most recent Scottish Government figures—for 2020-21—cybercrime accounted for an estimated one in three sexual crimes. In the past decade, the levels of most types of crime have fallen, but sexual crimes have risen by 78 per cent. Will the cabinet secretary set out the measures that the Scottish Government is planning to protect vulnerable people—especially women and girls—from the increasing risk of cybercrime of a sexual nature?

Keith Brown: Pauline McNeill is right to point to the concerns in that area, and I have mentioned some of the things that we are doing. In relation to young people, through our cyber strategy, we have been working with Police Scotland on the

keeping people safe in a digital world initiative, which seeks to allocate resources where they can best meet the demands of the public, communities and business, but with a focus on vulnerable people.

We are committed to investing in Police Scotland's officers and staff to ensure that the right skills are in the right place in the organisation. Pauline McNeill is right to say that we are not at that place yet, so there is more work to be done on that—not just in Police Scotland but in the other agencies throughout the UK. People attack their victims with vigour and ingenuity, and we must use the same level of commitment to defend people's interests—not least the vulnerable people Pauline McNeill mentioned.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I thank the cabinet secretary for his responses to the questions so far. Will he say a little more about what the Scottish Government is doing to raise awareness among the Scottish public about cybercrime and the damage that it can do, not only to the vulnerable people Pauline McNeill mentioned but more generally across all our communities?

Keith Brown: That work is done mainly through a number of partners, especially in relation to public awareness. One of the groups that has been doing that for many years is the Scottish Business Resilience Centre, which was based in my constituency. We use all the agencies in Scotland—and, where appropriate, in the UK—to get that message out. In the past, we have helped to fund courses for people on how to protect their online presence and software from potential fraud—for example, sometimes, people take over terminals and use them for nefarious purposes. Addressing a lot of that is down to awareness raising and—as I just said to Pauline McNeill—making sure that our agencies are fully equipped to deal with the challenge.

Fatal Accident Inquiries

6. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what role fatal accident inquiries have in the delivery of justice in Scotland. (S6O-00240)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): Fatal accident inquiries are inquisitorial judicial proceedings before sheriffs or sheriffs principal that are held in the public interest to investigate the circumstances of a death, to establish the time, place and cause of a death, and to identify reasonable precautions that might be taken to prevent deaths in similar circumstances. It is not the purpose of an FAI to establish blame or guilt in the civil or criminal sense.

Fatal accident inquiries play a significant role in exposing systematic failings and unsafe working practices and in ensuring that there are systems to safeguard and protect those who are held in legal custody. When the sheriff identifies reasonable precautions that might have avoided the accident or death, defects in any system of work that led or contributed to the accident or death, or any other fact that is relevant to the death, they might make recommendations to prevent similar deaths from happening in the future.

Richard Leonard: Over two years ago, I raised in Parliament the death of Allan Marshall—a young man who died in the custody of the state in March 2015. His death was the subject of a fatal accident inquiry and was highlighted once again just yesterday, following the publication of the important new report “Nothing to See Here?”.

The fatal accident inquiry concluded that Allan’s death was “entirely preventable”, and it made 13 recommendations, all to the Scottish Prison Service. However, three of those recommendations have been rejected, including the recommendation to disallow the use of feet as a control and restraint technique—that is, prison officers kicking and stamping on prisoners, which we witnessed in Allan’s case.

I spoke to Allan’s family yesterday, and they do not understand why that recommendation continues to be rejected. Will the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans instruct the Scottish Prison Service today to reconsider its decision to ignore that recommendation? Will he, in due course, come back to Parliament to give a considered response to this week’s University of Glasgow report?

Keith Brown: I would point out that the Scottish Government has no role in the outcome of an FAI. However, Richard Leonard rightly raises the situation in which recommendations are made but are not accepted by, for example, a public agency or other organisation. In response to his point, I undertake to look into the case to see what action, if any, has been taken by the Scottish Prison Service and to discuss it with him further. At that point, if he remains unsatisfied, we can consider how to take matters forward.

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): The research that Richard Leonard referred to reveals severe problems, but at least deaths in custody are automatically subject to an FAI. What does the cabinet secretary say to families who suffer the deaths of relatives in non-custodial settings and have to fight for an FAI? Is he satisfied with that scope?

Keith Brown: Yes—I think that the current system of FAIs, whereby the duty to make the decision lies with the Lord Advocate, is the right

one. I am not aware of anybody else having made sustained proposals for an alternative system. The matter was discussed at length with the previous Justice Committee. It looked at the issues, including the time that some FAIs take, but it did not come forward with an alternative proposal. The current system has major benefits—although they are not all advertised in the chamber—not least that the Lord Advocate’s role in criminal investigations is joined up with the FAI system.

The current process is the right one, but that is not to say that we are complacent. The Government and, I am sure, the Crown Office will always look to make improvements. Improvements have already been made, further improvements are being made and we will continue to improve the system.

Veterans (Support)

7. Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on how it supports veterans, and what official statistics it records to monitor this. (S6O-00241)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): Each year since 2017, the Scottish Government has given Parliament an annual update on our support for veterans and the armed forces community. We will do so again in November this year.

The member will be aware that, as part of our response to the United Kingdom-wide strategy for our veterans, the Scottish Government committed to improving the collection, use and analysis of veterans data. In 2022, Scotland’s census will for the first time include a question on previous service in the UK armed forces. Analysis of that data will support a programme of work to better identify and support the veterans community in Scotland.

Alex Rowley: The collection of data through the census will be important. As a result of that, the UK Government has recently announced that it will for the first time collect statistics on veteran suicides. That move has been welcomed by the many charities and families who have long campaigned for more transparency on the issue. Will the Scottish Government confirm that it will consider doing likewise? What is the timescale for that?

Keith Brown: That is an interesting point. Over many years, I have asked the UK Government to provide more data, including crucial service leaver data. With a week’s notice to the Scottish Government, the UK Government has only just announced that it will do so.

We want to undertake some of the analysis that the UK Government will now undertake,

particularly in relation to veterans who have died after leaving the service and the reasons for those deaths. We will work with National Records of Scotland, whose procedures differ from those of the Office for National Statistics, to get the same output of information and analysis of that information. I just wish that it could have happened many years ago.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): As the cabinet secretary will appreciate, the few remaining Korean war veterans are very elderly, and they decided to hold their last ever memorial service at the Korean war memorial in Bathgate, in my constituency, last month. Will the cabinet secretary send his best wishes to the remaining Korean war veterans and the newly established trust, which has agreed to take over the distinctive Korean war memorial—it is the only one in the country—and the garden?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: A very brief response, cabinet secretary.

Keith Brown: I am grateful to have the opportunity to pass on my best wishes to the remaining veterans of the Korean war and to pay tribute to all those who served in the conflict. I would wish to say more, but we do not seem to have the time. The member might not be aware that I intend in the coming weeks to visit the memorial, which she knows so well. I will get in touch with her about that.

Police Estate (Support)

8. Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support Police Scotland in its upkeep of the police estate. (S6O-00242)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): Although the allocation of resources, including those for the police estate, is for the Scottish Police Authority and the chief constable to determine, we have committed to protecting the police resource budget in real terms in every year of the current parliamentary session, as we did in the previous session. Scottish Government funding for the SPA in 2021-22 increased by £75.5 million, which brings the annual policing budget to more than £1.3 billion. In relation to on-going investment in its estate, Police Scotland will continue to ensure that, in all cases, the primary focus of its approach is on the health and safety of all officers, staff and the public.

Donald Cameron: In 2019, I raised in the chamber the Scottish Police Federation's concerns about the poor state of Oban police station, which it described as

"by far and away the worst police station they have ever encountered".

I understand that, in December 2020, Police Scotland ordered a feasibility study to look into new premises for Oban's hard-working police. Will the cabinet secretary provide an update on that? Will he commit the Government to providing any additional funds that are needed to ensure that our police in Oban and elsewhere in Scotland have safe and modern premises from which to operate, given the dire state of our crumbling police estate?

Keith Brown: I am happy to get in touch with those that are responsible—Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority—on the issue that the member has raised. On the general point about funding, I just detailed the increased budgets that we have made available, which—incidentally—provide £15 million more than the Conservatives proposed at budget time.

In case the member had not noticed, it is also true to say that we have just gone through a decade of austerity. Furthermore, it would be easier if Police Scotland was not facing an additional £11 million cost because of the United Kingdom Government's national insurance increase, as Mr Greene found out when he asked a question at committee this morning. Such things must be paid for, and they squeeze other resources. It would be good if Donald Cameron recognised that.

Finance and the Economy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Again, if members wish to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button, or enter R in the chat function during the relevant question.

Underemployment

1. Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle the reported increase in underemployment. (S6O-00243)

The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead): Underemployment can affect workers who are unable to secure work that matches their skills and qualifications. The Scottish Government's future skills action plan sets out our approach to addressing challenges such as skills underutilisation. That includes providing workers with access to upskilling and retraining opportunities to meet their needs and circumstances, while delivering a skills system that understands and reflects the needs of employers.

Workers can also face underemployment due to a lack of working hours to meet their financial needs. Although employment law is, of course, reserved, we have in Scotland, via the fair work agenda, introduced the living hours employer

accreditation scheme. The scheme's implementation began in August.

Foyso Choudhury: According to the annual population survey, which was published last week, underemployment has increased in 22 local authority areas, and as many as 219,100 people are underemployed across Scotland. The city of Edinburgh faces one of the largest increases across the year.

Underutilisation in our labour market will stop Scotland's economic recovery. Underemployment normally rises in recessions, because part-time work is second best for people who want full-time work during such times. How many full-time work opportunities is the Government creating from its national transition training fund?

Richard Lochhead: The Government has in place a number of initiatives at the moment, including the national transition training fund, to support training and employment opportunities. Of course, given the impact of Covid, many different dynamics are at play in the Scottish economy.

Statistics from the annual population survey show that the underemployment rate in Scotland—the proportion of people in employment who would prefer to work more hours—is estimated at 8.5 per cent for the period up to March 2021, so the member is right to highlight that that is one dynamic that is at play in the Scottish economy. That is why the accreditation for living hours is so important and why, in the past few weeks, it has been introduced in Scotland. It will ensure that people get a decent number of hours to earn a decent income.

We also continue to support the roll-out of the real living wage in Scotland, to ensure that people get a decent level of salary and wage for their work. A bigger proportion of people in Scotland receive a real living wage than elsewhere in the United Kingdom, so we are making progress, although there is some way to go. The issues that the member raises are very important and are at the heart of our thinking.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): The United Kingdom Government's decision to end the furlough scheme will have a substantial impact on many low-paid workers, and it is forcing many households into financial insecurity. Does the minister agree with me that that decision should be reversed urgently?

Richard Lochhead: Yes, and that is a point well made. The Scottish Government's policy continues to be that the UK Government should make appropriate support available and not end supports through the furlough, because it is still a very anxious time for many employers in particular sectors, and they might well require on-going support. At the end of July, 160,500 jobs in

Scotland were still supported by the furlough scheme, and many are today as well. That is why the Scottish Government says to the UK Government, "Please make sure that you do not cut off that vital support."

Glasgow Life (Support)

2. **Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will respond to the calls being made by trade unions and activist groups and allocate an additional £17 million in funding this year to support the local authority services currently managed by Glasgow Life. (S6O-00244)

The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur): The Scottish Government does not underestimate the severe impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the arts and cultural sector in Glasgow, which is hugely important to the wider city economy and Scotland's cultural life.

Councils are autonomous bodies that are responsible for managing their own day-to-day business. They must deliver services as effectively as possible. It is for locally elected representatives to make decisions on how best to use their resources to deliver services to their local communities. How that is done is a matter for each council.

Glasgow City Council will receive a total funding package from the Scottish Government of almost £1.5 billion in 2021-22 to support the provision of local services, which includes an extra £29.8 million to support vital day-to-day services; that is a 2.2 per cent increase over 2020-21. Glasgow City Council has already been allocated an additional £221.7 million to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown through the local government settlement, over and above its regular grant payments.

Paul Sweeney: Of course, the pandemic has had an impact, but let us look at the preparedness of the situation as the pandemic hit. Over the past decade as a whole, Glasgow Life's block grant from Glasgow City Council has been cut by 8 per cent, while the Scottish Government has cut Glasgow City Council's budget by over 10 per cent. Clearly there are interdependencies. For the leader of Glasgow City Council, Susan Aitken, to continue to claim—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question.

Paul Sweeney: —that the proposed venue closures come as a result of Covid is disingenuous at best. Will the Scottish Government please get a grip on the situation, provide local authorities with the funding that they need and stop taking Glaswegians for fools?

Tom Arthur: As I made reference to in my original answer, it is for local authorities to decide how they allocate their funding. We have given a fair settlement to local government over the past 10 years—10 years of austerity that was inflicted on us by Westminster.

The point that I would put to the member is very simple. As he is aware, health is becoming an increasing part of the budget, and it has priority. If he wishes to see increased resourcing for local government, it is incumbent on him and his colleagues to identify where that resource should come from.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Bill Kidd has a brief supplementary question.

Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary provide an update on the funding that has been made available to support the culture sector in Glasgow during the pandemic?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: And a brief response, minister.

Tom Arthur: The Scottish Government has supported organisations and individuals in Glasgow during the pandemic with more than £18 million through Creative Scotland's culture organisations and venues recovery fund and other Covid-tagged funding programmes. I would be happy to provide more details on that to the member in writing.

Public Procurement (Sustainability)

3. Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to promote sustainable public procurement. (S6O-00245)

The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee): The Scottish Government is committed to using public procurement to help achieve wider economic, social and environmental outcomes. It has formed the national climate and procurement forum to ensure that public procurement is contributing to our ambition of becoming a net zero economy.

We have mandated sustainable procurement through policy and legislation. We promote widespread application of it through the sustainable procurement tools platform, which provides a one-stop shop for guidance, e-learning and case studies. This year, we added a revised introduction to sustainable procurement e-learning module and a climate literacy e-learning module, which has been widely used and is mandatory for buyers in several organisations, including the Scottish Government.

Maurice Golden: Third sector involvement in sustainable procurement is supported through the

Scottish Government's multisupplier framework that is reserved for supported businesses. However, the framework is limited in its scope, with only a handful of suppliers covering a limited number of commodity areas, which means that the vast majority of Scotland's third sector organisations that are defined as supported businesses under Scotland's Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 are excluded. Will the minister commit to review the scope of the framework and look at ways in which it could be extended ahead of the next retendering of the framework agreement?

Ivan McKee: As the member is well aware, supported businesses are hugely important and a great area of focus across all the work in procurement. I undertake to have a look at the issue that the member raises to see what else can be done—on top of all the other work that we have undertaken—specifically on that particular framework to extend the scope for supported businesses to bid for work.

Inverclyde (Development and Inward Investment)

4. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what work it has undertaken with Inverclyde Council to encourage business development and inward investment into Inverclyde. (S6O-00246)

The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee): We are working closely with Inverclyde Council and other local partners to ensure that Inverclyde is rightly seen as an attractive location for businesses to invest and grow. The Scottish Government is providing £500 million through the Glasgow city region deal, which will support a number of projects—at Inchgreen, Ocean Terminal and Inverkip—that will significantly enhance the region's ability to attract new investment and business.

In addition to a share of the place-based investment programme over the next five years, Inverclyde Council has been awarded a further £2.9 million from the regeneration capital grant fund to support three local projects. Our commitment to the economic wellbeing of Inverclyde is further demonstrated through the significant support that is given to key industrial projects, such as the £13.7 million package of major inward investment support that was provided to Diodes, which was delivered through Scottish Enterprise. The work that is under way at Ferguson Marine will equip the yard to compete for new orders and contracts in future, thereby retaining vital jobs and skills for Inverclyde.

Stuart McMillan: The minister will be aware of the high levels of deprivation in parts of Inverclyde and of the historical and on-going population

decline. I am aware that local authorities can submit a specific business case to the Scottish Government for additional funding outwith the local government settlement. Can the minister confirm whether such a proposal has been forthcoming from Inverclyde Council? If not, what resources, in addition to those that the minister has touched on, is the Scottish Government currently allocating to Inverclyde to tackle deprivation and population decline?

Ivan McKee: As I stated in my previous answer, we are working closely with Inverclyde Council and other local partners on a range of opportunities for additional funding to be made available through city region deals, the place-based investment programme and regeneration capital grant funds, to name but a few. As I mentioned, funding has been allocated and work is already under way in projects across Inverclyde. With the project at Inchgreen, the full business case is due later this year. When ready, that will require approval by the Glasgow city region deal cabinet, in accordance with the existing deal governance arrangements.

Employment Gap (Monitoring)

5. Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the decision to remove the cohesion target from the national performance framework, how it is monitoring whether the employment gap is narrowing between the best and worst performing areas. (S6O-00247)

The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead): The Scottish Government regularly carries out analysis of the labour market for local authorities areas. On 29 September 2021, the annual national statistics publication "Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions" was published. It contains up-to-date employment rate estimates for local authorities, among other measures, for April 2020 to March 2021. Between January to December 2017 and January to December 2020, the gap between the combined employment rate for the three best-performing local authorities and the combined employment rate for the three worst-performing local authorities reduced. There was a gap of 11.8 percentage points in 2020, which was down from 16 percentage points in 2019.

Neil Bibby: Regional policy was a welcome feature of the recovery strategy that was unveiled yesterday, but the reality is that, for years, the Scottish Government has been erasing regional equality from its economic frameworks. People in the west of Scotland are living with historical inequalities. Our region contains areas with the highest unemployment and the greatest levels of

deprivation in Scotland. Targets requiring action on regional inequality can drive change, so does the minister agree that there is a case for setting clear, new and ambitious targets to close the employment gap and make the west of Scotland's economy fairer?

Richard Lochhead: I take a great interest in regional policy. It is difficult for the member to say that we have not been implementing regional policy, given that we have agreed more than £1.9 billion of funding for city region and regional growth deals across Scotland. Regional partners anticipate that that will support more than 80,000 jobs and attract more than £1 billion of additional investment across Scotland's cities and regions.

Regional policy is very important. The Government is looking at Scotland's economic transformation over the next 10 years. I am sure that the advisory council is looking at the role of regional policy, and we look forward to its deliberations.

The point that I have raised is important, given Boris Johnson's reference today to levelling up across the United Kingdom. So far, he has refused to involve the Scottish Government, to any meaningful degree, in decisions on how the funds will be spent and invested in Scotland's regions in relation to regional policy and levelling up, so I am sure that the member will want to support us in ensuring that we can help to shape how the funding is invested in Scotland.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which shows that I am still a member of Aberdeen City Council.

Aberdeen City Council's Conservative-Labour Administration has launched Abz Works, which will help people into much-needed jobs, training and education. Given that the initiative is funded directly by the council, without any Scottish Government support, will the minister confirm that this excellent example of local authority proactivity will be used as an exemplar for Scottish local authorities in the national performance framework?

Richard Lochhead: The member highlights one of many impressive projects that local authorities are implementing to support employment in their local communities. The Scottish Government is supporting the no one left behind policy, which will devolve further funding to local employment partnerships in each local authority area in Scotland. I am keen to learn more about the example that the member highlights, and I will ensure that I do so in the near future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 6 is from Gillian Martin, who joins us remotely.

North-east Economy (Support)

6. Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government how it will support the north-east economy, in light of the impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00248)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Kate Forbes, who also joins us remotely.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): The Scottish Government acknowledges that the north-east economy faces multiple challenges. We are actively supporting economic recovery in the north-east by providing close to £100 million to support businesses and additional funding of almost £150 million to councils to help to achieve that. We are also investing £157 million in the Aberdeen city region and Moray growth deals and more than £14 million to develop the skills that are needed to support regional economic recovery. We are actively supporting economic recovery in the north-east.

Gillian Martin: Infrastructure will play an important part in the north-east's economic recovery, particularly the provision of better connectivity. What transport and digital infrastructure is being funded or being considered for Aberdeenshire? How are gaps in connectivity being addressed?

Kate Forbes: I agree that investment in transport and infrastructure is critical, and I know how active the member is in representing her constituency interests in that regard. We are investing £5 million in digital connectivity infrastructure through the Aberdeen city region deal, which will help to deliver digital projects that will connect about 200 public sector and national health service sites across Aberdeen city. The site package commitment includes £10 million for digital projects in addition to the reaching 100 per cent programme.

On transport, we have recently awarded the north-east £12 million from our bus partnership fund to enable work to begin on the development of the Aberdeen rapid transit system. The funding will also deliver significant bus priority in the city centre and on key routes into the city.

I could mention a number of other investments, but I will leave it there. I would be happy to write to the member, detailing all the investments that we are making in digital and other infrastructure.

Digital Economy and Digital Single Market

7. **Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its discussions with the United Kingdom Government regarding

the digital economy and digital single market. (S6O-00249)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy (Kate Forbes): On 28 September, I provided the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport with a detailed response to the UK Government's plans for digital regulation—a key feature of the digital economy—and called for continued alignment with European Union data protection standards and improved co-ordination across the digital regulatory landscape.

In terms of the digital single market, we continue to engage with the UK Government to minimise the risk of losing data adequacy and to maintain the free flow of data between the UK and the EU digital single market for Scottish businesses.

Willie Coffey: The cabinet secretary is aware that the digital single market is worth €400 billion per year across Europe and that Scotland's businesses are denied access to that market with no thought or guidance from the UK Government about what it intends to replace it with. Will the cabinet secretary outline how she sees the situation and how Scotland can continue to be part of that crucial market for Scottish business?

Kate Forbes: The member is right in saying that, as a result of the UK leaving the EU and its digital single market, Scottish businesses have lost substantial membership advantages, which the Scottish Government has to mitigate. We are, for example, reducing the compliance burden for businesses in accessing the digital single market by taking steps to reduce regulatory barriers and local presence or representation requirements. We are also engaging with the UK Government to ensure that the on-going positive data adequacy decisions with the EU remain a priority, with no agreement to provisions and trade agreements with non-EU countries that could put those decisions at risk. In addition, we are building on co-operation with the EU on emerging technologies and ensuring that Scotland retains policy authority for future regulation relating to digital developments.

Areas of Multiple Deprivation (Impact of United Kingdom Government Policy)

8. **Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact of UK Government policies on the local economies of areas of high multiple deprivation. (S6O-00250)

The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur): A Scottish Government analysis highlights the harmful impact of UK Government welfare reforms on the most vulnerable people in Scotland. A report from June indicates that key policies of the

UK Government, including its callous decision to cut universal credit by £20 per week as of today, will reduce social security expenditure in Scotland by £586 million by 2023-24. The situation is particularly worrying as the cost of food and energy increases, the furlough scheme ends and national insurance contributions are hiked. The UK Government's senseless and harmful decision to remove that lifeline while the cost of living rises will hinder communities across Scotland and demonstrates why full powers over social security should be held in the Scottish Parliament instead.

Bill Kidd: Along with colleagues from around the chamber, I attended a demonstration outside the UK Government building in East Market Street this morning, to campaign against the taking away of the £20 weekly universal credit uplift. Does the minister join me in calling on the UK Government to reverse its decision, which damages the living standards of those who are affected, including on the basis that the inevitable lowering of local expenditure will damage small businesses in deprived areas in Scotland?

Tom Arthur: I whole-heartedly join Bill Kidd in doing so. The Scottish Government's analysis shows that the cut will result in an extra 60,000 people in Scotland, including 20,000 children, being pushed into poverty and hundreds of thousands of others into hardship. The reality is, as the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland has said, that the cut will

"effectively knock out the benefits that the Scottish child payment brings into families".

That is why there is, unsurprisingly, such broad political opposition to the cut—except, of course, among the Scottish Conservatives, who were happy to defend that callous cut last week in the chamber.

Supreme Court Judgment

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney on the Supreme Court judgment on the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. As the Deputy First Minister will take questions at the end of his statement, there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:51

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney):

This morning, the Supreme Court handed down its judgment on the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. We have had limited time to consider the full implications of that judgment but, given the seriousness of those potential implications, I wanted to come to Parliament at the earliest opportunity to update members. I am grateful to you, Presiding Officer, and the Parliamentary Bureau for making time for this statement today.

In every parliamentary session, there are moments when this Parliament comes together to make a significant statement of intent of who we are and what we collectively stand for, showing a shared sense of purpose on what we seek to achieve as parliamentarians for the people of Scotland. The Scottish Parliament unanimously passing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill in March was one such moment.

This Parliament set out our collective will to change the culture and practice of how we support children in Scotland. Incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child directly into our domestic law would have made us the first Administration in the United Kingdom and the first devolved legislature anywhere in the world to do so. We felt proud to be the Parliament that would have enabled that historic step to be taken.

We celebrated how the bill would change the lives of children for generations. We imagined how incorporating article 12 would mean that children would have the right to be involved and heard in relation to the decisions that affected their lives. We all looked forward to seeing the improvement that incorporating article 23 would deliver in ensuring that children with disabilities had dignity and self-reliance and were able to actively participate in their community. We were certain that we were doing the right thing by incorporating

article 3 so that children's best interests were a primary consideration in decision making.

On 12 April, however, the UK Government's law officers referred certain provisions of the bill to the Supreme Court. That reference meant that the bill could not be presented for royal assent and, accordingly, could not become law until the reference was determined. Today, we have that determination.

Although we fully respect the court's judgment and will abide by the ruling, we cannot help but be bitterly disappointed. The ruling makes it plain that we are constitutionally prohibited from enacting legislation that this Parliament unanimously decided was necessary to enshrine and fully protect the rights of our children.

Before I discuss the implications of that in more detail, I shall make clear that the judgment also affects the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, which strengthened local government by incorporating the charter into Scots law. Starting as a member's bill, it, too, was passed unanimously by the Scottish Parliament and supported by the Scottish Government and local government through the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

The bill was intended to develop and to strengthen further the relationship between the Scottish Government and local government in Scotland and so ensure that priorities and policies were developed and delivered in partnership. The judgment will make such aims more difficult to achieve. The Scottish Government will now liaise closely with the designated member in charge, Mark Ruskell, who has taken over the role from former MSP Andy Wightman, to work out the best potential next steps that can be taken to address the issues arising from the ruling.

The introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill was a landmark moment in the Scottish Parliament's history. The bill was modelled partly on two pieces of legislation that are central to our constitution: the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Scotland Act 1998. It sought to incorporate international human rights law into our domestic law and to adopt a judicial route to a remedy. With the unanimous support of the Parliament and the overwhelming support of stakeholders, we sought to make those internationally recognised treaty articles directly justiciable in Scottish courts by providing powers for our independent judiciary to strike down incompatible legislation in devolved areas or to declare a future piece of legislation incompatible.

That was a new approach for legislation in this Parliament, so the bill took us into new territory, which included the use of the powers of the

Parliament and devolved competence. After wide public consultation and full parliamentary scrutiny, we were all clear in entering that territory that that was the approach that we wanted to take.

The full implications of the judgment need to be considered carefully. However, our initial view is that the judgment does not prevent the Scottish Parliament from doing something that we would consider "routine practice". It has not narrowed our ability to amend or repeal legislation in devolved areas, either in an act of our Parliament or in an act of the United Kingdom Parliament. It has not changed our competence to incorporate international treaties, nor has it reduced our ability to rely on our judiciary to enforce our statute book.

However, the judgment exposes the devolution settlement as being even more limited than we all—and, indeed, the Scottish Parliament itself—had understood. It sets out new constraints on the ability of our democratically elected Scottish Parliament to legislate to protect children's rights in the way that it determines, after open and careful consideration, appropriate roles for the judiciary and the Parliament in that protection.

Strikingly, the judgment has decided that there are limitations to devolved competence for the mere reason that existing statutory provision just happens to be in an act of the Westminster Parliament. The reason for that distinction derives from Westminster's continued claim of sovereignty over all matters, including those that are devolved to this Parliament. However, the effect of that distinction is, essentially, arbitrary. For example, the Scottish Parliament can fully protect children's rights by declarations of incompatibility if those rights are affected by acts of this Parliament, such as the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, which affects Gaelic education, but not if they are in Westminster legislation from before devolution, such as the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, even if the subject matter of that legislation is wholly devolved and could be repealed and replaced by the Scottish Parliament. Although it is legislation that relates to our own children, in our own schools, in our own country, it is Westminster legislation, so we cannot apply the UNCRC to it. That is the ludicrous constitutional position that Scotland finds itself in.

The Supreme Court has therefore illustrated the incoherence of the powers of the Scottish Parliament within the current devolved settlement and under the current UK constitutional arrangements being tied to the continued claim of unlimited sovereignty by the Parliament at Westminster.

There is no doubt that the implications of the judgment are significant from a children's rights perspective and from the point of view of the aspirations of the Scottish Government and the

Scottish Parliament for the country that we want our children to grow up in. The Scottish Government remains absolutely committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law to the maximum extent possible. We want to ensure that we pursue that policy in a way that can be enacted and therefore made real in practice.

Members may wish to recall what children told us about how incorporation would change things for the better. In the evidence that the Children's Parliament gave in the consultation on the bill last year, a child said:

"I think you should make children's rights law because it will keep a lot more children safe".

Bruce Adamson, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland called the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law

"the most important thing we can do to protect and uphold the rights of children and young people."

The Supreme Court has criticised the "maximalist approach" that the Scottish Government took as deliberately exceeding the limitations of competence. However, it is normal for the Scottish Government to invite the Scottish Parliament to make the maximum use of its devolved powers and responsibilities. Indeed, we are frequently encouraged to do so and, on this issue, were specifically encouraged to take this approach by many voices within the Scottish Parliament. It was an approach widely supported by many stakeholders and by the children of Scotland, who wanted Parliament to protect them to the maximum extent possible.

The law in the area in question had not previously been tested. The Scottish Government took a reasonable view on those difficult questions—a view that the Presiding Officer at the time judged to be within legislative competence, and that was unanimously supported by Parliament.

The Scottish Government notes that this judgment underscores that domestic legal effect to international human rights treaties can be achieved only through incorporation and that, although it is within the Scottish Parliament's competence to incorporate international treaties and protect the rights of Scotland's citizens, the nature of our current devolution settlement and the UK's constitutional arrangements impose limitations on the extent and manner in which we can do that.

It is regrettable that the bill has been delayed and will not now become law in the form that our Parliament agreed. We remain committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC to the maximum extent possible as soon as is practicable. Although the judgment means that the bill cannot receive royal assent in its current form, the majority of

work in relation to implementation of the UNCRC can continue, and is continuing. We will now reflect on how to add to those existing protections through incorporation.

The UNCRC is the most widely ratified international treaty, but very few countries have committed to take the journey that Scotland so clearly wants to take. I reassure everyone who has walked with us this far on that journey, encouraging us along the way, that we will reach our destination. The Government remains committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC to the maximum extent possible.

There is no doubt that we may not yet wholly comprehend all the implications of the judgment—it will require careful consideration, and I will be happy to keep Parliament updated.

However, one thing is already crystal clear. Some have said that the Scottish Parliament is the most powerful devolved legislature in the world. On the day that the Supreme Court has confirmed boundaries to our ability to protect our children, I regret to say that it certainly does not feel anything like that.

The Presiding Officer: The Deputy First Minister will now take questions on the issues that were raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business. I will be grateful if members who wish to ask a question press their request-to-speak buttons now.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for prior sight of his statement. I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests and declare that I am a member of the Faculty of Advocates.

We welcome the legal judgment, because this was always a legal question. It was never about the substance of the policy—there was unanimous support from all parties in the chamber for both bills. However, we warned that parts of the bill would be legally problematic. To its shame, the Scottish National Party did not listen and instead politicised the matter from the very beginning.

In this very chamber, during the stage 3 debate on the bill, the Deputy First Minister characterised the UK Government's approach as "menacing". In an election debate, Nicola Sturgeon used it to attack the UK Government and, on Twitter, described the legal challenge as "morally repugnant."

That political posturing has been comprehensively demolished by the definitive judgment of the Supreme Court. The judgment by Lord Reed, one of Scotland's most eminent judges, is unrelenting in its criticism of the Scottish

Government's approach. At paragraph 60, he notes that

"the legislation has been drafted in terms which deliberately exceed the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament."

"Deliberately exceed"—those are caustic words. The court was in no doubt that it was intentional.

To confirm that this was always about politics and not the law, I ask this: what was the first response by the SNP to its comprehensive court defeat today? As ever, it made the matter about nationalism and its obsession with independence.

Given that the SNP's disgraceful approach has delayed a bill on children's rights that every party in the Scottish Parliament supported, will the Deputy First Minister apologise for creating this unnecessary delay, and will his Government make the necessary changes so that the legislation can be passed immediately?

John Swinney: The delay in implementation of the legislation was created by the UK Government's law officers' reference to the Supreme Court. That is the only reason for it.

On the point that Mr Cameron raises about the scope of the bill, I simply remind him that, at stage 3 of its passage, his colleague Alexander Stewart said:

"The direct incorporation method adopted by the bill will ensure a maximalist approach, which is very much to be welcomed."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 2021; c 101.]

It is a maximalist approach that has caused Mr Cameron to express such concern in his remarks today.

The Government is absolutely committed to implementing the legislation at the earliest possible opportunity, after addressing the remedies that are necessary. I make absolutely no apology whatsoever for being determined to do as much as possible within statute to protect the interests and rights of children and young people in our country. For the United Kingdom's law officers to take us to the Supreme Court to stop us doing the maximum that we want to do is an absolute disgrace.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): I thank the Government for advance sight of the statement. Scottish Labour stands ready to get the bill back into Parliament quickly, and to make sure that we can pass a competent act that protects young people's rights.

The Government's record on rights shows why the bill is needed. In his statement, the Deputy First Minister said that the decision

"is, essentially, arbitrary. For example, the Scottish Parliament can fully protect children's rights".

Too often, however, this Government does not do that.

In recent days, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, which is directly under the remit of this Government and, until recently, the Deputy First Minister, was made subject to the statutory powers of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. That extraordinary move was a result of breaches relating to 112 policies, many of which relate directly to awards of qualifications.

There are other areas where the Scottish Government has refused to act either to the standard of the UNCRC or in the spirit of it. Real and tangible action is needed now and is possible now. Will the cabinet secretary commit to publishing an analysis of every policy area where the Government is not yet meeting the UNCRC criteria, alongside an urgent action plan of how that will be achieved?

John Swinney: Much of the material that Mr Marra talks about was rehearsed during the passage of the bill. I appreciate that he was not a member of Parliament at that time, but his colleagues wholly supported the bill at all stages of its proceedings.

The argument that Mr Marra advances about the necessity to protect children's rights is why the Government introduced the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. We did that to make sure that incorporation of the UNCRC would be the statutory position in Scotland, and that there would be a justiciable remedy, should Government or public bodies not fulfil their commitments in that respect.

What worries me about the situation in which we find ourselves is that there are significant areas of statute where that remedy will not be available to be exercised. I cited in my statement the Education (Scotland) Act 1980; the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 is another example. During the stage 3 proceedings on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, I put on record a host of examples in relation to which there will be, as a consequence of the approach that is now being taken, a limitation on our ability to do exactly what Mr Marra wants us to do.

I want a justiciable remedy to be available to children and young people in our society, and I want it to go across the whole statute book. I want people to be able to challenge where they believe that their rights are not being honoured; unfortunately the ruling today constrains the ability to exercise that because of the objections that were raised by the United Kingdom Government's law officers. I profoundly regret the stance that they have taken.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I share the Deputy First Minister's deep disappointment about today's decision, but it is perhaps more surprising and disappointing that the UK Government decided to challenge this Parliament's unanimous decision in that way, given that a working system for intercepting legislation has long been in place in relation to European Union law. We now appear to be in a position where the UK Government is not interested in co-operation in the common good to allow us to protect our children's rights; it is interested only in defending insular borders.

As part of the co-operation agreement between the Scottish Greens and the Scottish Government, we will introduce world-leading human rights legislation, which will enshrine in Scots law the right to a healthy environment, and dignity and rights for older people and LGBTI people. Will the Deputy First Minister advise us of the implications of today's decision for that legislation? How can we ensure that neither legal technicalities nor the UK Government's insularity will prevent our enshrining human rights in Scots law?

John Swinney: Maggie Chapman has raised a number of significant points. She correctly reinforces what Parliament had in mind when it passed the bill—albeit that there seems, on the part of some members sitting behind me, to be a little bit of walking away from those commitments. What Parliament had in mind was to maximise, within the powers of this Parliament, protection of the rights that could be available to children and young people. We endeavoured to do that as a Parliament, and we agreed unanimously the mechanisms to enable it, but those mechanisms have now been constrained by the objections that the United Kingdom Government raised at the Supreme Court.

That is the factual reality of the situation that we now face. We must consider the ruling and we must reflect on it in relation to the human rights legislation to which Maggie Chapman referred, which will come to Parliament in due course. I assure Maggie Chapman that my ministerial colleagues will engage constructively with Parliament and wider Scotland in order to ensure that we have an open discussion about the application of the issues in the formulation of that legislation.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Months have been wasted, and it is children who have lost out. The Scottish Government knew that there was a problem, but it preferred to wait for a constitutional clash. It is depressingly predictable. The Deputy First Minister has not yet answered this question: why did the Government wait?

John Swinney: The Government did not pass the legislation on its own; Parliament passed the

legislation in its entirety. Let me go through the absurdity of the question that has just been put to me. If I unilaterally decided not to follow the unanimous legislative decision of the Scottish Parliament, the first person to get on his feet to complain about it would be Willie Rennie. *[Interruption.]* There are lots and lots of loud people shouting behind me.

I am trying to say to members that Parliament knew what it was doing. Members wanted to maximise protection of the rights of children. Willie Rennie was one of them, and his colleagues, all my colleagues, all the Conservatives, all Labour Party members and all the Greens wanted it, too. Everybody here wanted that protection to be put in place; the people who objected were the United Kingdom Government's law officers.

That is the factual reality. I regret that enormously, because nothing would have pleased me more than to get the legislation on the statute book and to put in place the type of protection that Mr Marra raised with me. Nothing would have made me happier. What has thwarted that is the actions of the United Kingdom's law officers.

The Presiding Officer: As members would expect, many members want to ask a question. I would be grateful if questions and responses could be short and succinct.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): On the day on which the UK Government is cutting £20 per week from the poorest people in our society, thereby pushing thousands of children into poverty, does the Deputy First Minister agree that the Supreme Court ruling today has shown that devolution simply does not enable this Parliament to protect Scotland and, in particular, our children, from Westminster control?

John Swinney: There are clear limitations placed on the Scottish Parliament's ability to legislate to the maximum extent through which it wished to protect the rights of children and young people in Scotland. We will do as much as we can to remedy that, in the spirit of the unanimous view of Parliament.

United Kingdom Government actions of the type that Rona Mackay has cited certainly do not help to strengthen the rights and the position of children and young people in Scotland.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I am sure that the Deputy First Minister recognises that the UNCRC was ratified by the UK Conservative Government 30 years ago, in 1991.

The Supreme Court ruling points to a number of significant questions about the legal advice with which ministers and Parliament as a whole were provided during the passage of the bills. That is an issue on which the Parliament must reflect, given

what the Deputy First Minister said about the former Presiding Officer's advice to all members of this Parliament. Will the Deputy First Minister agree to publish the legal advice that ministers received throughout the bills' progress?

John Swinney: As Mr Briggs knows, because we rehearsed a lot of these arguments in the previous session of Parliament, the Government does not publish its legal advice. That is a well-established—*[Interruption.]* We know that Mr Kerr is new to this institution, but he will become accustomed to the fact that Governments do not publish their legal advice.

As for the issues in connection with Parliament, those are not issues for me and it would not be appropriate for me to comment in any respect on their contents.

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): As the much-respected Centre on Constitutional Change at the University of Edinburgh has made abundantly clear, the referral of the bills to the Supreme Court by the UK law officers was as much a political decision as a legal one. They were under no duty to refer. Their decision was political.

The effect of the ruling on the UNCRC bill is to deny a range of rights to Scottish children. Although the Scottish Government may now reluctantly seek to amend the legislation to make it compliant, can the cabinet secretary confirm that every effort will be made to ensure that the children of Scotland do not lose out due to the political actions of the UK Government?

John Swinney: Let me use an example to illustrate the position that Michelle Thomson puts to me to substantiate the argument that she has made. The contents of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 are entirely devolved and this Parliament can amend that act in its entirety. However, if we wish to extend to the citizens of Scotland the right to judicially challenge the bill in terms of the UNCRC—I refer to the point that I advanced to Mr Marra—that is no longer available to them, because the United Kingdom law officers have taken the action that they have taken.

The act and the area of policy are entirely within the competence of this Parliament, but we cannot extend the rights that we and Parliament want to extend to the bill because of the actions of the UK law officers. Therefore, I am rather with Michelle Thomson on the point that this was not a legal but a political intervention. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, colleagues, but I can hardly hear myself speak. I would be grateful if we could have calm in the chamber.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): Paragraph 32 of the judgment states:

“No-one disputes the right of the Scottish Parliament to regard the UNCRC as an important convention and to give effect to it”.

The Deputy First Minister would have the support of the members on this side of the chamber. Can he confirm that we can rectify this by April next year?

John Swinney: I say to Mr Whitfield that I will do it as quickly as I can. We will have to consider the judgment and other aspects of the legislative programme, and we will come back to the Parliament on those terms. I am certainly very keen to work with members of Parliament, as I was throughout consideration of the UNCRC bill, which ended up being passed unanimously. Not all the legislation that I bring to this institution passes unanimously, but the bill did so and I am keen to work with other parties to rectify the issues. As for the timescale, Mr Whitfield will have to give me some time to consider what is possible.

Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): Writing last year to the Local Government and Communities Committee—I am now the deputy convener of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee—the president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities celebrated incorporation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government into Scots law and noted that she sensed that there was a high degree of support for the bill. That observation proved correct when this Parliament backed the bill unanimously.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that the UK Government's attack on the act is an attack on the cross-party judgment of both COSLA and the Scottish Parliament as well as on the system of devolved politics in Scotland?

John Swinney: The local governance bill was not initiated as a Government bill, but we supported it and Parliament adopted it unanimously. I recognise it as a constructive and helpful piece of legislation that cements the position of local government in Scottish democracy and society. Although I regret the fact that we cannot proceed with the legislation at this stage, I give Elena Whitham and the local government community the assurance that the Government will work within the spirit of the legislation as far as we are able without the legislative power being in place.

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con): Throughout his statement, the Deputy First Minister asserted that the UK Government is making a “claim of unlimited sovereignty”. Will the Deputy First Minister accept that, instead of striking a collaborative tone and pledging to work on behalf of Scotland's children, his statement does nothing but stir up even more constitutional

grievance, which even the Supreme Court accepts is deliberate?

John Swinney: The straightforward way through the matter would have been for our bill to get royal assent without objection from the UK law officers. [*Interruption.*] It was supported by every member of this Parliament. Why on earth are the Conservatives objecting to the passing of legislation that they supported? Do they not understand how ridiculous their line of argument is?

The Scottish Parliament made its choices about how it wanted to deliver the maximum protection for children and young people in our country, and the people who have got in the road and interrupted that are the UK Government's law officers. Is it any wonder that some of us are disappointed by the outcome of the process?

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I was a member of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee when the incorporation of the UNCRC was scrutinised and passed, and the bill had overwhelming support from civic Scotland. What hope can the Deputy First Minister give children's organisations and the many children they support that the UNCRC will inform everything that we do in Scotland in the future, despite the UK Government's needless patrician decision to flex its muscles and take us to court? Does the Supreme Court ruling make it clear that the current devolution settlement needs urgent attention if children's rights and the Parliament's will are at stake?

John Swinney: Not long before I came to the chamber today, I received a letter from Together—the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights—which is signed by countless organisations that work in the field of children's rights and interests. They appealed to me—I confirmed this in my statement, but I take the opportunity of Gillian Martin's question to repeat it—to ensure that the Government does everything that it can to work within the spirit of the legislation that the Parliament passed, which is in no way constrained by the referenced unlimited elements of the provision. We will make sure that we advance the cause of children's rights and operate in a fashion that is consistent with the UNCRC while taking the necessary legislative remedies to address the situation.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): We cannot lose sight of the people the legislation is for—children across all of Scotland. I am pleased to hear the Deputy First Minister say that he and his Government will seek to realise the rights of children to maximum effect, and I look forward to their support for my young disabled persons transition bill, the immediate doubling of the Scottish child payment, an end to the use of

mosquito devices and an amendment to the age of criminal responsibility.

In relation to the UNCRC, it is incumbent on us all to do all that we can to fix the situation and realise the human rights of children in Scotland. In that vein, when the bill was introduced, it included a grace period of six months after it received royal assent before it would have fully come into force. Had the Supreme Court judgment not taken place, the bill would have been implemented in November. The Scottish Government should reintroduce a reviewed bill straight away. Does the Government agree that there has been enough preparation time for incorporation already, and will it commit to ensuring that any review of the bill includes provision for it to be implemented immediately?

John Swinney: That is a legitimate point to be considered as part of the sequence of events that we take forward. We are aware of the limited range of issues that were the subject of challenge in the bill, and organisations will have the opportunity to consider the basis of the legislation that the Parliament passed. Pam Duncan-Glancy's point is a material one to consider within the timetable for the scrutiny and implementation of any future legislation.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Paragraph 33 of the judgment highlights the fact that the Welsh Government did not face a legal challenge on the provisions of the Rights of the Child and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, which incorporated the UNCRC. That makes the point even more starkly that it was the UK Government's choice to challenge the Scottish Government's bill and not a necessity. Does the cabinet secretary agree that that only goes to demonstrate that the Tory Government at Westminster cares more about exercising unfettered power over Scotland than it does about the rights of children?

John Swinney: I have a lot of sympathy for that point. I come back to the example that I have repeatedly cited, which is that this Parliament has legislative competence to amend the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 but the UK Government has objected to our extending the right of independent judicial scrutiny of whether issues in the 1980 act are compatible with the UNCRC. That, to me, is a vivid example of how absurd the United Kingdom Government's objection is, and it illustrates the willingness that Audrey Nicoll talked about to try to constrain the scope and actions of the Scottish Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the ministerial statement.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Today might not be a

good day for ministers but it is certainly not a good day for our Parliament and how we make legislation. The UK Supreme Court ruling calls into question the legal advice that members of the Scottish Parliament have received and, perhaps more so, the legal advice that Scottish National Party ministers have been given and have said that they hold when members are making legislation. In the light of that and the ruling that we have received today, what review or consideration will you and the Parliament undertake of what needs to change?

The Presiding Officer: I thank Mr Briggs for his point of order. The role of the Presiding Officer is to indicate a view—an opinion—on legislative competence at the point when a bill is introduced, and the intention of that statement is to inform the Parliament in any consideration of the bill. The Presiding Officer has no further role in relation to legislative competence during the passage of any bill, and their view on the matter does not prevent any bill from being submitted for royal assent. In all instances, the United Kingdom Supreme Court is the ultimate authority in determining legislative competence. Its ruling on these matters clarifies the legal position and will inform future consideration of legislative competence.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I make reference to the final question that was put to the Deputy First Minister and give my apologies to Audrey Nicoll that I have not been able to speak to her about it. However, paragraph 33 of the judgment states:

“The suggestion seemed to be that the fact that the legislative competence of that provision had not been challenged had some bearing on the present proceedings. But that provision is much more limited in scope than the Scottish UNCRC Bill. It imposes a duty on the Welsh Ministers, when exercising any of their functions, to have due regard to the requirements of the UNCRC and its first two protocols.”

I just wish to put that on the record, Presiding Officer, as a clarification in relation to the final question to the Deputy First Minister.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Whitfield. That is not a point of order, but your comments are now on the record.

There will be a short suspension before we move to the next item of business.

15:28

Meeting suspended.

15:29

On resuming—

Scotland in the World

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-01527, in the name of Angus Robertson, on Scotland in the world: championing progressive values. I call Angus Robertson, the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, to speak to and move the motion for around 11 minutes, please.

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): It is a privilege to lead a discussion about the role that Scotland can play in the world to champion progressive, democratic values.

The Covid crisis has reminded us, as never before, of our interdependent world. Last year, the German president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said that the pandemic was a test of our common humanity and, as we emerge from the public health crisis, further tests will shape the world around us for this and future generations.

The Scottish Government is determined to play our part and make our contribution. That starts with an internationalist outlook that is based on co-operation and not confrontation.

We have the opportunity to build on strong foundations. As a nation, we are active and connected, with a long history of constructive engagement with our neighbours. We have a track record of leadership on climate change and climate justice and effective delivery of development assistance. At the conclusion of the debate, the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development will say more about the opportunities that the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—will present.

In the past five years, we have set out a clear direction of travel. For example, in January of this year, we published “Scotland’s Vision for Trade”, which was inspired by and rooted in our national performance framework. It describes the five core principles that underpin the trading relationships that we want Scotland to have now and in the future—inclusive growth, wellbeing, sustainability, net zero and good governance. Those principles allow us to weigh up future policy decisions, which are related to trade, in order to achieve our economic, social and environmental objectives.

The vision also aims for trade to contribute to addressing global challenges, such as tackling the climate and nature crises, reducing global inequalities and building international co-operation. Scotland will co-operate as a good

global citizen and trading partner, respect international law, support human rights and seek to build global relationships on trade. Values such as those underpin not only our trade but all that we do, at home and abroad.

Of course, the context for our international engagement is changing rapidly. The decision of the United Kingdom Government to pursue a hard Brexit—when a significant majority of people living in Scotland, who voted in the referendum, opposed the very idea of leaving the European Union—has, in the view of influential observers, reduced the influence of the UK in the world.

Former senior UK diplomats have been queuing up to point out what Lord Ricketts, a former head of the Foreign Office, called “uncomfortable truths”. Commenting on the aftermath of what he described as the “Afghanistan debacle”, Lord Ricketts noted that

“Britain has become less useful as America’s ally”.

Sir Nigel Sheinwald, former UK ambassador to Washington, when talking about “global Britain”, said:

“There is no point in writing new Atlantic charters which depend on mutual trust, mutual confidence and the rule of law when you are operating as chancers.”

All of that follows the threats that the current Westminster Government made to break international law during the passage of the UK Internal Market Act 2020.

The United Nations refugee agency has suggested that the UK’s Nationality and Borders Bill violates the 1951 refugee convention. The president of the Law Society for England and Wales has said that

“There are significant concerns and a lack of clarity over whether the ... Bill would comply with international law or, indeed, uphold access to justice for extremely vulnerable people.”

In that context, we will go the extra mile to ensure that the Scottish Government can continue to engage internationally for the benefit of Scotland’s people, businesses and institutions, and that is why the programme for government sets out an ambitious agenda for Scotland’s place in the world. Guiding our work will be an updated global affairs framework, which will articulate how our internationally-focused programmes of work fit together and link back to the national performance framework. It will help us to keep our focus on being open, connected and making a positive contribution internationally, which is a key national outcome.

International development is a key part of that positive contribution. It encompasses our core values—historical and contemporary—of fairness and equality. We have a distinctive development

contribution to make through focusing Scotland’s expertise, being innovative and employing our unique partnership approach for global good.

In the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, we carried out a review of our approach to international development in 2020, to ensure that our work is led by the voices of the global south, and to focus our work on areas in which we can make the biggest differences.

We have made it clear that we believe that the UK Government’s cut to the 0.7 per cent commitment is a deplorable decision that is hitting the world’s poorest and most marginal communities at a time of great need. We have made, and will continue to make, strong representations to reinstate international development funding.

By way of contrast, we have committed to not only maintaining but increasing our international development budget by 50 per cent to £15 million. That will help to support Covid-19 responses and recovery in our partner countries, and it will double our just transition fund to £20 million.

An independent Scotland could be a global leader in development, because it is not necessarily just about size in absolute monetary terms but the impact that we can make. Indeed, according to the Centre for Global Development, the countries with the highest quality of aid are Sweden, Finland and Denmark.

If our policies and actions abroad are consistent with our focus on fairness and inclusion at home, we can be a leader in other areas, too, and we should aspire to that. For example, the Scottish Government is determined to play its part in making the world a better place for women and girls. However, we can, and should, do more. Over the coming months, we will engage with, and seek to learn from, those who have an interest in helping to shape a feminist approach to foreign policy.

Alongside those responsibilities as a good global citizen, our international work is vital in promoting Scotland’s cultural and economic interests. Our cultural heritage is recognised and celebrated all over the world. By harnessing the global profile and expertise of Scotland’s world-renowned festivals, companies and creative entrepreneurs, cultural diplomacy has the potential to develop and maintain relationships with key partners in Europe and beyond. It can support our cultural and creative sectors to work and collaborate internationally, fostering the cross-border cultural partnerships and networks that are vital to the sector’s operation. In our programme for government, we have committed to developing a cultural diplomacy strategy to ensure that

cultural links with our partners in Europe and beyond are developed further.

The pandemic has clearly taken a significant toll on our cultural and creative sectors, but it masks the damage that has been done by our no longer being part of the European Union. The strategy will help to support those sectors to recover and flourish, and ensure that they can continue to enrich our lives, put Scotland on the world stage and contribute to our own sense of nation and place.

We are already taking forward work to support touring artists and other creative professionals working internationally to overcome the challenges of the pandemic and the end of freedom of movement. We are currently considering what measures could be put in place to mitigate the loss of access to key programmes, such as creative Europe, to ensure that cultural exchange continues to be supported, and we are pressing the UK Government to minimise barriers.

One of the ways in which we will support Scottish culture is by ensuring that Scotland's international presence is enhanced. We will open a Scottish affairs office in Copenhagen next year, and in Warsaw during this parliamentary session. Our network, which began under a Conservative Government and was expanded under a Labour and Liberal Democratic Administration, offers excellent value for money. Work to attract investment by our offices both at home and overseas has helped to increase foreign direct investment into Scotland by 6 per cent in 2020, compared with a 12 per cent fall across the UK as a whole.

Nordic countries are key trade partners for Scotland. In 2018, Scottish exports to the Nordics were worth more than £2.6 billion. There is much that we can learn from one another in areas such as the transition to net zero and reducing inequalities.

The new presence in Warsaw is likely to focus on people-to-people links, policy exchange, support for trade and investment and cultural co-operation across the central European and Baltic regions. Members will know that we are very fortunate to have around 92,000 Poles who choose to call Scotland home; they sustain a vibrant and active Polish community across the nation, and we highly value their contribution to our society.

I have touched on the negative impact of the UK's departure from the EU. In recent debates, members have looked at the example of Brexit in more detail. We know that the Prime Minister's bluff and bluster about the ability to strike trade deals across the world cannot disguise the fact that there will not be a deal with the USA any time

soon, or that his deal with Australia will contribute just 0.02 per cent to gross domestic product in the long term. Based on analysis of external studies, the Office for Budget Responsibility expects UK GDP to be around 4 per cent lower with the deal compared with continued EU membership.

Of course, membership of the EU is about much more than trade deals, and Scotland shares with the EU a vision for Europe that embodies democratic values, promotes the wellbeing of all in society, rises fully to the challenge of the global climate emergency and supports a sustainable economic recovery from the global pandemic.

We believe that the pandemic and the response to it have demonstrated the need for more co-operation between independent nations, not less.

The election in May once again underlined the people of Scotland's strong support for our view that rejoining the EU at the earliest opportunity as an independent country represents the best future for Scotland. *[Interruption.]* Forgive me, but I have just 20 seconds in which to conclude.

Until that time, we will maintain alignment, where possible, with EU legislation, policy, and standards. That will help to ensure that Scotland is able to protect and advance the high standards that we enjoyed as a part of the EU, promote ease of market access for our people and businesses, and smooth the process of Scotland's reaccession.

To choose a Scotland with the power to make decisions in areas such as social security, taxation and immigration is to build a better country—a Scotland that is ready and able to play our part in the global community of nations, championing progressive values and helping to build that better world that we know is possible.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the internationalist vision for Scotland set out in the Programme for Government and the Scottish Government's commitment to be a good global citizen; supports the measures outlined to promote progressive values globally and offer practical help to international partners, notably a 50% increase in the Scottish Government's International Development Fund and doubling of the Just Transition Fund, the opening of additional Scottish Government hubs in Copenhagen and Warsaw, and the ambition to align domestic policy objectives with the approach to international development; regrets the actions taken by the UK Government, particularly since 2016, which have reduced its standing in the world, for example the deplorable decision to cut its Official Development Assistance by a third, which will hit the world's poorest communities at a time of great need; notes the increasingly interdependent nature of the world and the necessity of cooperation between nations to address global challenges; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to promote democracy, fairness and human rights across the world; recognises Scotland's distinctive profile on the world stage, and believes that Brexit, which the overwhelming majority of people in

Scotland did not vote for, is at odds with that internationalist ambition.

15:41

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I will start with what I hope are uncontroversial points. International relations is a reserved matter. Under the devolution settlement, it is clear that foreign policy is the preserve of the UK Government. That is not to say that we cannot debate international affairs—of course we can, and rightly so. It is also only right that successive Scottish Governments have fostered links with our European neighbours and with nations beyond Europe.

Anyone with a sense of Scottish history and an appreciation of Scotland's international traditions will recognise that there is a long and proud story to be told of Scotland's role in the world, whether as an independent country before the union of 1707 or, equally, from its role in the union as one of the founding nations of the United Kingdom.

More recently, there has been a strong tradition of promoting Scotland abroad. That was true even before devolution. As the cabinet secretary just said, it was a Conservative Government in the 1990s that promoted the footprint for international offices that the Scottish Government seeks to expand. I will return to that topic in a moment.

No one disputes that we should promote and celebrate Scotland abroad. There are good reasons to do that, including trade, culture and maintaining links with the Scottish diaspora. However, we should not pretend that the Scottish Government can unilaterally make and pursue its own foreign and diplomatic policy. It cannot. The reality is that the devolution settlement prevents that, for very good reason.

The Scottish Government's efforts on international affairs should operate in tandem with UK Government foreign policy, rather than against it. That is precisely why so many Scottish Government international offices are located in UK embassies. The Scottish Conservatives seek constructive engagement between the Scottish Government and the UK Government when it comes to international affairs, not endless differentiation for the sake of it or—worse—grievance seeking simply to manufacture a row.

We believe that the Scottish Government should work constructively with the UK Government for the benefit of everyone in Scotland. I suspect that, behind the rhetoric, there is a lot more commonality than might at first appear to exist. I am not naïve—of course there will be policy differences when three very different political parties make up Scotland's two Governments. Brexit, which has proven to be deeply divisive here

and in the wider UK, is one example of that. It is as divisive as the independence referendum, to be honest.

On international offices, I have touched on the fact that we have no objection to the current set-up and network of eight foreign offices in countries around the world or to the 30-plus trade hubs that are based in British embassies and consulates around the world, which Scottish Development International runs. However, there are justifiable concerns about expenditure, especially when it appears that there are plans to extend the network.

At a time when all our efforts require to be directed at recovering from the pandemic, when our national health service is under acute pressure and when our economy is faltering, it is right to question the current cost and the proposed expansion, purely as a matter of political priorities, especially when this does not formally fall within devolved competence.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I appreciate the member's point about the importance of counting costs. Will he concede that the money that the Scottish Government expends on such offices is an almost imperceptibly tiny fraction of the amount that the UK Foreign Office spends on some of its more palatial residences and other offices around the world?

Donald Cameron: I do not accept that. It is entirely reasonable for any Opposition party to question Scottish Government expenditure. We have a crisis in the NHS, underfunded schools and struggling local authorities, and the Scottish National Party Government has spent more than £8 million on international offices in one year alone—the 2021-22 financial year—to employ staff around the world. The most expensive hub is the Brussels headquarters, where 17 people are employed at a cost of £2.3 million a year. The Washington office has a budget of more than £805,000. The London base will cost £2.2 million, with 14 staff.

To move on from that, let us look at why the Scottish and UK Governments should act in tandem and why the Scottish Government should support the UK Government. Much has been done that is different from what might be viewed as traditional diplomacy. The UK Government's new pact with the United States and Australia—the AUKUS pact—will extend the UK's influence in the Indo-Pacific region by enhancing the development of joint capabilities and technology sharing and by creating deeper integration of security and defence-related science, technology and industrial bases while creating hundreds of highly skilled jobs across the United Kingdom, including in Scotland.

I am glad that climate change has been mentioned. The UK Government is lobbying nations around the world to take urgent action to address climate change ahead of COP26. That is not new—over the past 10 years, UK Government funding has provided 41 million people with improved access to clean energy. It has installed 2,400MW of clean energy capacity and has avoided or reduced 180 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. The UK Government has also committed £11.6 billion over the next five years to helping developing countries to limit and manage the impacts of climate change.

International relations is not just about high-level policy or funding emanating from the Foreign Office. I could point to the work of the British Council, which drives forward campaigns for girls' education and for religious and media freedom. I am sure that other colleagues will touch on the UK Government's plan for global Britain, which was published in 2021 and outlines various interests. It restates the fundamental values of democracy and a commitment to universal human rights, the rule of law, freedom of speech and faith, and equality—principles that I hope we can all support in the chamber. To borrow from the title of the debate, the plan is an example of "championing progressive values".

The UK and Scottish Governments should act together to promote progressive values around the world. We must be wary of exceptionalism at the Scottish and UK levels. It is easy to lapse into a sense of moral superiority about our own values and the need to promulgate them. However, by acting together, the four nations of the UK can continue to be a force for good in the world. Scotland in particular can, and surely will, play its part in that endeavour.

I move amendment S6M-01527.2, to leave out from "welcomes the internationalist" to end and insert:

"calls on the Scottish Government to work constructively with the UK Government in supporting international development programmes around the world as well as promoting the Scottish diaspora on the world stage; welcomes the UK Government's plans for Global Britain, which put the freedom to speak, think and choose at the heart of its foreign policy for the decades to come; recognises the UK Government's efforts to make the world a safer, cleaner and greener place through international alliances such as the AUKUS pact and its Presidency of COP26, and notes with concern the level of spending by the Scottish Government on overseas offices and its plans to further increase the number of such offices."

15:48

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to speak in this debate on Scotland's place in the world and the championing of progressive values. Scots have a long-standing

history of internationalism. There is a lot that is worth celebrating but also a lot that requires a more solemn recognition, such as our role in the expansion of the British empire and our other historical exploits in imperialism. When we debate today how Scotland is committed to being a good global citizen, it is worth remembering that we have not always been as progressive as we might think we were, and parts of our history cannot be swept under the rug.

That said, I think that all members will recognise the significant positive role that Scotland has played and continues to play on the world stage. Our country has played an integral part in the formation of the modern world and has provided global influences in economics, medicine, technological advancements and so much more. That progressive tradition continues even today—for example, my colleague Monica Lennon's Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill resulted in Scotland becoming the first country in the world to make period products free for all. Recently, we have also become the first country in the world to embed LGBT education in the school curriculum.

Those successes are worth noting and celebrating, but the systemic problems that we face as a country remain and must be recognised. Although it is vital to look outward, we must recognise that there are severe failings at home that need to be addressed. Poverty and inequality are deep rooted in society, especially here, in Scotland.

Just this week, the Scottish Government has been warned that it is set to significantly miss its targets for reducing child poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has said that the Scottish Government's "political failure" to meet child poverty targets will have "a profound human cost." A JRF report has highlighted a

"failure to make inroads into the significant levels of poverty"

among the priority groups for action as identified by the Scottish Government, which include families from ethnic minority backgrounds, families where someone is disabled, those with a child under the age of one and single-parent households. The JRF researchers found that more than 80 per cent of children in poverty in Scotland are from one of those groups. That is systemic poverty that we have failed to take seriously or tackle.

If people look inward to Scotland, they will see an education system that fails far too many young people and does little to support economic growth at home. They will see unacceptable levels of homelessness, poor housing and public services that are buckling at the knees, with no coherent

plan to build a dynamic economy that works in the interests of the majority of Scots. Therefore, let us not kid ourselves that everyone who looks at Scotland does so through rose-tinted glasses, because they do not.

I could not make this speech without mentioning our role in and contribution to conflicts around the world and, in particular, the plight of Yemen.

It is right that the Scottish Parliament has condemned the UK Government's decision to cut international aid. More than 80 million people around the world are displaced from their homes and countries as a result of persecution, conflict and human rights violations. We have rightly opposed the cutting of international aid, and we must use our limited influence to build the case for an international consensus that will support migrants to live in safety and peace, free from persecution.

I hear what the SNP says about Europe, but let us not look at Europe with blinkers on. Oxfam has said:

"At Europe's borders, migrants and refugees are denied their basic human rights".

There have been reports that EU states have been co-operating informally to deny refugees asylum rights. Many European countries are rolling back civil liberties that we in Scotland take for granted—indeed, that is happening at a worrying rate.

My main plea is that we must use the little influence that we have at this time to bring countries together to work to deliver a more global vaccine strategy, because none of us is safe until we are all safe.

I move amendment S6M-01527.1, to leave out from "welcomes the internationalist" to end and insert:

"recognises Scotland's distinctive profile on the world stage and that successive Scottish administrations have sought to support and empower partner countries around the world; regrets the actions taken by the UK Government in taking the deplorable decision to cut its Official Development Assistance by a third, which will hit the world's poorest communities at a time of great need; notes the increasingly interdependent nature of the world and the necessity of cooperation between nations to address global challenges, including the moral responsibility of those in the Global North, including Scotland, to work on climate protections for those in the Global South, and the need to end the vaccine apartheid; calls on the Scottish Government to support the roll-out and sharing of vaccines to the Global South, considers that the Scottish Government's failure to address poverty, inequality, intolerance and violence against women in Scotland undermines its ability to promote progressive values abroad, and regrets the Scottish Government's inaction regarding Police Scotland providing training to the police forces of countries, such as Sri Lanka, which it considers are engaging in human rights abuses and repression."

15:54

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The Government is rarely modest in its parliamentary motions, but I have to say that today's motion verges on smug. It is certainly unjustified in relation to the SNP Government's role in the world, where it is apparently championing progressive values. The evidence contradicts that assertion.

As an example, we can take the £10 billion deal with SinoFortone Group Ltd and the China Railway Company No 3 Engineering Group Co Ltd in 2016, only five years ago. The First Minister signed the agreement without even bothering to check their backgrounds. The Norwegian oil fund had blacklisted the China Railway Group because of allegations of widespread corruption. In 2013—years before the agreement was signed—Amnesty International published a report that tied the China Railway Group to illegal forced evictions in Africa. That perhaps explains why Alex Salmond refused to meet the Dalai Lama when he had visited a few years earlier—for fear of offending the Chinese Government. Chinese officials had visited the then First Minister days before the Dalai Lama visited.

The Scottish Government kept quiet about human rights abuses while seeking up to £1.3 billion from the oil-rich state of Qatar. On an official visit to Qatari leaders in May 2013, the then Minister for External Affairs and International Development, Humza Yousaf, failed to mention the lethal conditions that were faced by hundreds of thousands of migrant workers. He was also advised to discuss the plight of an imprisoned Qatari poet only with UK officials. That does not sound like championing progressive values to me.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Willie Rennie is doing an excellent job of outlining the Chinese Government's horrendous human rights record. Does he agree that the Scottish Government could do more to welcome Hong Kong residents to Scotland, so that they make Scotland their home, under the visa scheme that was announced by the UK Government?

Willie Rennie: Yes—that should certainly be happening, and on a more widespread basis.

The SNP condemned the recent hasty withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, and rightly so. Its current Westminster leader, Ian Blackford, said that

"UK ministers must accept their share of responsibility and do more to support the many Afghan citizens who are clearly in danger, and have been left behind in fear for their lives, safety and human rights."

Mr Blackford was clearly oblivious to the views of his predecessor—one Angus Robertson—who, 10 years earlier, was urging a hastier withdrawal from

Afghanistan. On Hogmanay in 2010, Mr Robertson said:

“UK involvement in Afghanistan has now lasted longer than either of the world wars. If David Cameron is to make a New Year’s resolution, it should be to bring troops home by Christmas 2011.”

My final example of failure on the international stage relates to antisemitism. The SNP is now in a coalition Government with a party that has not endorsed, and still refuses to endorse, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism. The Greens have voted in favour of a motion that describes Israel as a “racist state” based on “Jewish supremacy”, but the First Minister still authorised the coalition agreement without even challenging the Greens on that incredibly sensitive and important matter. How is it possible for the coalition Government to champion progressive values across the world when it will not fully endorse the international definition of antisemitism?

Whether it is human rights abuses in Qatar and Africa, kowtowing to the Chinese over the Dalai Lama, hypocrisy on Afghanistan or antisemitism, there is little justification for today’s smug motion. The SNP is in no position to lecture anyone about progressive values here or anywhere else in the world.

15:59

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): The presidency of the United Nations Security Council is currently held by Ireland. Four of the 10 non-permanent members of the UN Security Council have populations smaller than Scotland’s, as have 77 member countries of the United Nations. Small and medium-sized countries matter on the global stage—in particular, when it comes to leading progressive and humanitarian values rather than parading military might, so I very much welcome the Government’s motion.

In this modern but troubled world, Scotland needs to find her own voice. We also need to give voice to those who are most in need but are too often not heard, so I am particularly pleased to see the programme for government’s emphasis on women and girls. Whether it be to address state-sponsored violence against women and girls in the likes of Afghanistan or the responsibility that is placed on mothers to rebuild families and communities in many parts of our conflict-ridden world, it is right that women and girls be supported and placed centre stage.

Simon Coveney, Ireland’s Minister for Foreign Affairs said recently that

“When women participate fully and equally in peace processes, those peace processes last.”

I therefore also welcome the £500,000 fund for local organisations in international development partner countries to take forward work to ensure that women and girls are safe, equal and respected.

The motion also condemns the UK Government’s cut in the aid budget from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of gross national income. I agree, but I would go further, because in reality it is much worse than a cut to 0.5 per cent. We now know that the Treasury plans to use accounting tricks in this month’s spending review to squeeze the aid budget by yet more billions of pounds.

The BBC reports that charities that operate on the front line have already condemned such moves. Romilly Greenhill, the UK director of ONE, the global campaign against poverty, has said that

“It’s incredibly worrying that UK aid looks set to be cut again, through accounting trickery by the Treasury.

The chancellor looks set to count the sharing of surplus vaccine doses, a new injection of cost-free foreign exchange reserves and the cancellation of debts that haven’t been repaid for decades as part of the aid budget.”

In effect, the UK Government plans to commit considerably less than 0.5 per cent of GNI to foreign aid. While it is shackled to this declining UK state, Scotland’s options are regrettably limited.

There is much to be welcomed in the Scottish Government’s approach, including the expansion of our residential fellowship programme to train women to take on leadership roles in mitigating the effect of climate change, for example.

Until Scotland becomes independent and takes her own seat at the United Nations, a frankly mean-spirited UK will constrain our actions and influence. One thing that we can all do is use our voice to speak up on behalf of those who are most in need in this troubled world. That is what I intend to continue to do.

16:02

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): I recognise, as other members have done, the importance of co-operation between nations to address global challenges. Nothing has underscored that point more than the Covid-19 pandemic.

The SNP would have us believe that post-Brexit Britain is a silo and that we have turned away from the world, but the UK Government has helped to lead international efforts in response to Covid-19, with its pledge to donate 100 million Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine doses overseas by June 2022, 80 million of which will go to COVAX, which guarantees fair and equitable access to Covid-19 vaccine for people in all countries. The UK

Government ensured that funding for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine was based on its being affordable around the world. The vaccine has the greatest global reach of all of the vaccines—175 countries and territories use it. That is the United Kingdom being a force for good in the world.

In less than a month, Glasgow will host the COP26 summit as a direct result of the UK's COP presidency. Together, if we can work as one, we can recover and build back better, and we can save our planet. That is global Britain in action.

At the height of the pandemic, about 1.6 billion children were not able to attend school or access education. Together with other G7 countries, the UK has committed to helping 40 million more girls into school and to getting 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10, in the next five years. It has also pledged £430 million to the global partnership for education in order to fulfil that ambition. That is “championing progressive values”.

Against that background of international engagement, the SNP keeps returning to Brexit. It seems to believe that EU membership is the only form of internationalism. The new trilateral defence partnership between Australia, the UK and the US will help to create hundreds of highly-skilled jobs across the United Kingdom, including in Scotland.

The SNP-led Scottish Government is choosing to ignore the scores of trade deals that have been secured by the UK as an independent trading nation, even though they will help to drive forward an exports-led and jobs-led recovery for Scotland. Instead, the First Minister announced in this year's programme for government that the Government is planning to open new offices in Copenhagen and Warsaw, in addition to the eight international hubs it already has. They have cost the public purse more than £8 million in just one year. The NHS is in crisis, our schools are underfunded and local authorities are struggling.

Angus Robertson: Will the member give way?

Tess White: I am in my last minute. The public will understandably question the cost of those offices, given that international relations is a reserved matter.

The climate change crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic are stark reminders of just how interdependent—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could we have less chat from a sedentary position?

Tess White: Thank you, Presiding Officer. They are stark reminders of just how interdependent the world has become. By combining the resources of our union, we can respond to those global challenges. Let us work together, not apart.

16:06

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I open with a quote from the great Winnie Ewing, who said after winning the Hamilton by-election in 1967:

“Stop the world, Scotland wants to get on.”

For centuries now, Scots have travelled the world, sharing their skills, wisdom, ingenuity and friendship everywhere, from the US and Canada to Australia, India and China. Along the way, they have influenced everything from technology to world-class academic institutions to banking and government and so much more. At the same time, they have helped to construct and maintain Scotland's international reputation, establishing the iconic recognition that Scotland enjoys today.

Those on-going relationships are supported by a group of international offices situated in key locations: Belgium, Canada, China, England, France, Germany, Ireland and the USA. The Scottish Government will build on those with new offices in Copenhagen and Warsaw. I really cannot understand the criticism of the Scottish Government looking to support Scottish business by opening up more offices; I do not get that at all. The offices play a critical role in supporting Scotland's international reputation and deliver economic success.

Each of the offices is dedicated to improving Scotland's international profile; attracting investment to Scotland; helping Scotland-based businesses to trade internationally, which is so much more important since Brexit; and protecting and enhancing Scotland's interests in the EU and beyond.

During 2020, foreign direct investment projects in Scotland increased by 6 per cent, compared to a decline in the UK of 12 per cent and a 13 per cent decline across Europe. Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen are in the UK's top 10 FDI cities outside London, with Edinburgh overtaking Manchester to move into first place. The cabinet secretary talked about the export growth plan.—[*Interruption.*]

I want to make progress. I have only four minutes for this.

The Scottish Government has set an ambitious target of increasing international exports from 20 per cent to 25 per cent of GDP over the next 10 years.

We have recent examples of other countries taking their place in the world. Estonia regained independence in 1991. Its gross domestic product has since increased five-fold, and today it is recognised as Europe's Baltic tiger. After the velvet divorce from the Czech Republic, Slovakia saw its economy grow by 60 per cent in 10 years.

Denmark and Norway have higher GDP than that of Scotland, at between 30 per cent and 40 per cent.

The success of the countries that I have just mentioned is also solidly based on cultural confidence, an irrepressible national identity, bold leadership and a people who never gave up. Are there lessons for Scotland or are our circumstances simply too different, as our Opposition would tell us?

Stephen Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Paul McLennan: No, I am conscious of the time—I have only a minute left.

When Scotland was taken out of the EU against its will, there was a massive impact on the 200,000 EU citizens who called Scotland their home, and the Scottish Government established the stay in Scotland campaign.

Scotland is a proud European country—I am proud to be Scottish and European. Many EU citizens see themselves as being European and Scottish.

Today, Boris Johnson is reported to have said in his conference speech that he wanted to end the “broken model” of a low-wage, low-growth economy. That broken UK economy has failed Scotland over many years. There is another way. *[Interruption.]* No. I am in my final minute.

Boris Johnson said that on the day on which he will plunge millions into poverty with the cut to universal credit.

An independent Scotland would meet its international obligations on foreign aid, and it would not support the selling of arms to the Yemen, whose long-suffering people Alex Rowley mentioned.

In his last speech to the EU, the then SNP MEP Alyn Smith insisted that Scotland was a European nation and added that independence would offer the country a “route back”. In a plea to other European politicians, he said:

“colleagues, I’m not asking you to solve our domestic discussions. I am asking you to leave a light on so we can find our way home.”

Scotland is on that journey and will find its way home soon. Scotland will regain its rightful place in the world.

16:11

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland (Lab): In its motion, the Scottish Government emphasises its commitment to Scotland being a good global citizen, but that commitment lacks substance. It is easy to say that Scotland in the

world should be a champion of progressive values. Everyone in the Parliament would probably identify themselves as an internationalist. We would all say that we support Scotland being a champion for fairness, democracy and human rights, but achieving those goals requires fundamental change to our failed economic system, because the global challenges that we face, from the climate emergency to vaccine apartheid, are a direct result of wealth and power being concentrated in the hands of a few. That will not change while the Scottish Government pats itself on the back with motions rather than bringing forward a real plan to tackle those international issues. *[Interruption.]* No.

The scale of the challenge could not be greater. The world’s richest 10 per cent now own more than 80 per cent of global wealth. There is a growing divide between the north and the global south when it comes to access to healthcare, education, housing and wealth, and the pandemic has exposed that divide, with the global south set to suffer from greater debt and lack of access to vaccines. It is also set to bear the brunt of the climate emergency.

So, the Scottish Government’s commitment to increasing its international development fund by 50 per cent is a welcome step forward, but it does not go nearly far enough, especially in meeting its own self-image as an international progressive force.

The Labour amendment calls for specific commitments from the Scottish Government on access to vaccines and highlights the importance of matching rhetoric with reality when it comes to promoting human rights.

The Scottish Government’s current action on human rights is totally inadequate. We can see that in its refusal to address the activities of Police Scotland’s international development and innovation unit. That unit is proactively offering training and technical advice to some of the world’s worst offenders when it comes to human rights abuses. Several organisations, from Pax Christi Scotland to Freedom from Torture, have highlighted that the Sri Lankan regime is engaging in the use of torture and state surveillance of human rights defenders. Police Scotland has claimed that its training activities with the Sri Lankan police are helping to promote gender equality and tackle gender-based violence, but, as recently as August, the Sri Lankan police confirmed that cases of intimate partner violence would not be taken to court. Therefore, how can anyone say that that training is working?

The activities of the unit extend far beyond Sri Lanka. Police Scotland is also offering technical advice to the police force in Colombia, a country that has faced long-standing allegations of human

rights abuses and which launched a major crackdown on recent protests. What is the Scottish Government's response to that alarming activity? To repeatedly pass the buck to Police Scotland. There is no point in having a justice secretary who is not prepared to stand up for human rights and hold the police to account when things go wrong, yet we have exactly that in Keith Brown. He avoids answering questions about human rights abuses, and he has nothing to say about Police Scotland providing political cover and legitimacy to those human rights abusers.

My question to the member is this: will he urge the justice secretary to seek an immediate suspension of Police Scotland's activities with any country that engages in human rights abuses? Will the Scottish Government also launch a full-scale review of the international development and innovation unit's activities?

This debate has asked us all, as MSPs, to consider Scotland's role in the world. Although the Scottish Government's motion seeks to paint a picture of Scotland as a progressive beacon, the reality, at home and abroad, could not be more different. It is yet another example of Scottish Government ministers talking progressive while failing to deliver real change.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: James Dornan joins us remotely.

16:15

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in today's debate about Scotland's place in the world in order to highlight our progressive, inclusive and international world view as a nation. That world view stands in stark contrast to the xenophobic, insular and cruel one espoused by the UK Government led by Boris Johnson and gleefully supported by such right-wing ideologues as Priti Patel.

That attitude from the Westminster Government has been laid bare in recent weeks in the disgraceful way in which it handled the situation with refugees from Afghanistan, along with its on-going crusade to quite happily see asylum seekers floating about in the water with nowhere to go or to round them up and send them to Albania. I honestly wish that I was making that up. Such anti-immigration and anti-refugee rhetoric has no place in a modern, civilised society—and certainly not here in outward-looking Scotland.

Scotland has a long history of being part of the international community; it is not a new thing. If you want confirmation of that, listen to Prime Minister Boris Johnson's hero, Winston Churchill, who famously said:

"Of all the small nations of this earth, perhaps only the ancient Greeks surpass the Scots in their contribution to mankind."

Yet still—amazingly—according to many in opposition, and the above-mentioned Johnson, we are apparently the only country in the world that is unable to handle being independent and playing our full role on the international scene.

The contribution of Scottish people to the shaping of the modern world has been beyond compare. Scotland has a proud history of innovation in all manner of different fields, from philosophy and economics to engineering. Of course, we aspire to greatness—but not greatness as defined by our neighbours in the form of big bombs and being keen to go and fight, and not necessarily in huge individual wealth, but in being a great country for all the communities that live here and in being an example for other countries abroad.

I heard the previous contribution. When it started off, I thought, "Fair enough, I get that—I do not like the economic system as it is." However, attacking a Government that does not have the powers to do any of the things that you want it to while, at the same time, always being in a situation in which you will vote against it is a wee bit of an interesting take on politics.

We believe that everyone matters, whatever their start in life. That is why we reintroduced free university education, along with the baby box, free school meals and the Scottish child payment, and it is why we oppose policies such as the bedroom tax, the rape clause and the £20 per week cut to universal credit.

We see ourselves as natural members of Europe and the EU. The people of Scotland said that loud and clear at the referendum; yet, as so often in this union of equals, the voice of Scotland is drowned out by the braying from another place.

There is no doubt that the Brexit effect is just starting to hit; the delivery shortages are just the beginning. I saw today that there is another dispute between Westminster and France. Be assured that those things will continue to get worse as long as the crony Government, which is more interested in lining the pockets of its friends and family than in ensuring that our health workers and carers are protected and that the poor have enough to eat, stays in power.

If ever we needed proof that independence is required, we need simply look at the past 24 hours. The UK Government tried to bypass Holyrood with yesterday's legislative consent motion and, today, a Supreme Court decision said that this place—this Parliament, which we are all meant to be so proud to represent—does not have the powers to protect our own children. Donald

Cameron highlighted why in his contribution: because of the constitutional settlement. We should not be having such a debate in the first place.

We should never have been dragged out of Europe against our will, particularly as the whole thing was simply a Tory leadership stunt in the first place. We belong in Europe and we would be welcomed back into Europe. I mean, how could it refuse us? After all, as the famous French poet, philosopher and playwright Voltaire said:

“We look to Scotland for all our ideas of civilisation.”

Let us be fair—he was a very wise man.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call the next speaker, I remind members that we expect courtesy and respect to be shown to all members. During that contribution, there was a lot of sedentary chattering from members on the Conservative benches, which was not really in keeping with the need to show respect and the obligations that we are all under as members of the Parliament.

I call Maurice Golden, who has up to four minutes.

16:20

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I think that the previous speaker showed a lack of respect to colleagues in the chamber as well as to you.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Golden, please resume your seat for a second. The content of speeches is not a matter for the chair. Every member will have their own view. Nonetheless, it is important to listen respectfully to all contributions in the Parliament. Please resume.

Maurice Golden: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The most pressing issue is, of course, climate change. It is undeniably a good thing for Scotland to play a role in helping those around the world who are most vulnerable, such as in Malawi, where Scots are often at the forefront of efforts. The Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, for example, is working hard to improve access to food, water, and energy there. In Nepal, Tearfund works in the heart of local communities, with much support from a generous Scottish public, as I saw at first hand when I visited in 2018. We should welcome Scottish Government efforts to support climate action in at-risk communities, such as its commitment to train women in leadership roles to mitigate climate impacts.

Dr Allan: I certainly concur with what the member says about the efforts of all those organisations. Does he feel that those efforts around the world are helped or hindered by a UK

Government whose stated ambition is to cut the money that the UK spends on international development and potentially to redirect some of what is spent through other Government departments?

Maurice Golden: The UK is one of the leading nations in both tackling climate change and alleviating poverty. In the past 10 years alone, Britain has protected 88 million people around the world from the impact of climate change, including through helping 41 million people access clean energy and avoiding or reducing 180 million tonnes of emissions. I hope that the member recognises that wonderful contribution. In addition, Britain has committed almost £12 billion over the next five years to support developing countries.

That incredible global mission opens up a huge opportunity for Scotland to lead the world on climate change, strengthen vulnerable communities, protect millions of people and make the world a better place.

The rest of the world looks to Britain as a global leader. With Glasgow hosting COP26, Britain is leading the discussion on how the world tackles climate change. The world pays attention when Britain speaks because we do not just ask others to do the work—we roll up our sleeves and lead by example. The UK has reduced emissions by a quarter in the past decade alone and, just this week, the British Government committed to completely phasing out electricity from fossil fuels by as soon as 2035.

Refusing to fully engage with or even recognise Britain's global success simply leaves the SNP-Green coalition looking weak and insular. Let us look at its motion: it talks of being a “good global citizen” but then forgets to mention COP26. How is anyone supposed to take the coalition seriously when it forgets to mention the world's biggest environment summit being hosted in Scotland?

This is the dilemma that the nationalist coalition faces: it wants a bigger global role, but it lacks the credibility to make it happen. Its credibility on climate action was already “wearing thin”, as SCIAF said in its evidence to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee last week. That same session also saw Oxfam issue an equally stark warning. It said:

“Scotland's credibility on climate justice is now in significant jeopardy due to it missing three successive annual emissions targets.”

In fact, more than two thirds of SNP climate policies are now off track.

If the SNP-Green coalition wants to be taken seriously on climate change, on the world stage or on anything else, it needs to stop putting its interests before Scotland's.

16:25

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): Many of us have, for some considerable time, given much thought to the role that Scotland has played in championing progressive values—on climate action, on welcoming immigrants, on peace and, importantly, on how we can be better.

Although we have a long and proud tradition of leading change around the world and of creating progressive values, we must also understand the role that Scotland has played in the worst episodes of imperialism, old and new, from slavery to the hosting of nuclear weapons. That is not to say that, as Scots, we are somehow unable to change or make recompense for those episodes. However, we must recognise that they are not just issues of the past. The long shadow of slavery darkens the present day. The impact of our role in imperialism continues to drive division, from Ireland to south Asia. We can, though, redeem those actions and become a global force for good. But before I speak more about how we can be a global force for good, I implore everyone here—indeed, all Scots—to recognise the darker elements of our history as well as the more fêted moments.

We see at Westminster the outcome of having a Government that cannot see the historical impact of its actions. The UK Government's abandonment of its commitment to international development funding is disgraceful, short-sighted and contemptible. We continue to make the case for restoring the funding. Although cutting aid might play well to British empire chauvinists in the home counties, it is nothing short of a default on the UK's obligation to return some of the plunder of imperialism to those from whom we stole.

I want Scotland to do better. I want Scotland to live up to all our aspirations as a global builder of peace and justice. I want Scotland to be a champion for enhancing the rights of people at home while recognising that those same rights apply to all individuals and communities across the globe. I want Scotland to find our role in the world as being a force for good.

Even without being a fully independent state, Scotland, as a nation with devolved powers, can take a more active role in the international community. We can build our influence and contribute to global efforts to address the pandemic, enhance human rights and progress the transition to a net zero economy. A significant part of climate justice relates to the way in which our emissions have a disproportionate effect on people in the global south.

I know that we can do better. In the previous session of the Parliament, Scottish Greens forced the Scottish Qualifications Authority to undertake a

review of its international activities. That resulted in withdrawal from six countries whose human rights records would cause us all concern, including Saudi Arabia.

More than 25 years ago, Robin Cook spoke of an ethical foreign policy, marking a move from self-interest. Although he was unable to deliver on that, he set an important principle. We need to adopt another approach: policy coherence. We simply should not be arming Yemen while sending aid to Yemen to ameliorate the damage that our arms do. Similarly, we should not be using public funds or support—more than £31 million in enterprise funding in the past 15 years—to line the pockets of international arms dealers, whose weapons have been linked to alleged war crimes, killing civilians. That is both morally wrong and economically unjustified.

An ethical approach and policy coherence must run right through the Government and all its actions. As members suggested, that will not always be easy. It will mean a shift in thinking. It will mean doing things in a way that is very different from business as usual. It will mean moving beyond the policy silos of the past. We cannot have one bit of the Government doing one thing and another bit directly undermining it.

We need policy coherence and progressive values at the heart of our global mission. That means that we need to think about everything that we do, from climate justice to the manufacturing that we support, to make sure that it is advancing all our positive values across the world.

16:29

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Today's debate is a perfect demonstration of the determination among the people of Scotland to do what is right regardless of who is telling us that it is not our job. There is a difference between Government responsibility and moral responsibility, and that difference is laid bare when we consider the work that Scotland has done internationally despite the limits of devolution and the UK Government's stubborn, immoral focus on devolved competence above all else, including ethics.

Only this morning, the UK Government was successful in overturning a unanimous decision by this Parliament to enshrine the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Scots law. The UK Government is so petty that it would rather take human rights away from children than have the Scottish Parliament make the decision to implement them. It is so intent on ensuring that Scotland knows its place that it does not care that it is trampling over kids' lives to do so.

Maurice Golden: The member seems to be attacking both the Supreme Court and our legal system. Is she suggesting that we have a non-impartial legal system in the United Kingdom?

Emma Roddick: I do not think that it is attacking the Supreme Court to say that the law is wrong. There is a difference between upholding the law and saying that it is not correct. We can say that the devolution settlement is not adequate, which it is not, without saying that it is the fault of the Supreme Court for enforcing it.

I think that most of us in the chamber and most people who are listening know that Scotland's place is on the world stage. Scotland is a champion of human rights around the world. World-leading human rights legislation is being taken forward here against racial discrimination and discrimination against women, and to improve the rights of disabled people.

There is, however, the catch that we are still beholden to what the Tories at Whitehall think is best on reserved matters. Scotland does not yet have the power to make full, rounded decisions on human rights or international affairs. Never before has the contrast between what we have and what we could have been so stark. Instead of being able to strengthen children's rights and tackle fuel poverty, we are stuck mitigating cuts and lamenting the UK Government's decisions on tax increases for the poor and breaks for the rich, the biggest overnight cut to social security in seven decades, and Brexit.

Alex Rowley: Is SNP policy still such that people who support and vote for independence in any future independence referendum would also be voting to go back into Europe?

Emma Roddick: The important thing to note here is that Scotland being in or out of Europe should be a decision for Scotland, whereas we have been torn out of Europe against our will. The Tories in England cannot even govern without breaching existing human rights, so they certainly cannot be trusted to strengthen them.

Scottish Labour's amendment to the motion accuses the Scottish Government of failing to address violence against women. I would never claim that there is no more work to be done to tackle violence against women. I am a young woman in politics, so I am no stranger to misogyny, discrimination or sexual assault. However, Labour's amendment explicitly says that this Scottish Government—led by Nicola Sturgeon, UN global advocate for women—has failed to address violence against women at all and that that undermines our ability to promote progressive values. That is as ridiculous as it is offensive. I am tired of seeing accusations that the first female First Minister and the first First Minister

to introduce procedures for dealing with complaints against those in her position, leading by example, is somehow bad for women in Scotland. Scotland's foreign policy, limited in scope as it may be, is feminist at its core.

Following the harrowing details of Sarah Everard's murder coming to light, a Conservative police commissioner said that she should have been "streetwise" and should not have "submitted" to her fake arrest. Boris Johnson then assured us that we can trust the police. I ask members to compare that with the First Minister's response. She said:

"The problem is male violence, not women's 'failure' to find ever more inventive ways to protect ourselves against it."

Our ability to promote progressive values internationally is certainly being undermined, but let us lay the blame at the correct door.

16:34

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): "Progressive" is a word that is thrown around by Governments of all stripes to justify a wide variety of reforms, many of which are anything but. True progress means a world in which homelessness is a chapter in a history book, not a daily reality. True progress means paying people a wage that is more than barely enough to keep their heads above water. True progress is people's right to food being enshrined in law; the rest is window dressing. "Progressive" is a badge that Governments like to wear on the world stage and a topic that they like to fill parliamentary time with, because it says something about how they wish to be seen, regardless of how far from reality that may be.

I welcome any opportunity to consider the values that we should encourage in Scotland. I will start by recognising that, although the Scottish Government might be progressive in relation to one of the harshest Tory Governments in living memory, that does not hide the fact that, when it comes to standing up and being counted on pay, public service investment and infrastructure development, it is sorely lacking.

I will take the opportunity to reflect on our shared commitment to internationalism. I congratulate the Government on that sentiment, but I do so with a word of caution. We have to encourage future generations to believe that people working together in common purpose is the only hope for a world free from climate catastrophe and desperate greed. However, seeking to do so through the lens of exceptionalism—by which I mean suggesting that Scotland is uniquely enlightened—is not the way to go about it.

Nevertheless, the Scottish Government has correctly derided Downing Street's decision to slash overseas aid. That decision was made to send a signal to a reactionary part of Britain that we will return to a cold-hearted view of the world in which anything that we put in must be paid back double. That is not progress; that is stone-age thinking. However, we should expect that from the Tories; beneath the buffoonery of Boris Johnson, the UK Government is committed to redistributing wealth from the poor to the rich and rewriting the history of our role in creating global inequality.

I ask the Scottish Government to learn from that example and ensure that we do not do that. For all the positives that are no doubt plentiful in our history, Scotland's role as part of the UK in spreading war, injustice and intolerance around the world is just as potent and regrettable as any other part of this island. Let us recognise that, so that we can move forward.

To be an example to the world, you have to govern with consistency, and that starts with the basic principles of holding to commitments and respecting the will of the people. What does it mean, as stated in the motion, to "promote democracy" when the Scottish Government continually pushes for a referendum because it did not like the answer the first time? Implicit in that disregard for democracy and in the motion is the suggestion that Scotland is different and that we stand apart from a callous UK and a tough global north, but there is no truth in that. Those are the stories that nationalists tell themselves in every part of the world. We do not need to do that to be progressive. We do not have to create a "them and us" narrative. We simply need to reset our priorities and start going after the profiteers and the privilege that damage us all.

The next time that we discuss the issue, perhaps that can be the focus, rather than the vague advert for an imaginary Scotland that few who live at the thin end of the wedge would recognise.

16:38

Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP): Scotland is a country with huge ambition, and rightly so. Since devolution in 1999, the Scottish economy has grown, which has allowed Scotland to drive forward policies that are important and beneficial to the people of Scotland. In the past 20 years, Scotland has stood on the world stage and set many precedents in human and ecological wellbeing. Scotland has joined an international movement that seeks to transform the economic system into one that delivers social justice with a green agenda.

Internationally, Scotland, along with New Zealand and countries such as Iceland, is creating an economy that prioritises the wellbeing of its citizens. It was recently reported that Scotland is the first industrialised country to generate 97.4 per cent of its electricity from wind and solar. In 2019, our First Minister became the first world leader to declare a climate emergency and the first to treat climate change with the seriousness that it deserves. As a world leader in climate action, Scotland will host COP26 in a matter of weeks. *[Interruption.]* I will not take an intervention at the moment, sorry.

We will have the opportunity to facilitate the acceleration of action to tackle climate change on an international scale. Today, I was approached about visiting COP26 delegates who want to discuss Scotland's green energy success. Developing countries are looking to Scotland for lessons on renewable energy strategy and clean green energy.

Scotland is a modern country that is made up of many ages, abilities, cultures, languages, beliefs, geographies and interests. Scotland is committed to ensuring that participation in democracy is representative of all voices and communities and it has set up a citizens assembly. The first assembly met earlier this year to consider what kind of Scotland the people want to build, how the Scottish Government can overcome international challenges such as Brexit and what the future of Scotland could look like.

I will name just a few of our progressive achievements. Scotland was the first nation to set minimum pricing for alcohol. Scotland is one of the world leaders in family support, with three and four-year-olds eligible for 1,148 hours of early learning and childcare, saving families almost £5,000 per child annually. Scotland is leading the way in transforming women's health and the inequality found in the process of diagnosing and treating endometriosis and the menopause. Police-recorded crime fell by 41 per cent between 2006 and 2019 and, internationally, Scotland has led the way in tackling knife crime.

We are leading on other devolved issues and we can gain further autonomy over social care and social security. Scotland looks to the future, orientated towards more kindness, dignity and compassion. Scotland will continue to welcome refugees and asylum seekers, despite our limited powers in that area. Scotland has a long history of providing homes for those fleeing war and terror. The recent image on the news of a desperate parent in Afghanistan handing their baby to a stranger in the hope of a better future for the child is one that should haunt us all. The Scottish programme for government includes a promise of an additional £500,000 to support local authorities

to accommodate more unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland.

In economic terms, far from being a disaster, Scotland has performed well since it has been handed greater powers. We argue that devolution is a disaster only from the perspective of those such as the Prime Minister, who sees the success of an SNP Government in Holyrood as a threat to Scotland remaining in the UK. In 1999, the first bricks were laid for this building, which represents Scotland's democratic choice to realise our potential. Inscribed on those bricks are the words written by Ayr's own Robbie Burns, and I wish that I could say them in a Scottish accent:

"O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!"

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): We move to closing speeches. Foysol Choudhury, you have up to six minutes.

16:42

Foysol Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): I support the amendment in Alex Rowley's name.

There can be no doubt that Scotland has a proud record to look back on. Since 2005, successive Scottish Governments have, through a specific international development fund, built a development programme to support and empower partner countries, including Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Pakistan. We have seen that programme contribute to progress made in tackling rising inflation, investing in local health services, improving food security and increasing access to financial services and schemes to support young people back into school, such as the Pakistan Scottish scholarship scheme for school children.

However, there can be no doubt that more can be done, particularly in the fight against Covid-19. It is clear that, although cases of Covid-19 are declining in Scotland and much of the west, we still have tens of millions of people without a first dose of the vaccine, which poses a threat to us all from possible new mutations and strains of the virus. As we recover, as a country of evident wealth, technology and manufacturing, we should be at the forefront in assisting the many citizens across the world who are still waiting for that first shot of the vaccine.

This is a time when we can show our country's values and tell the world who we really are, and we did—or, at least, the UK Government did, by making a huge cut to international development at a time of international crisis. Conservative Party members should hang their heads in shame.

The research group Airfinity stated that there are now a "staggering" number of stockpiled "use

now" jabs, which will be of no use to anyone by December. In its research, the group also predicted that, by the end of September this year, 7 billion vaccine doses would have been available around the world, with that number rising to 12 billion by December. Although it is good news that more supply is available, if our Government will not take the actions that are needed to prevent a new global outbreak, we are heading for a vaccine waste disaster.

The crucial issue now is how and where the vaccines will be distributed. If there is no plan, and if no agreement is drawn up urgently, many lives in the poorest nations on the planet will be lost needlessly. It is unthinkable that more than 100 million vaccine doses will have to be thrown away from the stockpiles of rich countries while the populations of the world's poorest countries will pay, in lives lost, for our vaccine waste.

In Scotland and the UK, we need to up our game. In government, Scottish Labour would, of course, maintain the international development programme, including an increase in the climate justice fund, and improve its effectiveness. That includes strengthening safeguarding standards and improving transparency. Defeating Covid-19 requires international co-operation, and Scottish Labour is committed to the global effort to guarantee that everyone has equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines and treatments. We will not be safe until we are all protected.

Scotland can play a role in a range of international issues, including human rights, migration, refugees, global public health and climate change, as well as help to inform public and policy debate. Scottish Labour would support the establishment of a Scottish council for global affairs, which would be much more effective than the current system. By drawing on Scotland's academic centres of excellence, as well as civic society and businesses, that body would serve as an independent repository of expertise on international affairs, and help to enhance knowledge of international affairs within Scotland.

I end my contribution by reflecting on the values that we hold with regard to human rights. I am deeply concerned by the Scottish Government's poor stance on Police Scotland's provision of training to the police forces of countries such as Sri Lanka, where those forces have engaged in human rights abuses and repression. In recent months, the Sri Lankan police have allegedly been responsible for torture and extrajudicial killings and have been implicated in a large pattern of such abuses over many years, despite receiving Police Scotland training on an almost continuous basis since 2013.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Choudhury, please wind up your speech.

Foysoyl Choudhury: Presiding Officer,

“Police Scotland should halt its Sri Lanka training program until the Sri Lankan government and police demonstrate a willingness to reform”.

That is a direct quote from Yasmine Ahmed, the UK director of Human Rights Watch.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Choudhury. Your time is up.

16:49

Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con):

Today, we have heard a variety of views from across the chamber, including from Angus Robertson and Alex Rowley, and we heard powerful speeches from Willie Rennie and my Conservative colleagues about Scotland’s place in the world. Although views vary, we can all find common ground in our desire to see Scots contributing to societies across the globe in a positive and thoughtful manner.

The history of Scotland and the United Kingdom is littered with examples of Scotland as a leading light in the world. Whether it is through the charitable works of Andrew Carnegie, the influence of David Hume and Adam Smith, or the power of Walter Scott’s pen, Scotland’s influence has been felt far and wide and has brought enlightenment and prosperity to the lives of others.

Of course, not all our overseas adventures have gone so well—just look at the infamous Darien scheme or the role of the Glasgow tobacco lords in developing the slave trade. On the whole, however, Scotland and the UK have excelled in setting a positive agenda around the globe, and in forging partnerships that endure to this day.

As my colleague Donald Cameron highlighted, it is only right that Scottish Governments seek to develop relationships with other nations. Jack McConnell’s trips to New York and the Scotland-Malawi partnership come to mind, but those schemes were never designed to interfere with UK foreign policy. They were designed to complement it, not compete with it; that is where the difference lies. As with so many aspects of devolution, constructive engagement in foreign policy creates an environment for co-operation and success, rather than for division and failure.

The development of international offices, although it is unobjectionable in itself, comes with an eye-watering price tag. As Donald Cameron highlighted, £8 million is a huge amount of money that could be better spent close to home on recruiting ambulance drivers or more teachers. Quite why we need to spend £2.2 million—*[Interruption.]* I cannot take an intervention, as I have a lot of points to get through. Quite why we need a £2.2 million international base in London is

a question to which I am yet to hear an adequate answer. One would think that any Scottish Government that promotes international trade—*[Interruption.]* No. I will not take an intervention as I want to get through my points. One would think that any Scottish Government that promotes international trade basing trade hubs in British embassies would support the UK Government’s search for new markets for Scottish products, and its plans for free ports to boost Scottish manufacturing. However, we hear nothing in support of those efforts.

There is no recognition of the 70 trade deals with countries in every corner of the world, nor of what they mean for Scotland. There is only silence on that from the SNP. If we look at any trade deal that the UK Government has signed—whether it is with Japan, Australia, Ukraine or Singapore—we see that the SNP has voted against them all. The SNP has failed to back any trade deal for more than 15 years—even the EU-Canada agreement. For a party that is supposedly keen on international trade, that is a strange way to go about things.

The Presiding Officer: Just a second, please, Ms Dowey. There are conversations going on across the chamber and across walkways. Could members please show Ms Dowey the courtesy of listening to what she is saying?

Sharon Dowey: All those deals are good news for Scottish businesses. Often, it is Scots in the Foreign Office or the Department for International Trade, working on fostering the links that lead to trade deals, who strike the agreements. Their work is undervalued by the SNP, which is a shame to see.

Tess White explored the issue a little further and looked at the range of fantastic initiatives that are being promoted by the UK across the globe, all of which involve Scots in leading capacities. Whether it is the admirable efforts that have been put into distributing the Oxford vaccine overseas, the commitment to get 40 million more girls into school, or the impact of the AUKUS deal on enhancing global security, those projects are all joint works among the people of Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales. One could say that they are achievements of the four nations. However, we do not hear from the SNP about those laudable schemes, nor do we hear about the role of Scots in securing the objectives.

It is not only in foreign policy that the United Kingdom, with Scotland as a partner, is succeeding. On the climate front, the UK’s efforts to combat climate change across the globe have continued for many years. As Maurice Golden pointed out, those efforts are providing clean energy to millions and are reducing greenhouse gas emissions by hundreds of millions of tonnes.

On top of that, the UK Government has committed nearly £12 billion to helping developing countries to manage the impact of climate change. Let us also not forget that the UK was the first advanced economy in the world to set a net zero target for 2050.

Of course, there is still a great deal of work to do. The UK has always been a standard bearer for international liberty, the rule of law and liberal democracy, and it must continue to be that. We have a duty to promote free markets and to uphold the international order, which is increasingly under threat from authoritarian regimes. *[Interruption.]* That was a bit loud. Such regimes will only prosper from division among the four nations of the UK, which means that it is more important than ever that we stand together.

The same goes for the world of science. Today, the Prime Minister set out his ambition for the UK to secure status as a science and tech superpower by 2030. The Oxford vaccine programme, which is being rolled out across the world, is just one part of that grander strategy. So, too, are the drive to create Scottish space ports and the push to attract the best and the brightest through the global talent visa.

When standing together, Scotland and the UK are one of the greatest progressive forces for change in the world. When our people work hand in glove, great things happen.

16:56

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Jenny Gilruth):

Before I respond to the points that have been raised in the debate, I thank all the members who have participated. As the cabinet secretary noted in his opening speech, it is a privilege to be involved in a discussion about Scotland's role in making a positive and progressive contribution to the world.

Today's contributions have been wide ranging. At times, the exchanges did not always reflect that positivity. However, this is a timely conversation for us to have and one that all members and every party should be a part of.

Last weekend, on the 31st anniversary of the reunification of East and West Germany, Angela Merkel warned that democracy must be protected. I hope that, irrespective of our differing views in this place, we can all agree with that important sentiment

I want to start on a note of consensus around an area over which I have ministerial responsibility—to my mind, it rarely gets the attention that it deserves, but many people, including Foysoy Choudhury, mentioned it during the debate. In

2005, the then Liberal-Labour Executive committed to the first iteration of Scotland's international development fund. With a budget of £3 million, it focused on Scotland's historic relationship with Malawi. The Labour amendment rightly points to the fact that, politically, irrespective of who has been in government, our international development fund has always been well supported by Parliament. In addition, there has always been an understanding that the Scottish Government spend on the fund is in addition to the funds that the Scottish taxpayer already contributes to, because international development is—for the moment, anyway—largely reserved.

The cabinet secretary mentioned that, last year, we reviewed our approach to international development in the light of the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, which pose questions to all areas of Government. Whom we listen to as a Government tells us a story about whose voices we value. The programme for government commits to the establishment of a global south programme panel. The panel will lend expertise to our international development work and ensure that voices from the global south directly shape our international development offer. We are also developing a new £500,000 women and girls fund, which Michelle Thomson noted. That will support local organisations in our partner countries to ensure that women and girls are safe, equal and respected.

We will also reconstitute our ministerial working group on policy coherence for sustainable development, which will work across portfolio areas of Government, and, as Maggie Chapman mentioned, move beyond policy silos of the past.

On that point, the Labour amendment highlights Police Scotland's work in Sri Lanka, which Mercedes Villalba and Foysoy Choudhury mentioned. That directly relates to policy coherence. It is vital that, if we espouse an international development offer with human rights at its heart, we ensure that our contributions internationally are coherently linked to that agenda. I understand that the UK Government is funding work through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in that regard. I also understand that, of course, operational issues are a matter for the chief constable. However, I assure Labour that I am keen to meet Police Scotland and hold discussions with the organisation in the spirit of the dialogue that I initiated with it during the international development review.

On vaccines for poorer nations, as Alex Rowley mentioned, Covid-19 knows no borders. I was pleased that last year, in the previous session of Parliament, we contributed £2 million to our efforts in support of our partner countries in the fight

against Covid-19 via UNICEF. In this session, we have been able to support Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia with oxygen concentrators, ventilators and surplus personal protective equipment. Tess White mentioned the UK Government's commitment to donate 100 million surplus coronavirus vaccines, and we would welcome that. However, I think that the UK Government, as a member of the G7, must do more, and I will come back later to the role that Scotland can play in that.

In his opening remarks, the cabinet secretary noted the deplorable decision of the UK Government to cut spending on development aid. Following the publication of the FCDO annual report in September, it has been confirmed that UK overseas development aid spending next year will be cut by 59 per cent in Zambia, by 51 per cent in Malawi, by 42 per cent in Rwanda and by 39 per cent in Pakistan. That is not just needlessly heartless; it is also short-sighted in the extreme. As non-governmental organisations told the UK Government in May, aid cuts will mean that 700,000 fewer girls will receive an education globally. I know that there are Tories who disagreed with the ODA cuts. Some of them spoke recently in the debate that we held on Afghanistan, and Ruth Davidson has spoken publicly regarding the cuts.

However, the Conservative motion states that the Scottish Parliament should call

"on the Scottish Government to work constructively with the UK Government in supporting international development programmes".

Last year, I wrote to the Minister for Africa, Mr James Duddridge. I really wanted to speak to him about the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, which directly impacted on Scottish charities. I wanted to understand better what that policy decision meant for the UK Government's international development offer, which Scotland is meant to be part of, and I also wanted to seek Mr Duddridge's views on my review of Scotland's international development programme. He refused to meet me. Nor has it been just with regard to international development. Nineteen separate requests to meet on matters relating to immigration were refused. Three requests for the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands to meet Liz Truss were sent, and every one was ignored. We were gagged from speaking at the partnership council meeting with the EU and prevented from joining EU exit operations meetings the week before the EU settlement scheme ended, and an unelected parliamentary under-secretary of state for Scotland, who has bought his way into Government—

Willie Rennie: I know that the minister is upset about being ignored by UK Government ministers, but is she going to address the points that I raised about investment from Qatar, about SinoFortone and about the relationship of the Green Party with antisemitism? Is she going to address any of those issues at all?

Jenny Gilruth: I thank Willie Rennie for his intervention, although I do not think that his tone was particularly helpful. I addressed what he said in his contribution in my remarks regarding the working group on policy coherence for sustainable development, which is going to look specifically at that issue across Government. I hope that he takes some assurance from that.

Donald Cameron can rest assured that the cabinet secretary was consensual when he finally had a meeting with the UK Government's immigration minister earlier today. However, he should understand the very difficult political reality that preceded that meeting, which I think it is fair to say is one of disrespect and contempt for devolution. It should not be like that. Our programme for government sets out further positive steps on migration. We will develop a migration service for Scotland, and we are committed to developing a rural visa pilot proposal. We will also press on with our population programme work, the ministerial task force having met just this morning.

I have heard today as well—*[Interruption.]* I would like to make progress, thank you. COP26 must galvanise all parties to take action that ensures that the world is on a pathway to net zero that is fair and just. It is vital that countries such as ours take our share of responsibility for finding solutions to the climate emergency.

We will also use our position as European co-chair of the Under2 Coalition to encourage greater action and more ambitious climate commitments from member Governments to demonstrate that global climate action cannot be met without action by Governments at all levels.

From a tailored approach to migration that meets Scotland's needs, to increasing funding on international development by 50 per cent, to establishing a centre for peace, the Scottish Government is leading the way in progressive action on the global stage. We will not shy away from our responsibilities as a good global citizen. However, as we step up, we do so in spite of a UK Government that is determined to punish the world's poorest as they attempt to recover from the global pandemic. We do so while the UK Government trumpets meaningless slogans such as "global Britain", and we are doing so in the teeth of a UK Government that has no respect for devolution or for this institution.

The makar's poem set a test for us all on Saturday:

"We seek good governance, Parliament.
Act bold. Be kind. Stay strong."

The Scottish National Party and Green Party co-operation agreement asserts that the only way to do so is to take on the full powers of an independent nation—to make the choices, to protect our people, to govern ourselves with respect and to be accountable to our people across every policy area, as a normal Government should be.

In bringing the debate to a close, I again point to the value of an internationalist perspective and the vital connections between our actions at home and abroad. By being open and connected and making a positive contribution internationally, we give ourselves the greatest possible chance of building a successful, confident and independent Scotland.

Business Motions

17:05

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-01585, 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 7 October 2021—
after

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Carer's Allowance Supplement (Scotland) Bill

insert

followed by Withdrawal of SSIs—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-01558, 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 26 October 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 Person Centred Approach to Mental Health and Substance Abuse

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 27 October 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

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

followed by Scottish Government Debate: COP26 Action and Ambition

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 28 October 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 Scottish Government Debate: Covid
 Recovery Strategy
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
 Tuesday 2 November 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 Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 3 November 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 Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Thursday 4 November 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:
 Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 25 October 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

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-01561, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Shetland Islands (Electoral Arrangements) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.—[George Adam]

The Presiding Officer: I call Beatrice Wishart.

17:06

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I wish to speak in connection with the boundary changes affecting Shetland and, in particular, the change to the Shetland West ward.

The final report that Boundaries Scotland submitted to the Scottish ministers states that its proposals

“take into account Shetland Islands Council’s Localities and the local ties and communities that they represent”

and

“use the flexibility introduced by the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 which allowed us to design a 2-member Shetland West ward to reflect local ties and recognised boundaries in the area”.

However, the community councils in Shetland West were opposed and objected to the proposal.

The ward is currently served by three councillors. The community councils do not consider that their views have been taken into account in the final report, which has overlooked geographical considerations and has instead put the focus on parity of population. Community council members are strongly of the opinion that wards with three or four members are better able to put forward the views of those whom they represent and that a two-member ward will not be able to represent them fully on all the statutory committees and other non-statutory committees.

I raised the matter with the Government and, in July, I had a reply from the Deputy First Minister, who indicated that, once it was known which committee would have responsibility for considering the relevant statutory instruments, he would ensure that the convener of that committee would be made aware of the concerns.

I cannot vote for the SSI, which has not taken into account the genuine concerns of the community regarding the changes to the Shetland West ward.

17:08

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam):

It is vital for local democracy and for local service delivery that councils are as representative as possible of the communities that they serve. Regular reviews of council wards and councillor numbers are necessary to reflect changes in population. The Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee acknowledged that Boundaries Scotland has discharged its duties professionally and competently. Shetland Islands Council stated that it was

“happy with the outcome of the commission and its recommendations”

and said:

“We feel that the process of communication and engagement has led to the satisfactory result that we have achieved.”—[Official Report, Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, 14 September 2021; c 3.]

On that basis, the committee recommended approval of the recommendations for that council and for the three other councils that were covered by the review.

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

The next item of business is consideration of nine Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S6M-01559, S6M-01560 and S6M-01562 to S6M-01566, on approval of SSIs; S6M-01567, on substitution on committees; and S6M-01568, on designation of a lead committee.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Electoral Arrangements) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Orkney Islands (Electoral Arrangements) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the North Ayrshire (Electoral Arrangements) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Young Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Children’s Legal Assistance (Miscellaneous Amendments and Consequential Provisions) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security (Advocacy Service Standards) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Liam McArthur be appointed as the Scottish Liberal Democrat substitute on the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

Alex Cole-Hamilton be appointed as the Scottish Liberal Democrat substitute on the Education, Children and Young People Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the legislative consent memorandum on the Elections Bill.—
[George Adam]

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

Decision Time

17:09

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business.

I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Donald Cameron is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Alex Rowley will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-01527.2, in the name of Donald Cameron, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01527, in the name of Angus Robertson, on Scotland in the world: championing progressive values, 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.

17:10

Meeting suspended.

17:15

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We move to the vote on amendment S6M-01527.2. Members may cast their vote now.

The vote is now closed.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (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)

White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
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)
Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Choudhury, Foysol (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)
Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)
Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
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)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Caitness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01527.2, in the name of Donald Cameron, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01527, in the name of Angus Robertson, is: For 28, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-01527.1, in the name of Alex Rowley, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01527, in the name of Angus Robertson, on Scotland in the world: championing progressive values, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to access the app, and I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Brown. We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
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)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 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)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01527.1, in the name of Alex Rowley, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01527, in the name of Angus Robertson, is: For 26, Against 94, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-01527, in the name of Angus Robertson, on Scotland in the world: championing progressive values, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Balfour. We will make sure that that is recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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)
 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)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 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)
 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 vote on motion S6M-01527, in the name of Angus Robertson, on Scotland in the world: championing progressive values, is: For 66, Against 54, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the internationalist vision for Scotland set out in the Programme for Government and the Scottish Government's commitment to be a good global citizen; supports the measures outlined to promote progressive values globally and offer practical help to international partners, notably a 50% increase in the Scottish Government's International Development Fund and doubling of the Just Transition Fund, the opening of additional Scottish Government hubs in Copenhagen and Warsaw, and the ambition to align domestic policy objectives with the approach to international development; regrets the actions taken by the UK Government, particularly since 2016, which have reduced its standing in the world, for example the deplorable decision to cut its

Official Development Assistance by a third, which will hit the world's poorest communities at a time of great need; notes the increasingly interdependent nature of the world and the necessity of cooperation between nations to address global challenges; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to promote democracy, fairness and human rights across the world; recognises Scotland's distinctive profile on the world stage, and believes that Brexit, which the overwhelming majority of people in Scotland did not vote for, is at odds with that internationalist ambition.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-01561, in the name of George Adam, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 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)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)

Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 92, Against 26, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Shetland Islands (Electoral Arrangements) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

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

As no member objects, the final question is, that motions S6M-01559, S6M-01560 and S6M-01562 to S6M-01568, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Na h-Eileanan Iar (Electoral Arrangements) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Orkney Islands (Electoral Arrangements) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the North Ayrshire (Electoral Arrangements) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Young Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Children's Legal Assistance (Miscellaneous Amendments and Consequential Provisions) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security (Advocacy Service Standards) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Liam McArthur be appointed as the Scottish Liberal Democrat substitute on the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee.

Alex Cole-Hamilton be appointed as the Scottish Liberal Democrat substitute on the Education, Children and Young People Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the legislative consent memorandum on the Elections Bill.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Rest and Be Thankful

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-00989, in the name of Donald Cameron, on the A83 Rest and Be Thankful. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises what it sees as the ongoing frustration felt by communities and businesses across Argyll and Bute as a result of the reported continued problems on the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful pass; acknowledges the establishment of the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign group, representing 1,500 businesses across Argyll and Bute; notes the group's calls for a more robust, long-term solution to the existing road, and for faster action to be taken to deliver it; understands that, following public consultation, Transport Scotland has identified a new route to replace the existing A83 Rest and Be Thankful pass; considers that the timescale set out to achieve this does not meet the urgent needs of communities and businesses across Argyll and Bute; notes the view that Transport Scotland should explore the potential use of the nearby forestry road as a temporary mitigation route, and further notes the calls on the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to work with MSPs from all parties, the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign and other local stakeholders to achieve a suitable outcome.

17:27

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank members from across the Parliament who have supported my motion for debate and those who will speak in the debate. I particularly welcome the cross-party effort on this important issue from MSPs past and present, including my old adversary Mike Russell, who I know was keen to see a permanent solution for the Rest and Be Thankful pass. I pay tribute to the Rest and Be Thankful campaign group, which is chaired by John Gurr and has the support of over 1,500 businesses from across Argyll and Bute. In addition, I acknowledge the minister's efforts, because, unlike others in the Government, Graeme Dey has visited the pass, met the campaign group and done much more than any of his predecessors in relation to the crisis, an often overused word but which describes precisely what is happening at the Rest and Be Thankful pass.

The group that I just mentioned was established as a direct result of the fact that this issue has been on the agenda for many years but remains unresolved and has no clear end in sight. Members will likely sympathise with that, as I imagine that many of us here have received countless emails from exasperated constituents and businesses who are fed up with having to put up with a substandard road that is regularly closed. However, it is not just a road but the key arterial route into and out of Argyll, relied upon by

residents and businesses from towns such as Campbeltown, Lochgilphead and Dunoon and by many in our island communities such as in Islay, Jura and Gigha, who commute to the central belt by ferry and road. People talk about lifeline routes, but that route really is a lifeline.

The figure that I want to remind everyone of is 100,000 tonnes, which is the amount of debris that sits above that road. That is 100,000 tonnes of debris sitting above vehicles carrying our school children, our elderly to hospital and people from our communities in and out of Argyll every day, every week and every year, which is very real and threatening for a vast number of people.

Many rightly believe that the road has been neglected over many years and that the short-term fixes that have been applied to attempt to make it safe and reliable simply have not worked. *The Herald* recently reported that £8.5 million has been spent on mitigation measures over the past five years, including on things such as catch pits and barriers. However, there is broad acknowledgement in all quarters that, in the event of some of the worst landslips that we have seen, even those mitigation measures simply will not prevent the road from closing. That brings into question whether the mitigation measures have been worth it. If landslides are going to overwhelm the catch-pits and close the road when it rains, have they been worth it? That is why it is clear that we need a long-term solution sooner rather than later, otherwise Argyll is getting a second-best solution with only mitigation measures and long timescales.

I welcomed the action that was taken by Transport Scotland in October 2020 to consult on a new route, and the route option that was chosen was broadly welcomed by all stakeholders. However, many stakeholders to whom I have spoken since, including the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign group, are deeply concerned about comments from Transport Scotland that it could take up to 10 years to deliver that route. Residents cannot wait 10 years for a safe and reliable route, and businesses cannot wait 10 years.

As others have noted, many key sectors across Argyll and Bute will struggle if they are forced to make longer detours to get their products to the marketplace as a result of the Rest and Be Thankful and the old military road—the usual diversion—being closed. For example, dairy farms in Kintyre, which transport tankers of milk for processing, work on low margins and are massively affected by the excessive detour as a result of the Rest being closed, which obviously hikes up their costs. There is huge and increasing frustration in relation to agricultural businesses in general. In addition, a Dunoon-based manufacturer of kit-built houses said that it took

“the unfortunate decision to manufacture our timber kits out with Dunoon due to the road connection being unreliable.”

The fact is that some businesses are deterred from investing in Argyll. One issue that the Government could perhaps explore is whether there is recognition of the cost for and impact on businesses and whether that can be quantified.

Colin Craig, the managing director of West Coast Motors, said that his business

“calculated that diversion via Dalmally and Crianlarich would add 170,000 miles per annum, use 53,000 extra litres of fuel and ... add over 140,000 kg of CO₂ emissions.”

The delays are therefore having an environmental impact too.

It is clear that action is needed from Transport Scotland to reduce the delivery timescale for this project, which is why local campaigners ask the Scottish Government to commit to a new route by the end of this parliamentary session. However, even if that date was met, there is wide recognition that additional short-term measures are needed to alleviate reliance on the pass. Many people have long called for the local forestry road at Glen Croe to be upgraded so that it can be used as a relief road in the event that the Rest and the old military road are closed. Again, an interim solution is needed this winter. One year is bad enough, not to mention four years.

The Rest and Be Thankful Campaign group states that a

“Transerv report ... in 2012 ... suggested the forestry road could be upgraded in 10-12 weeks.”

I am aware that Transport Scotland officials are still reviewing the route, over a year since it was originally mooted at a task force meeting. I appreciate that they have statutory duties to follow and that that can take time, but it is clear to me that there is an emergency situation and that, as winter approaches and the risk of landslips heightens, something has to be done sooner rather than later. The situation must be treated as an emergency.

I turn to the work of the task force. I have been grateful for the vital updates on the situation given by Transport Scotland officials, but it is clear to me that there is a divide between those officials and stakeholders on the ground. There is a strong argument for someone independent of Government being appointed to chair future meetings of the task force so that the agenda is set by local stakeholders rather than by Transport Scotland. I hope that the minister will consider that.

Since my election to the Scottish Parliament, in 2016, the Rest and Be Thankful issue has been one of the most significant local issues that I have dealt with and I have raised it in the Parliament on

countless occasions, as have others. I have raised the issue with three different transport ministers and with the First Minister. However, in all that time, little progress has been made, and residents and communities continue to suffer.

We must ensure that a future route is robust and reliable, which will take time, but we must also be mindful that, for each year that goes by in which the issue is not resolved, pain will be felt in the communities that are most affected. Let this be the session of Parliament in which we resolve the crisis at the Rest and Be Thankful once and for all.

17:35

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I thank Donald Cameron for bringing this important matter to the chamber.

For almost 100 miles, the A83 traverses Argyll and Bute. From Tarbet on Loch Lomond, it snakes its way through mid-Argyll and then south into Kintyre to Campbeltown. It links towns, villages and islands. It links people across Argyll and Bute with neighbours, businesses and the lifeline services that we all depend on.

The road is also Argyll and Bute's main link to central Scotland, but there is one section of the road that is infamous for landslips, closures and long diversions—the Rest and Be Thankful. I know the road well. It is my route home, so this is personal.

I have seen the mitigation work progress over the past 16 years—the catch pits, the wire slip capture nets, the resurfacing of the old military road, the building of the bund and now the commencement of a woodland aiming to stabilise the slope—but we need a long-term solution.

Donald Cameron has set out clearly the history and impact of the closures and detours on Argyll and Bute businesses. I am going to concentrate on the social and societal impacts.

One of my constituents living in Tarbert has regular hospital appointments in Glasgow. When the Rest is open, it is a straightforward drive of two and a half hours each way. However, if the Rest is closed, it is a journey that takes two and a half times as long—a mixture of driving and catching ferries. That is not ideal when you are healthy, but it is so much worse when you are ill.

My constituent and their carer-partner are so concerned about the impact on their health of the anxiety that comes with any hospital appointment that they are questioning whether they should attend. That should not be happening. At the Kirking of the Parliament on Friday evening, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland reminded us, as elected representatives, of the importance of

“walking in our constituent's shoes”.

I believe that this is a situation in which we must do just that.

Before every journey, my constituents check the road reports and weather forecasts, just in case the Rest might close. They work out the best way to travel and decide whether they need to travel the day before, with the added monetary and time expense.

Three weekends ago, for example, there was a perfect storm. An accident closed the A82 north of Tyndrum, with traffic diverted via Connel, a single track bridge, resulting in horrendous tailbacks, and then there was an accident in Taynuilt. On top of that, the Cammanachd cup final was being played in Oban. Accidents and increased traffic volume on a fragile road network resulted in gridlock.

Everyone in Argyll and Bute recognises that the solution to the Rest and Be Thankful landslides must be safe, but they ask that the situation be treated as an emergency. We already have “strategic timber routes”. I suggest that the A83 is a “strategic lifeline route”.

I ask the Minister for Transport to ensure that my constituents' voices—those of both communities and businesses—are listened to at the A83 task force meetings. The task force is there for everyone. I also ask that he looks into the possibility of appointing an independent chair for those meetings and, finally, that the dialogue between Transport Scotland and Argyll and Bute Council occurs on a more regular basis.

This week, the welcome news of the addition of the MV Utne to Calmac's service shows, I believe, the positive changes that the transport minister is making. I hope that he continues in that vein with regard to the Rest and Be Thankful.

The people of Argyll and Bute are resilient and, as one said to me, they “don't go bothering people until it gets really bad”. Well, it has got really bad. The health and welfare of my constituents and their businesses are at risk. For too long, they have been the victims of the geology of Glen Croe, and they now look to the Scottish Government to solve the A83 problem once and for all.

17:39

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Donald Cameron on securing the debate and join him in paying tribute to the campaign group. The Rest and Be Thankful is a crucial link for our constituents in Argyll and Bute. The disruption that closures bring impacts on the economy but also on people's health, as we have just heard, and on people who depend on it for their social links as well as their livelihoods.

I believe that the whole Parliament takes the issue of depopulation seriously. It is an issue that the Scottish Government tells us is on its radar, but its failure to deal with the situation at the Rest and Be Thankful does not reassure me on that. I understand that, because of the route, the area could not compete for an investment of more than £700 million by the Scottish Salmon Company that would have created local jobs. Instead, the investment went to a place where transport links are much more secure. A manufacturer of kit houses is moving out of Dunoon

“due to the road connection being unreliable.”

The road haulage sector tells us that the disruption is costing it around £2.3 million a year. Donald Cameron mentioned other examples.

The area contributes 15 per cent of Scotland's whisky and 26 per cent of its forestry, and those industries are hampered by the situation on the A83. Despite millions of pounds having been spent on the road, it is no safer. The amount of earth that is unstable and in danger of falling is terrifying. We have already lost one life to the road and, should that 100,000 tonnes of earth fall on to the road this winter, it could have catastrophic consequences.

It is also unacceptable that the road closes when there is a threat of bad weather, with traffic being rerouted to the old military road, which is not satisfactory. Until the Scottish Government fixes the route, we need a real-time warning system, whereby when bad weather is forecast, an amber light indicates that the road is liable to close, with a red light showing that it is closed. A similar system is used for our ferry services. A text alert system could give regular travellers real-time information on what was happening on the route.

We need a safer and more sustainable short-term alternative, because I fear for this winter. Thereafter, we need a long-term solution that serves the whole of Argyll and Bute. We need that urgently. Too much time has already elapsed. We cannot wait for the next election to get new promises—we need action now.

Transport Scotland tells us that it takes it a year to look at every temporary solution that is proposed. It should open the forestry road to take transport in the opposite direction of the old military road in the short term. It could do that now. It would still cause delays, but it would be much faster than the current solution.

Surely it is not too much to ask for a road that is open when it rains, that people can depend on and that they do not fear travelling on. I am sorry to say that the situation on the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful is a catastrophe waiting to happen if no action is taken. The Scottish Government knows that, and it needs to act now.

17:42

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I thank Donald Cameron for bringing the debate to the Parliament. It would be nice if we had something to be thankful for, because, if that were the case, we would not need to be here. The problems on the A83 are long-standing.

Too many parts of Scotland—generally, those on the edges—get left behind when it comes to road investment, although in this case lack of money is not the problem. Goodness knows, enough has been spent—£8.5 million in the past five years—on mitigation measures. No, I am talking about the spending of money on a permanent solution that will mean no more road closures; Argyll not being cut off unless drivers take an enormous detour; business not suffering; and people being able to do normal things, such as get about, get to work and trade.

As Donald Cameron said, 1,500 businesses support the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign. A quick look at the campaign's website shows the level of frustration. The campaign has some stats of its own: 200 days is the length of time for which the A83 was disrupted in 2020; 10 years is the length of time that was waited for 11 new proposals, only one of which is feasible; 10 years is the Government's current timeframe for delivering a permanent solution; 100,000 tonnes is the amount of debris that could fall on the road; £1 million is the amount of money that was spent on the barrier wall on the old military road in 2020.

We are not talking about some remote road that a few tourists use to get to the hills, although that is important, too. The A83 is a key artery. It is as important to the people of Argyll and Bute as the A77 is to people in Ayrshire, or as the A1 is to those in the Borders. There is a lack of investment in those roads, too, but communities along them generally do not get cut off.

Too often, projects in this country get bogged down in process. The cabinet secretary or minister of the day will talk about how they need to follow the process, how proper studies need to be done and how there is a need for reviews and consultation. That is all shorthand for delay—for not actually doing anything.

Donald Cameron spoke about the growing divide between Transport Scotland officials and stakeholders on the ground. That is all too typical of the we-know-best attitude that permeates some parts of the public sector. It is not good enough. Mr Cameron has spoken to three different transport ministers in his time in the Parliament. He has been an MSP for as long as I have—just over five years—and nothing has happened in that period.

The Minister for Transport, whom Mr Cameron praised, should chair the meetings of the A83 task force—or get someone independent to do so—and commit to winding it up because a new road has been built. That needs to happen now—not in 10 years' time.

The A83 campaign has written to various ministers and officials. In an act of sheer desperation, its chairman, John Gurr, wrote last week to the coalition of chaos's very own ministerial double act, Patrick Harvie and Lorna Slater. He said:

"we estimate the impact to the environment on idling traffic waiting at lights or for a convoy, or with the increased impact of 30-60 miles diversions—for a two-mile road closure—to be an extra 3,300 tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere."

That is bad for the environment. One would think that that would interest the Greens. The Government must act, and act now—not in 10 years' time.

17:47

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I congratulate Donald Cameron on securing debating time on this important matter. The disruption that is caused by repeated closure of the A83 Rest and Be Thankful has not only impacted the people and communities of Argyll but had a knock-on effect on my Arran constituents. When the Rest and Be Thankful is closed, islanders and visitors who wish to travel to Argyll via Arran, and vice versa, are prevented from travelling on a vital main road unless they take a wide detour.

Unreliable diversions such as the single-track old military road, which can also face closure due to a lack of staff or weather conditions, increases the reluctance to visit the Kintyre peninsula, causing the island to miss out on tourists who would visit Arran via Claonaig. Ironically, many choose that route only if the Brodick to Ardrossan ferry is not sailing, as is not infrequently the case. Tourism is the backbone of Arran's economy, generating £61 million in 2018.

Unreliable alternative routes often prevent residents from leaving the island or delay their return home from essential visits to the mainland due to traffic queues and increased pressure on the CalMac Lochranza to Claonaig ferry route. Islanders repeatedly make it clear that their biggest concern is the reliability of ferry services, which is worsened by Covid outbreaks on vessels. It is therefore vital to expedite the implementation of a solution to the landslides in order to support local communities in Argyll and, by extension, those on Arran.

The island has faced numerous setbacks due to Covid and Brexit. The angst among Arran and Argyll business owners must be recognised and acted on to prevent further detriment. Every closure of the A83 due to delays in implementing a permanent solution to the landslides that plague the route is a further setback to local businesses as they work to kick-start the economies of Argyll and Arran post-lockdown. Additional transport costs and the environmental impact must also be considered. For 674 of the 730 days between 2018 and 2020, the A83 pass was used as a single-track road with traffic lights. That highlights the catastrophic impact of the landslides on accessibility to much of Arran and Argyll.

We should find a permanent solution to the issue, in order to boost local confidence and much-needed growth in local economies, instead of pouring more money into ineffective temporary measures. A fast, long-term and robust solution is what the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign group is working for, but it is yet to be delivered.

Despite eight permanent solutions being identified in 2012, Transport Scotland implemented ineffective temporary measures that have cost £8.5 million to date, as Donald Cameron pointed out. Notwithstanding that, we see an ever-increasing number of road closures. Those short-term mitigations have failed to ensure continuous full access through the A83.

In 2020, Transport Scotland identified a further 11 proposals, with even a tunnel being considered, although I understand from my colleague Jenni Minto that the soil and underlying conditions make that an unlikely prospect. Local communities were relieved that at least those options were being considered, but that relief changed to disappointment when it was announced that it might take a further 10 years to implement a solution.

That must change if the A83 Rest and Be Thankful route is no longer to have a detrimental effect on my constituents and much of Argyll—and not least on the communities and businesses in the Kintyre peninsula. I know that the minister will take the opportunity to grab the bull by the horns and work to deliver a swift solution to this seemingly perennial problem.

17:50

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I thank Donald Cameron for securing the debate and colleagues for all the work that they have carried out in raising the issue of the Rest and Be Thankful on behalf of people who live and work in Argyll and Bute.

As an MSP for a region that covers large areas of rural and island Scotland, I have become very

familiar with the term “lifeline”—lifeline services, lifeline ferries and lifeline roads. The Rest and Be Thankful is a lifeline road. The residents and businesses that depend on that lifeline road require a solution now, and, having met with a number of them, I have been made aware of the level of their frustration and concern.

I appreciate that the Scottish Government is working on a temporary solution and a long-term solution, but the timescales for those solutions are too long. Ten years is too long—our communities do not have time to wait. The situation needs to be tackled with a greater sense of urgency. The Scottish Government has committed to maintaining populations and re-peopleing rural and island Scotland, but it is taking too long to get a sustainable solution for the part of the A83 that we are debating. Businesses are relocating and people who live in the area are faced with being cut off from public services, including vital access to medical care in Glasgow.

In 2004, Transport Scotland undertook the Scottish road network landslides study, which identified the A83 Ardgartan to the Rest and Be Thankful as one of the top landslide hazard sites in Scotland. That was 17 years ago. Now, with the acceleration of the climate crisis, we face greater climate breakdown, which is bringing more, and frequent, landslips.

On 1 September, the Minister for Transport told members that the Government has

“invested £87 million in the maintenance of the A83” since 2007,

“including more than £15 million in landslide mitigation works to provide additional resilience at the Rest and Be Thankful”.—[*Official Report*, 1 September 2021; c 15.]

If the Scottish Government is to take an infrastructure-first approach in its response to the climate emergency, I suggest that it truly recognise that we are in a climate emergency and must reduce the levels of carbon emissions contributed by our transport. Let us widen our approach. I ask the minister to consider a tunnel—tunnels are in the solutions that have been offered—but, instead of or along with a road, he should include a rail line that is fit for passengers and freight. In the meantime, we should move rapidly on with the short-term solutions and, if possible, take the approach proposed by the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign group to upgrade the forestry road for immediate use.

What is happening at the Rest and Be Thankful is an indicator of what is to come as our changing climate and devastated biodiversity create more and more infrastructure problems. It illustrates the need for landowners and managers to do more to mitigate the inevitable impact of climate breakdown on our infrastructure, whether that be

through reforestation or irrigation measures. We need mechanisms in place that support landowners to manage their land for the public good in situations where their choices impact our national transport and other infrastructure.

Over the Parliament’s lifetime, we have had so many announcements on roads, major road-building projects and decisions that have benefited motorists. As we look to the future, we need to stop investing in projects that damage our environment and instead prioritise public transport and lifeline roads such as the Rest and Be Thankful, which put our constituents, our communities and our climate first.

17:55

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I congratulate Donald Cameron on securing the debate and on his speech. Members might be surprised to learn that the A83 is actually in my constituency—it is on the edge of it—but it impacts most significantly on the residents of Argyll.

Even here, some 90 miles away, I can tell when it is raining in Argyll—or, indeed, if there is the prospect of rain—because an email pops into my inbox from BEAR Scotland to tell me that the A83 will be under convoy or closed. I could paper my walls with those emails; in fact, I could paper the walls of the entire Parliament and all the way up the Royal Mile, because the emails have arrived almost daily for many a year. Of course, this is Scotland, where rain, unfortunately, is the default weather status, so the situation is hardly surprising. However, the consequences for Argyll are serious, because those people cannot afford to be cut off by the A83’s closure.

I therefore thank all the people involved—the designers, the engineers and the road experts—for their valiant efforts in trying to contain the landslides at the Rest and Be Thankful. Their efforts could be described as heroic, but they are battling mother nature, who will ultimately win, no matter how ingenious we are.

I agree with Donald Cameron that we should praise the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign group, which is so ably led by John Gurr. It has represented local views and interests very well, but it is, understandably, very frustrated.

I do not want to dwell on whether the catch pits work or whether the old military road is sustainable. They have served a purpose. However, the fear is that we will end up with the A83 and the old military road closed simultaneously, which will, in effect, cut Argyll off. I remind members that, from 4 August 2020 to 31 March this year—a mere eight months—the A83 has been fully closed for 35 days, has been under convoy using the old military road for 148 days

and has had traffic lights for 56 days. Basically, the A83 has not been fully open and operating normally since 4 August 2020.

For those who do not know the area, the A83 is a lifeline for Argyll, carrying at least 1.4 million vehicles a year. It is essential for farming and getting livestock to markets; it is essential for the timber industry, with 26 per cent of timber production coming from Argyll; it is essential for whisky, with the amber nectar being transported from more than 20 distilleries to Scotland and abroad; and it is essential for tourism, which is one of the main imports into the area—and no wonder, given the area's great natural beauty. Last but not least, it is important to people who travel for work or to attend hospital.

Whatever the reason for it, closing the road is bad for business and tourism, and it could lead to further population decline. It has a direct detrimental impact on the local industry that runs to millions of pounds in lost income and, indeed, lost jobs.

I know that the minister and his officials are doing their very best, but there is an urgent need now. The demands of the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign group are clear and, I have to say, very reasonable. Those people need a permanent solution, and they need it fast. A preferred route has been identified, running through Glen Croe, but there is dismay that it will take well beyond the lifetime of the current parliamentary session to deliver it. Indeed, some have suggested that it could be 10 years before it is delivered. As a result, it has been suggested that the forestry road be used as a temporary additional route, but that option was previously rejected by Transport Scotland, because Forestry Scotland, apparently, was not keen. I am really sorry, but I do not think that Forestry Scotland's lack of enthusiasm should be a barrier to doing what is right for the people of Argyll.

I am running out of time, as we are for a replacement road for the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful. We need action from the Government. All parties will support the Government in that endeavour, but it needs to move faster. Climate change will not wait for 10 years.

We managed to put a man on the moon in 1969. That was 52 years ago. We are talking about a road. It should not be beyond us. Let us stop the delay. Let us get this done. The communities of Argyll deserve nothing less.

18:00

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): I welcome the fact that Donald Cameron has secured the debate, because it gives me an opportunity to offer any reassurance needed that

the Scottish Government is entirely committed to keeping Argyll and Bute open for business by delivering short and longer-term permanent solutions to the issues at the Rest and Be Thankful.

I thank members for their, in large part, thoughtful and measured contributions.

I am acutely aware of the importance of the A83 trunk road to the communities and economy of Argyll and Bute. The fact that my first ministerial visit at the beginning of June this year was to the Rest and Be Thankful should be seen as evidence of that and of the fact that the Scottish Government is intent on identifying and delivering a safe and robust solution as soon as possible, with equal emphasis on “safe”, “robust” and “as soon as possible”.

As we have heard, since 2007, the Government has invested £87 million in maintenance of the A83 trunk road, including £15 million at the Rest and Be Thankful for landslide mitigation measures and improvements to the old military road diversions. As Mr Cameron and other members are aware, Transport Scotland has been progressing a number of projects throughout 2021, including further roadside catch pit works, drainage improvements and debris fences, along with vital maintenance and safety schemes along the A83. Those on-going works are helping to make the A83 and the old military road diversion more resilient to the effects of extreme weather landslides. I do not think that anyone is seriously suggesting that we should not have carried out that work, because it is designed to buy us time to deliver the medium and long-term solutions that we need. That work is extremely important.

I absolutely agree with Jackie Baillie's assessment of the challenges that mother nature poses here; it is quite scary to go there and see what has happened on the site and the necessity of the work that has been done by the engineers. The key point is, however, that parallel to those essential measures being deployed is the gathering of the data that is required to underpin a decision about the medium and long-term solutions to which we have committed.

Medium and long-term solutions are being progressed, but they must be based on sound information about the topography and the nature of the ground underneath—in relation to the old forest track, for example. On one side of the glen, the existing road is built into the hillside. That error should not be replicated if that is not the right place to put the road. That is where we are.

As I said, I have visited the site and walked the old forest track. I do not mean this as a challenge; I am making a genuine offer to members who have contributed to the debate. I will arrange a

visit if they want to go and see for themselves and question the engineers about the challenges that they face on the route. One of the engineers that I spoke to said that this is one of the biggest engineering challenges that we have faced in Scotland because of the nature of the location—he was not using that as an excuse.

In autumn last year, 11 corridor route options, to provide a long-term solution to the issues at the Rest and Be Thankful, were published for consultation. All corridors were assessed and, in March this year, the Glen Croe corridor route was announced as the preferred route. The preferred corridor is the most cost effective and least technically challenging of all the corridors that were considered. It provides scope for the quickest delivery. I hope that that answers the point about unnecessary delay.

Details of five possible route options for the preferred corridor have been announced, and an assessment to determine the best of them is under way. It is a complex project in challenging conditions, and the options range from traditional roads and localised structural protection to full tunnel options.

Timescales for a long-term safe and resilient solution to the Rest and Be Thankful range between seven and 10 years, depending on the solution that is chosen. Those timescales include all the work that needs to be done, but we are not asking people to wait for 10 years. I fully appreciate that, at face value, the timescales that have been mentioned are frustrating for the community, but we will look to bring forward the programme where we can. In part, that is what gathering the data is about. It is not an exercise in collecting data simply for the sake of it; it has an end product, which is to tell us which of the routes is the most suitable to progress.

It is also necessary that the correct statutory process is followed. First, we must ensure that it is fair and transparent and that all the options are looked at for the benefit of the community and local road users. It is also important to follow the correct statutory process so that we avoid the risk of a legal challenge. We have heard some very powerful contributions. None of us wants additional delays to be built in because someone picks a hole in the processes that were followed.

As I said, Transport Scotland is gathering data for the route options. It is essential that we have that information to inform the decision that is made. While that work is being done, and in recognition of the urgent need to find a solution, Transport Scotland is also progressing work on the medium-term resilient route. That will be a proportionate solution that is appropriate to the timeframe, but it will be based on sound engineering principles. As part of that work,

consideration is being given to the existing forestry track, possible improvements to the old military road and other options on land that is already owned by the Scottish ministers.

However, contrary to what some might assert, a medium-term solution on the south-western slope along or close to the forestry track is not without its challenges. As things stand, little information is available on the ground conditions in that area, the topography is challenging, and there is evidence of debris flow and boulder-fall events. It is imperative that we go through the process that is currently being followed to ensure that the chosen route for a medium-term solution is proportionate, robust and, above all else, safe for trunk road traffic.

Depending on the statutory consents that are required, following that work we should have a finalised proposal by this time next year. We intend to be as open as we can be with interested parties. That is why, in September, members of the campaign group that is referenced in the motion were afforded the chance to meet Transport Scotland's engineers and consultants and to walk the forestry track in Glen Croe. That gave both parties the opportunity to discuss the issues and the concerns regarding the use of that route. I reiterate that I make such an offer to members. I think that it would benefit them to go on site to see the situation for themselves and to ask any questions that arise from what they view.

Last month, an A83 task force meeting was held. We have heard talk about the task force. That group encompasses a wide range of stakeholders including MSPs, MPs, local elected members, businesses and community councils, to name just a few. I make it clear that the task force remains the appropriate forum for tracking and discussing progress. The information that is gathered on the medium and long-term solutions will be shared with the task force when it is available.

The campaign group is represented on the task force. I say to the campaign group's members that, if they have information or, more importantly, evidence from any advisers they have that might assist the process, they should share that at task force meetings.

In keeping with the task force being the forum for engagement between Transport Scotland and stakeholders, I have asked that any task force members who wish to be given the opportunity to walk the forestry track and have conversations of the kind that I mentioned be offered such an opportunity.

Transport Scotland will provide a project update at the next task force meeting, which will include the sharing of data from the project surveys. I

hope to attend that meeting, along with officials, so that I can answer any questions on next steps that members of the task force might have. I have much respect for Mr Simpson, but he seems to be obsessed with the idea that I am at the heart of every discussion in the transport portfolio. I am afraid that that is not possible.

A number of members made a point about the nature of the task force meetings. If it is felt that the format is not conducive to participants having the opportunity to interrogate Transport Scotland's position on the matter and to ask any questions that they have, I am quite happy to assess whether the format can be revised. I am happy to discuss that offline with members.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could you start to wind up, please?

Graeme Dey: I am sorry—I am going on a bit longer than I intended to.

I go back to the point that I made earlier: we have to deal with the here and now. That means seeking to mitigate the risk from landslides at the Rest and Be Thankful as a priority as we work through the measures that I have outlined. In the meantime, the work continues apace.

I will review the *Official Report* of the debate, as the sound during Ms Grant's contribution was a bit ropey, and I will consider her point about amber lights and red lights.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you very much indeed, minister. That concludes the debate.

Meeting closed at 18:10.

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