



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Tuesday 7 December 2021

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 7 December 2021

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Good afternoon. I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place and that face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The first item of business is time for reflection, and our leader today is Lee Mcleman, president of the Aberdeen Scotland stake, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Lee Mcleman (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints): Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the invitation to participate in today's proceedings.

Abraham Lincoln taught that

"The strength of a nation lies in the homes of its people."

Confucius also taught that

"The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home."

In 1995, "The Family: A Proclamation To The World" was published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Contained in that proclamation is a call to all

"officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society."

The proclamation declares one eternal truth that will, I believe, if understood and applied, bring peace to our families, homes, communities and nation. It states:

"All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny."

Inherent in the truth that we are sons and daughters unto God lies the beauty that each of us are brothers and sisters. When we understand our true divine identity as sons and daughters of God and our relationship one to another as brothers and sisters, one another's welfare, care and concern instinctively become our own, because we are all family, and our lives are a family matter.

In "The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ", an ancient prophet/historian called Nephi taught:

"I know that"

God

"loveth his children".

The Bible also teaches that

"God so loved the world"—

his family—

"that he gave his only begotten son."

Of the many titles that God would reserve, he invites us as his children to call him father. In the midst of our saviour's atoning sacrifice in the garden called Gethsemane, he addressed his father and our father in the intimacy of the Hebrew word "Abba", which has been interpreted as "Papa" or "Daddy".

My brothers and sisters of this chamber, may God bless you, our children, our families and our homes, and may he bless each one of us to see one another in our true identities not only as children, sons and daughters of Scotland, but as sons and daughters of God and all members of his eternal family.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Business Motion

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-02456, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out changes to today's business.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for Tuesday 7 December 2021—

after

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

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Independent Review of Moray Maternity Services—
[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

Topical Question Time

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is topical question time. To get in as many members as possible, I would prefer short and succinct questions and responses.

Serious Organised Crime and Terrorism

1. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what resilience measures are in place to tackle serious organised crime and terrorism, in light of reports that the assistant chief constable in charge has been suspended. (S6T-00339)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): That is an operational matter for Police Scotland. The chief constable has confirmed that Assistant Chief Constable Tim Mairs will move from his current role on an interim basis to take responsibility for the organised crime, counterterrorism and intelligence portfolio. The member will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to comment further while an investigation is under way.

Jamie Greene: I appreciate that an investigation is under way. However, the seniority of the individual and the importance of his remit cause the most concern. The assistant chief constable who has been suspended leads the charge in tackling serious organised crime, terrorism and cybercrime in Scotland. We know that cybercrime increased 95 per cent last year, web-based grooming offences have increased by 80 per cent over five years and the police are currently investigating nearly 2,500 serious organised gang members in Scotland. Is the cabinet secretary confident that we are making progress in tackling such crimes? What steps has he taken in the past few days to ensure that the recent events will in no way impact on Police Scotland's ability to protect the public?

Keith Brown: As I said, there is not much that I can say on the investigation. The member says that it is important because of the level of seniority that the person involved has in the organisation, but it would be just as important if an individual at any level in Police Scotland was involved in such a case.

It is the chief constable's responsibility to deploy his force as he sees fit. I have had discussions in the past few days with the police and the Scottish Police Authority, and I am confident that the police and the chief constable will ensure that, in relation to organised crime and cybercrime, the coverage that is provided, and effort that is made, will be the

same as it was before the case came to fruition. That will be effected by the changes that the chief constable has put in place.

Jamie Greene: I am reassured that a conversation has taken place about the resilience of the police's ability to handle such serious crime in Scotland, but let us not forget that it is over a year since Dame Elish Angiolini's final report into police misconduct and complaints handling was published. The Government snuck out a progress report on the final day before summer recess—I raised that at the time—but we have heard nothing since. It remains an astonishing fact that an officer can resign while suspended during an investigation with no further action taken or recourse available. Why is that still the case?

Keith Brown: Jamie Greene makes an important point. He knows that one of the recommendations in Dame Elish Angiolini's report relates to that. He will also know that there were more than 100 such recommendations, many of which have been progressed. I reassure him that a meeting took place last week at which the latest tranche of recommendations that have been progressed was summarised. We will shortly make public the progress that has been made on the range of recommendations.

The situation to which the member refers would require primary legislation to change. We will have to introduce that and, perhaps, another provision on advisory and barred lists, under which somebody who is convicted of an offence in one police force cannot join another police force without that force being told about it.

Those are two important recommendations, but they will require primary legislation and, if we implement them, that will require to be fitted into the legislative programme. The justice portfolio currently has around 22 bills scheduled for this parliamentary session alone before any bills that Jamie Greene and other members might propose. It is a congested programme, but we intend to implement those recommendations. Serious progress is being made on the range of recommendations that Elish Angiolini made.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for that information. He will be aware there has been an 18-fold increase in seizures of so-called street Valium in the space of a year, while seizures of psychoactive substances have nearly doubled. I would like further assurance that the cabinet secretary will be mindful of the need for that successful work to continue and not be compromised in any way.

Keith Brown: I give Pauline McNeill that reassurance, which is based on the 17,000 police officers that we have in place and the work that is being done through some new initiatives. She

mentioned psychoactive drugs. She will be aware of some of the measures that are being taken in relation to the presence of those drugs in prisons. The member will also be aware of recent changes made by the Lord Advocate in relation to how drug offences are prosecuted and dealt with by the police. There is a real focus on the issue.

The discovery of an increased amount of drugs should not necessarily be seen as indicating increased prevalence. We cannot properly determine exactly what that is due to, but it may well be down to the fact that the police are acting very effectively to locate and seize the drugs.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): What is the Scottish Government doing to strengthen the process for the handling of complaints and misconduct allegations against police officers?

Keith Brown: I think that I partly answered that question in response to Jamie Greene's supplementary question. Following the review by Dame Elish Angiolini, which has already been mentioned, and which concerned issues with complaints handling, investigations and misconduct, a number of recommendations have already been implemented. Others will require legislation, and we will consult further on those proposals to strengthen the framework for complaints and misconduct allegations against police officers. We will do that next year, including in relation to the conduct framework for senior officers.

There is currently an established process for the handling of police complaints, investigations of serious incidents and misconduct, and I welcome the significant progress that has been made by Police Scotland, the SPA, the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, among others, to drive improvements in systems and processes in advance of the legislative changes that I mentioned earlier.

NHS Lothian (Delayed Discharge)

2. **Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is providing to NHS Lothian, and other national health service boards, given the consequences and impact of delayed discharges. (S6T-00344)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): I thank the member for that important question. The health and care system is under extreme pressure due to the pandemic, and all health boards are experiencing significant issues, including workforce challenges and high levels of delayed discharge. To help alleviate some of that pressure, we announced a

substantial new package of more £300 million in hospital and community care to support the NHS and social care systems over the winter, with a substantial proportion of that funding going directly into social care to help with delayed discharge.

Last month, I announced further funding of £10 million to support health boards in maintaining resilience throughout the winter by putting in place a range of measures, including appropriate levels of staffing in the right place at the right time.

I have been meeting the chief executive of NHS Lothian, alongside the chief executive of the City of Edinburgh Council and Judith Proctor and the team at the Edinburgh health and social care partnership, on a weekly basis over the past month to discuss this very issue.

Daniel Johnson: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer, and I will be measured in my next question. Along with others in the chamber, I was at a briefing on Friday that painted an alarming picture. There has clearly been a spike in delayed discharge, particularly in Edinburgh, leading to a logjam right the way through in-patient care and into accident and emergency.

In the cabinet secretary's meetings, was the issue identified? My understanding is that the issue is not necessarily just one of money. Is the issue one of social care provision, or are there other blockages to discharge? Is that happening elsewhere in the country?

Humza Yousaf: If Daniel Johnson wants further briefing than this topical question will necessarily allow, I am happy to speak to him in detail offline, with my officials.

In response to Daniel Johnson's questions, I note that there are some Edinburgh-specific issues, and I meet representatives of the relevant organisations in Edinburgh every single week, as I am really concerned about the level of delayed discharge there—it is the highest in the country. There are also unique circumstances in Edinburgh. There is a severe lack of in-house provision, as Daniel Johnson probably knows, not just in care homes but in care at home, which plays a vital part in keeping people out of hospital, be that via the back door or by preventing people from coming through the front door.

Workforce is clearly a challenge in Edinburgh, too, given the competing workforce pressures in hospitality and so on. Daniel Johnson is absolutely right, however: as I have said to the City of Edinburgh Council, the health and social care partnership and NHS Lothian, finance should not be an issue. In fact, I agreed additional funding, recognising that, for interim care placements, for example, the cost may well be higher in Edinburgh than in other parts of the country. I am convinced and content that funding is not the issue, as Daniel

Johnson articulates, but there are a significant number of other issues that we are trying to work through in Edinburgh.

Given the limited time that I have at topical questions, I am happy to write to the member or, if he wants a meeting, I am more than happy to discuss these matters in greater detail.

Daniel Johnson: I would indeed welcome more detail and a meeting. Of particular concern is in-patient care, especially in trauma. One example is orthopaedics, where delays in treatment can obviously have consequences for bone growth and so on. Are there concerns in particular areas of in-patient care, and would the cabinet secretary be able to elaborate on what action is being taken to remove those issues?

Humza Yousaf: There may be concerns across the board, but the member is right to focus on the areas that he has focused on. It is important to note that although—understandably—we often spend a lot of time in the chamber focusing on unscheduled emergency care, we know that a backlog has been building for elective care, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic's significant impact.

We are using all the national resources possible—for example, we are asking how the Golden Jubilee national hospital can help with orthopaedic surgery in Lothian, the west coast or any other part of the country—and maximising resources as much as we can to help with the elective backlog. We know that, if people wait longer for such surgery, that builds up problems for us in the future. I am more than happy to go into more detail at a meeting with Daniel Johnson.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): The cabinet secretary has announced money to address delayed discharges, and he agreed in a previous answer that money is not necessarily the problem. When does he expect to help more long-suffering patients to receive the care that they need and deserve by reducing the level of hospital delayed discharges?

Humza Yousaf: The number is reducing—last week's figure was below 1,500, although it is still far too high and I want it to reduce even more. I am happy to provide Sandesh Gulhane with the latest figures.

We are beginning to see small reductions, but I need them to be far bigger. I am meeting the six health boards that have the most delayed discharges, and we are working through solutions and making progress, as I said. I hope that the progress will continue. As I said in response to Daniel Johnson and as I have made clear to health boards, funding and finances should not be a barrier to reducing delayed discharges.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I, too, attended the briefing on Friday with NHS Lothian, and then I went to one with NHS Borders. Further to the answers to Daniel Johnson, the problem is not just in Edinburgh. As of today, of the 300 beds in Borders general hospital, seven are occupied by Covid patients, but 51 are occupied by those whose discharge is delayed. I appreciate the various causes of that but, if we are losing 17 per cent of bed capacity when all the predictable challenges of winter lie ahead, we have an immediate problem.

I am listening carefully to the cabinet secretary's answers. Given that delayed discharge is a problem in the Borders, too, is he meeting Ralph Roberts of NHS Borders?

Humza Yousaf: Yes, as members can imagine, I discuss the issue with every health board. Christine Grahame is right that every health board contends with the problem. There is also very good practice, which I am ensuring is shared across every health board.

As always, Christine Grahame gets to the crux of the issue. If we invest not just in care home placements, which are hugely important, but in care at home and ensuring that people have the appropriate packages at home, we hope that we will prevent them from coming through the hospital front door.

I assure Christine Grahame that I meet the health board chief executives and chairs every week. Ralph Roberts is on those calls and we discuss such matters in great detail.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): I am grateful for the answers that we have heard. Following the meeting on Friday, will the cabinet secretary say where the staff will come from who are needed to alleviate the problem across Scotland?

Humza Yousaf: Recruitment is under way and is going well. Job adverts have been placed, interviews are commencing and a number of people have been recruited. In answer to Daniel Johnson, I said that Edinburgh has an acute problem because of pressures from the retail sector and hospitality and so on. A significant proportion of the £300 million of funding that I announced is for additional recruitment of band 2s to band 4s. That work is well under way. If the member wishes to write to me for more specific detail on recruitment, I will be happy to provide the numbers.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Given the cabinet secretary's comments about capacity in the system, I ask how many people are waiting for a hospital appointment.

Humza Yousaf: Forgive me—I do not have to hand the exact number who are waiting for a hospital appointment, but I am happy to see whether we have the figures and, if so, we will provide them to Stephen Kerr. We are investing heavily to free up as much capacity as we can. Getting back into the community people whose discharge has been delayed will help us to free up space in hospitals and see more people, which is important.

Our investment in primary care is really important to that. We do not want everybody to have to go to hospital to be seen. We are investing across the system so that they can be seen in the community—in primary care. I am more than happy to see whether we can provide the exact figures that Mr Kerr looks for.

Covid-19

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a statement by Nicola Sturgeon, giving a Covid-19 update.

14:20

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Today, I will give an update on the general Covid situation. In addition, I will share the most up-to-date information that we have on the omicron variant—both its transmission in Scotland and the world's developing understanding of it—and set out the steps that we must take to slow its spread and to stem transmission of the virus more generally.

First, I turn to today's statistics. There were 3,060 positive cases reported yesterday, which is 9.2 per cent of all tests carried out. There are currently 576 people in hospital with Covid, which is 15 fewer than yesterday, and 38 people are in intensive care, which is five fewer than yesterday. Sadly, a further 12 deaths have been reported over the past 24 hours, which takes the total number of deaths registered under the daily definition to 9,661. Once again, I send my condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one.

I am pleased to report, however, that the vaccination programme continues apace: 4,355,063 people have now had a first dose; 3,962,203 have had two doses; and 1,922,604 have had a booster or third dose of vaccine. On first, second, third and booster doses, Scotland is still the most vaccinated part of the United Kingdom. At this stage, on booster doses, we are comfortably ahead of the other UK nations, with around 40 per cent of the over-12 population having had a booster jab to date. Again, I record my thanks to everyone who has been involved in organising and delivering the vaccine programme.

Today's weekly update coincides with the latest three-week review point for all the remaining Covid regulations. I can confirm that, at our meeting this morning, the Cabinet agreed to keep all the current protections in place, with no immediate changes.

Given the very significant risks that are posed by omicron, and the continuing high, and once again rising, number of cases in Scotland overall, our judgment is that it would, at this time, be inappropriate to lift any of the protections that are currently in place. On the contrary, we agreed that, at this stage, it is vital to strengthen compliance with all the existing protections. We also agreed that, in the light of the rapidly developing omicron situation, it is important to keep the need for any additional protections under daily review. The importance of doing that will be clear from the

latest data, in particular the data that I will shortly share on omicron.

First, I will summarise the overall situation. After two weeks of falling case numbers, the past seven days have seen a rise in the overall number of Covid cases. Last week, I reported that the number of new cases being recorded each day had fallen by 14 per cent over the preceding seven days. However, in the past week, cases have increased by 11 per cent, and we are currently recording just over 2,800 new cases a day on average.

Encouragingly, cases in the over-60 age groups have continued to fall, in the past week by a further 8 per cent. There is little, if any, doubt that that reflects the effectiveness of booster vaccines. However, in all age cohorts under 60, cases are rising again. In total, the number of cases among under-60s increased by 13 per cent in the past week and, given that people under 60 currently account for more than 90 per cent of all cases, that has inevitably driven an increase in the total number of cases recorded.

More positively, the number of people in hospital with Covid has fallen further in the past week, from 706 to 576, as has the number of those in intensive care, from 54 to 38. That is of course welcome news. However, we should not be in any way complacent about that—first, because we know that there is always a time lag between rising cases and rising admissions to hospital, and secondly, because the national health service continues to be under very severe pressure, not only from direct Covid pressures but from the backlog of work created during the pandemic.

On top of all that, as we head further into winter, the NHS may soon face additional pressures from, for example, flu. There has always been the potential for Covid cases to rise during December—as may now be happening—as a result of more people mixing indoors more often.

In any circumstances, we would be concerned about the current high level of cases and the impact that it might have on the NHS, but the emergence of the omicron variant is now an additional and very significant, cause for concern. From tomorrow, Public Health Scotland's weekly Covid report will provide more detail on both confirmed and probable omicron cases in Scotland. It will include data on not only confirmed cases, but the number of polymerase chain reaction tests showing what is called the S-gene dropout. That is not conclusive evidence that a case is of the omicron variant, but it is highly indicative of it. The report will also contain data on the age, sex and health board area of omicron cases. In weeks to come, and as soon as the quality of data allows, the reports will also provide detail on the vaccination status of, and hospital

admissions and deaths associated with, omicron cases.

For now, I will summarise what we currently know about the presence and spread of the new variant in Scotland. I confirm that, as of 5 pm yesterday, there were 99 confirmed cases here. That is an increase of 28 since yesterday. To give a sense of the speed of increase, albeit at this stage from a low level, the figure that I reported this time last week was nine. Therefore, we have seen an increase of more than tenfold in the space of a single week.

A low—around 4 per cent—but steadily rising proportion of cases also now shows the S-gene dropout that, as I said a moment ago, is highly indicative of the omicron variant. At this stage, our estimate is that the doubling time for omicron cases may be as short as two to three days, and the reproduction number associated with the new variant may be well over 2.

I can also report that there are now confirmed cases in nine of our 14 health board areas, suggesting that community transmission is becoming more widespread, and possibly more sustained, across the country. Our health protection teams are working hard through contact tracing, testing and isolation to slow the spread of omicron cases. That work will obviously continue. I thank the teams for their excellent efforts. However, given the nature of transmission, I expect to see a continued and potentially rapid rise in cases in the days ahead, and that omicron will account for a rising share of overall cases. All that explains, I hope, the requirement for Government to review the situation daily, rather than weekly, at this stage.

I turn briefly to the developing global understanding of the new variant. The first point is that there is still a great deal that we do not yet know. However, data on cases worldwide, including here at home, gives a reasonable degree of certainty at this stage that omicron is more transmissible than the delta variant, and perhaps significantly so.

Early—albeit, again, unconfirmed—data also suggests that omicron is more capable of reinfecting people who have had the virus previously. In other words, it has some ability to evade natural immunity. Of course, there is also a concern that it may evade to some extent the immunity that is conferred by vaccination. However, I stress that, even if that latter point proves to be the case, getting vaccinated will still be vitally important. Vaccines being slightly less effective is not the same—nowhere near it—as vaccines being ineffective. Being vaccinated will still give us much more protection against omicron, particularly from severe illness, than we will have if we are not vaccinated.

Further data and analysis are needed to confirm all the hypotheses about the transmissibility, immunity evasion and severity of omicron. We will learn more about its characteristics and implications in the days and weeks ahead, and that developing understanding will inform and shape our response. However, we can assume already that the emergence of omicron is a significant challenge for us all. A variant that is more transmissible than delta, and has even a limited ability to evade natural or vaccine immunity, has the potential to put very intense additional pressure on the national health service.

A key point that we must understand, and which I underline, is that the sheer weight of numbers of people who could be infected as a result of increased transmissibility and some immune evasion will create that pressure even if the disease that the new variant causes in individuals is no more severe than that caused by delta.

There is no doubt, unfortunately, that this is another serious moment in the pandemic. I will talk shortly about what that means for all of us. First, I will outline the principles that will guide any decisions that Government might have to take in the days and weeks ahead.

It is worth noting that the period ahead might, as we learn more about the new variant, involve very difficult judgments for Governments everywhere. Indeed, many Governments around the world are already taking decisions that we all hoped were behind us for good.

For the Scottish Government, our first principle will be that we will seek to do what is necessary to keep the country as safe as possible, even if that is sometimes at the expense of being popular.

Secondly, we will strive to strike the right balance between acting proportionately and acting preventatively. We know from experience—sometimes bitter experience—that with an infectious virus acting quickly can be vital. If we wait too long for data to confirm that we have a problem, it might already be too late to prevent the problem. Indeed, acting preventatively is often the best way of ensuring that action can remain limited and proportionate.

However, after two years of restrictions, with the accumulation of social and economic harms that previous restrictions have caused, we also know that it is ever more important that we minimise further restrictions as far as is possible. While recognising that it is never a perfect science, we will seek to get that balance right.

I turn to the action that we have taken so far and what we are asking everyone to do now. First, in line with the other United Kingdom nations, we have tightened travel rules. In the past week, Nigeria has been added to the travel red list. That

means that anyone arriving in the UK from Nigeria—or from the 10 countries that are already on the list—must enter managed quarantine for 10 days.

In addition, since this morning, anyone aged 12 or over who is travelling to the UK from outside the common travel area will be required to take a Covid test shortly before they leave for the UK. That is in addition to the requirement to take a test on day 2 after arrival in the UK and to self-isolate pending the result.

My advice to anyone who is planning travel between Scotland and countries that are outside the common travel area is that they should check on the Scottish Government website for detailed guidance and check the requirements of the country to which they are travelling, because the requirements there might well be different to those that are in force here.

At this stage, travel restrictions have an important part to play in the response to the new variant. However, given that we already have some community transmission in Scotland, what we do domestically is also important. That is why the Cabinet decided this morning to keep in force all existing protections. However, we also agreed that it is vital not just to maintain but to strengthen compliance with the protections.

It is time for all of us to go back to basics and ensure that we are taking all the steps that are required to minimise the risk of getting or spreading the virus. Indeed, it is through heightened compliance with current protections that we will give ourselves the best possible chance of avoiding the need for any additional protections. I am asking everyone to make an extra effort to do so from now through the festive period and into January. Obviously, that means wearing face coverings in indoor public places, ventilating rooms by opening windows whenever possible and ensuring good hand and surface hygiene.

However, there are two important protections that I want to emphasise particularly strongly today. The first protection is working from home. We already advise people to work from home wherever that is practical. Today, I am asking employers to ensure that that is happening. To be blunt, if you had staff working from home at the start of the pandemic, please now enable them to do so again. We are asking that you do that from now until the middle of January, when we will review the advice again. I know how difficult that is, but I cannot stress enough how big a difference we think that it could make in helping to stem transmission and in avoiding the need for even more onerous measures.

The second protection is testing and isolation. Test and protect is deploying enhanced contact tracing for all cases with the S-gene dropout that is indicative of omicron. For those cases, household contacts of close contacts, rather than just the close contacts themselves, are being asked to test and isolate. If you are asked to do that, please comply.

More generally, for non-omicron cases, if you have symptoms of Covid, please get a PCR test and self-isolate until you get the result. If your result is negative you can end isolation at that point, if you are double vaccinated. If it is positive, you must isolate for the full 10 days.

Crucially, please remember that you can have the virus even if you have no symptoms, so testing regularly and repeatedly with lateral flow devices is essential. We are asking everyone to do a lateral flow test before mixing with people from other households, and on every occasion on which they intend doing so. That means testing before going to a pub or restaurant, before visiting someone's house and even before going shopping.

Let me make it clear that I am not excluding myself from that. I am currently doing a test every morning before coming to work. I will do a test on any occasion when I mix with others over the festive period and I will ask anyone visiting my home over Christmas to do likewise. I am asking every member of Parliament to lead by example and to do that, too. LFD kits are easy to get through NHS inform or from local pharmacies or test centres and are easy to use, so please do that. It will help us significantly in breaking chains of transmission.

I hope that if we do all those things, difficult though they are—as I appreciate—then even with a more transmissible variant we can avoid the need for further measures. I cannot guarantee that, however; no responsible person in my position could guarantee it, at this stage. Given the situation that we face, it is important that we remain open to any proportionate measures—for example, extension of vaccination certification—that might help us to reduce the risks, should the situation deteriorate.

The Government will carefully analyse the data in the days ahead. I hope that it will not require us to take any decisions ahead of my next scheduled statement, a week from today, but if it does I will, obviously, return to Parliament.

I end by reiterating the vital importance of vaccination. Scotland is currently the most vaccinated part of the UK. We have, more quickly than other nations, implemented the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's

advice to reduce the gap between second doses and boosters, but we are not complacent.

We are identifying and training additional vaccinators. So far, we have added the equivalent of more than 300 additional full-time staff to the vaccination workforce. We are also working to increase vaccination capacity further. A number of health boards—NHS Fife and NHS Tayside, for example—are now using drop-in centres to make vaccination even easier, and we are in the process of increasing use of mobile vaccination units that are being provided by the Scottish Ambulance Service.

In addition to those efforts, which are intended to improve the supply and availability of vaccine, we are also working to increase demand by encouraging even more people to take up the offer of vaccination. In the past week, therefore, text or e-mail messages have been sent to people aged between 40 and 60, encouraging them to book their booster jab. I ask those who are now able to get a booster jab—anyone over 40 who had the second jab 12 or more weeks ago—to arrange an appointment as quickly as possible, please. You can book through NHS inform or by calling the vaccination helpline. If you are 16 or 17, you can and should book your second dose in the same way.

Last week, we also sent blue-envelope letters to all 50 to 59-year-olds who have not yet been vaccinated at all. A similar letter is being issued over the course of this week to everyone aged between 40 and 49 who has not yet been vaccinated. Take-up of the vaccine has been exceptional, but a significant number of people in those age groups have still not been vaccinated. To anyone in that position, let me be clear: it is not too late to get vaccinated. In fact, it is now more important than ever that you get your first jab and start to get that essential protection.

To conclude, I say that omicron is a really concerning development; it is the most unwelcome of developments at this stage in the pandemic. However, the more positive aspect is that the actions that have helped us against other variants will also help against omicron. That means that we all know what we need to do in the days and weeks ahead, so my request to everyone is to follow those steps.

Please go back to basics and make sure that we are all doing everything that we are being asked to do. That is the best way that we have of making Christmas and the new year as safe as possible, and of maximising our ability to navigate this next unwelcome but unavoidable challenge without additional protections being necessary. That will also help us to protect the NHS and the people who are working so hard in the NHS and social care to keep us all safe. Please—get vaccinated.

Secondly, test regularly and on any occasion before socialising or mixing with people from other households.

Finally, make sure that you comply with all the existing protections. Wear face coverings on public transport, in shops and when moving about in hospitality settings. Keep windows open—which is not easy in the weather that we are currently experiencing—when meeting people indoors, and follow all the hygiene advice. If you were working from home at the start of the pandemic, please do so again for the next few weeks.

None of that is what any of us wants, two years into this ordeal—I know that—but it is the best way of slowing the spread of the virus in general, and omicron in particular. By doing that, we will give ourselves the best possible chance of enjoying a Christmas that is more normal but which is also safe, and of avoiding a new year hangover of spiralling case numbers.

Please—I really hope that this will be for one final time in this pandemic—let us all pull together, do what is necessary and get each other and the country through the winter and into what we all hope will be a much brighter spring.

The Presiding Officer: The First Minister will now take questions on the issues that have been raised in her statement. I intend to allow about 40 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business. I would be grateful if members who wish to ask a question would now press their request-to-speak button.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): As we wait for more information on the latest Covid variant, there are actions that people can take right now to protect themselves and their families. I encourage everyone who can do so to go out and get the vaccine and, if they have symptoms, to get a Covid test.

There are actions that the Government can take right now to tackle the huge challenges that Scotland's NHS faces. Today's monthly accident and emergency statistics are the worst on record. Fewer people are being seen on time than in any month since the Scottish National Party came to power. We have repeatedly warned that Humza Yousaf's flimsy winter NHS plan is inadequate. The First Minister previously accepted that there is a crisis in Scotland's NHS. Does she now accept that her Government has failed to do enough to prevent the crisis escalating, when hundreds of patients every week are left waiting more than half a day to be seen in our hospitals?

I will turn to the Covid situation. A school in Paisley has been forced to close because of a number of absences. It is a situation that, although it might be necessary in extreme circumstances, nobody wants to see. In the early stages of the

pandemic, there was consensus among the political parties in this chamber that children's education must come first and that closing schools should only ever be a last resort. Will the First Minister confirm that that remains her Government's position? Can she say that no plans for national school closures have been discussed by her Cabinet?

Finally, doctors, including my party's health spokesperson, are warning that new guidance that was issued by the Government to general practitioners will reduce the number of people who will be seen face to face. The guidance means that every patient who seeks an in-person meeting will be asked an extra nine questions by a member of staff before they receive an appointment. Dr Andrew Buist, the chairman of the British Medical Association Scotland's GP committee, has said:

"We see 1 million patients each month face to face in our GP surgeries. I don't think we can maintain that if we're having to do this new process."

Will the First Minister tell us how many fewer people will be seen face to face because of her Government's new policy?

The First Minister: I will come back to the clinical guidance on GP access. Let me run through the other points.

On accident and emergency, as in probably every country in the world right now, the pressure of the pandemic is creating challenges in unscheduled care, as well as in scheduled and planned care, in our NHS. We are no different from other countries in that respect. Notwithstanding that, although our A and E performance is nowhere near where we want it to be, our A and E units are still performing better than their counterparts in the other UK nations. We will continue to support our A and E departments and our NHS in general to cope with the current pressure and then to recover to normal as we come out of the pandemic.

In order to do that, it is really important not just that we first contain, then—I hope—drive down Covid case numbers, but that we take measures to keep the NHS as safe as possible from the ingress of Covid cases.

Let me come to the issue of GP clinical guidance. It is clinical guidance, not a Government policy. It is about screening patients to ensure that, if they are physically accessing general practices, we minimise the risk of Covid getting into the practices and creating outbreaks. GPs have expressed some concerns about that. We will listen to those concerns to see whether the process can be done more flexibly. However, in the midst of the pandemic and dealing with a variant that might be significantly more transmissible than any previous variant, it is

inescapable that we need such protective measures.

I am not surprised to hear Douglas Ross oppose what we have in place, because he has opposed pretty much everything that we have done up until now to keep the country safe from Covid. We will continue to take appropriate and proportionate protective measures to keep our NHS and the country safe.

Finally, on schools, it is absolutely the case that protecting the education of children remains a top priority. We are not discussing the national closure of schools; the Government will do everything that can be done to avoid that. That is a really important principle that will drive everything that we do.

However, that means doing other things that, again, Douglas Ross has opposed time and again. First, it means ensuring that there are sensible mitigations such as face coverings in schools. Nobody likes that, but such mitigations are essential. Douglas Ross has repeatedly opposed the use of face coverings in schools. Secondly, we must do what is necessary in the wider community to keep control of Covid. Again, most of the things that we have done in trying to achieve that have been opposed by the Conservatives.

We need to continue to take sensible and proportionate actions. We are, again, at a really serious juncture of the pandemic. It demands serious government and serious decisions; it certainly not does demand opportunistic opposition.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): I send my condolences to all those who have lost a loved one, and I thank all those on the front line—particularly all our vaccinators, who continue to protect and save lives.

In the past few days, I have been contacted by a number of people who, having booked an appointment, turned up at a vaccination centre on time and stood in the queue but were turned away as closing time approached. Can we ensure that all those who queue on time will get their vaccination?

For lots of Scots, the brief respite that comes from the winter break will give them the chance to find the time to get their booster vaccination. What are the plans for over the Christmas period? Will there be more drop-in centres?

The First Minister is right in saying that the NHS continues to face huge pressures. Statistics that have been published today show that there are 5,700 nursing and midwifery vacancies and more than 400 consultant vacancies, and that we have the worst A and E waiting times on record. When we are supposed to be catching up, 43 per cent

fewer planned operations are taking place compared with pre-pandemic levels. Perhaps most shocking of all is the news that almost 2,000 children have been waiting more than a year for specialist mental health services.

Many issues in the NHS predate the pandemic, but NHS catch-up must be part of our national emergency response. Will the First Minister give a commitment that, every week, she will come to the chamber and give, alongside her Covid statement, detailed updates on the steps that are being taken to address the emergency issues in our NHS, so that we can have the catch-up programme that Scotland needs?

The First Minister: My ministers and I report regularly to Parliament on the range of NHS pressures and the actions that are being taken to address and resolve them. That will continue—in fact, I strongly suspect that it will only intensify over the winter.

I will address the specific points that were raised. Last week, I explained the issue that led to a relatively small number of people being turned away from vaccination centres. We were in the process of changing the protocols and guidance—instead of saying that there had to be a 24-week gap between second doses and boosters, we were saying that there had to be a 12-week gap. As we now know, we had that problem for a short period because we made that change more quickly than other Governments. In England, for example, that advice might not be in operation before 13 December.

In addition, some people were turned away in parts of Glasgow on Friday, for example, because of the busyness of vaccination centres. Again, action has been taken to ensure that there is the capacity in clinics, in terms of vaccinators, to enable such issues to be dealt with.

I have always said that, with a programme of the scale and complexity of this one, there will be problems at times, and we are working to resolve those problems as quickly as we can. Again, however, I ask everybody to acknowledge—not for the sake of the Government, but for the sake of those who are working so hard to deliver the programme—that we are the most vaccinated part of the UK. I suspect that, when the figures are published today, we will see that more than 40 per cent of the over-12 population have now received a booster vaccination. That is considerably ahead of any of the other UK nations, to the credit of those who are organising the programme and resolving the problems when they arise, as well as those who are administering vaccines in the centres in every part of the country.

On the point about the festive season, part of the work that we are doing right now is ensuring

that we avoid, as far as possible, what often happens over the Christmas and new year break, which is that activity drops, and that the rate of vaccinations per week is maintained at the level that we have right now, so that we keep the flow through to the end of January, by which time we want to have completed the booster programme. Every effort is being made to ensure that all of that is fully taken into account.

On staffing in the health service, recruitment in our health service and social care, similarly to recruitment across our economy right now, is a significant challenge, partly because of the pressure that has come from the ending of freedom of movement. That is affecting the national health service, and we must be blunt about the reasons for that. Notwithstanding that, however, the figures that were published today show that we have a higher number of people working in the national health service than we have ever had before. I think that we have almost 30,000 more people working in our national health service than we did when this Government took office, and this is, I think, the ninth consecutive year of an increasing NHS workforce.

That is what this Government has delivered, and we are focused on delivering more of that. We are looking to accelerate recruitment, and I note that, when I came into the chamber this afternoon, the health secretary was talking about some of the work that is under way.

We continue to focus on those challenges as we go through this winter, and I remind people that all of us have a part to play in helping to relieve the pressure on the NHS.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I thank the First Minister for advance sight of her statement. This morning, we saw further evidence of the pressure that exists in the NHS. Nursing and midwifery vacancies are up by 19 per cent since the summer, with well over 5,000 posts being empty. Mental health waiting lists are as long as your arm, and some 265,000 operations have now been lost to Covid. That matters to people such as my constituent who has been off work and in agony since April and is now on reduced pay but has been told that their operation will not happen for another year. The backlog is only getting longer and operations remain well below pre-Covid levels. What can the First Minister tell my constituent?

The First Minister: What I would tell Beatrice Wishart's constituent and indeed anyone across the country is that the Government is investing in the additional staffing and additional capacity to ensure that we are recovering and reducing the backlog that has been created by Covid as quickly as possible, and that work is continuing to intensify.

The second thing that I would say to everybody is that the more we reduce the pressure that Covid is putting on the health service and the more we reduce Covid's ability to delay and pause other treatments, the less of a backlog we will create. It comes back to my central point today: we are again at a critical juncture. I wish that we were not facing that again in the shape of the new variant, but it is a moment where all of us have a part to play to reduce that pressure and reduce the number of cases overall. That will help to reduce the pressure on the NHS and allow it to do more to recover the backlog as quickly as possible.

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): We know that vaccines are the best line of defence against Covid, especially as we face the new variant. Will the First Minister provide an update on the progress that is being made with extending the booster programme for under-40s?

The First Minister: We have said that our clear aim and target—we have a lot of confidence in delivering this, given the progress of the booster programme so far—is to complete the booster programme for those who are over 18, including for under-40s, by the end of January, and that is what we are working to do.

That involves doing all the things that I spoke about in my statement, including increasing the vaccination workforce—we have already increased it, and we will seek to go further—and increasing the capacity for vaccinations but also making sure that we are doing what is necessary to generate the demand. That involves making sure that, when people are eligible, they come forward and get vaccinated. All of that is important work, and of course all MSPs can help us with that by getting those messages out in their constituencies.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The First Minister highlighted the importance of the vaccination programme. I am sure that we all pay tribute to the NHS staff and community volunteers who are working so hard to deliver it. However, we are still seeing too many unacceptable delays. I was contacted by constituents who advised me that, at the Pitlochry vaccination centre on Saturday morning, there was a three-hour delay for those who were turning up to be vaccinated and that many of those had to queue outdoors, in inclement weather.

We have the vaccines, but we do not have enough vaccinators. What more can be done, for example, to call on recently retired medical staff, or perhaps on medical or nursing students, with adequate training, who could come in and fill those gaps?

The First Minister: I am not sure whether Murdo Fraser paid attention to my statement. I

said that, through recent recruitment efforts, we have already added the equivalent of 300 additional vaccinators, through a range of different approaches, some of which Murdo Fraser has talked about. That work is already on-going.

I accept that, because we are seeking to encourage people to make appointments, some will come forward for vaccination without an appointment. There is always a balance to strike every day in every vaccination centre between supply and demand. On some days, more people come forward than was anticipated. In some ways, that is a good thing. However, it puts pressure on the supply and leads to regrettable delays in people being vaccinated, or in some cases—albeit a small number—to people being turned away. We are working hard, and health boards are working hard, to avoid that. However, in the overall scale of the programme, those are relatively small issues that are sometimes, unfortunately, unavoidable.

The overall programme is going exceptionally well. I keep making the point, because I think that it is important to give credit to the teams across the country, that we are not marginally but significantly ahead of England, Wales and Northern Ireland in the delivery of boosters. That does not mean that we can let up; we have to keep pushing ahead. However, it suggests to me that the programme is going well and that we are doing the right things. We just have to do more of them and make sure that we stay on it—and that is exactly what we intend to do.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): A hugely disproportionate number of people who are being treated in intensive care units with Covid chose not to get vaccinated. That has a significant and on-going adverse effect on the NHS, including on its capacity to treat patients with other illnesses. We are the most vaccinated part of the UK but, despite the exhortations of ministers over the past year on the importance of everyone being vaccinated, a stubborn minority refuse. What further steps will the Scottish Government take to increase the number of people being vaccinated in order to protect the NHS and wider society?

The First Minister: I have set out today some of the steps that we are taking to generate additional demand—to get the blue-envelope letters that I spoke about to particular age cohorts, and to encourage people who have not yet been vaccinated that, even at this stage, it is not too late and that they should get their vaccination. We will continue to use such methods to encourage people to come forward. By the end of January, of course, everybody who is over 18 will have been offered the booster vaccination.

I say, pretty bluntly: if you are eligible and able to be vaccinated but are choosing not to be

vaccinated, you are being deeply irresponsible and selfish; you are putting your own life much more at risk; and you are putting more at risk the lives of everybody you come into contact with. That was true before the emergence of omicron and it may be even more true now. Please, therefore, for your own sake, get vaccinated. However, if you are not going to do it for your own sake, do it for the sake of others you are coming into contact with and, for goodness' sake, do not put their lives on the line.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): Last week, the First Minister announced a significant change in guidance, meaning that anyone who is contacted by NHS test and protect in relation to the omicron variant must self-isolate, regardless of vaccination status. Will she give an assurance that self-isolation support grant guidance will be updated to include those who have been vaccinated and have been advised that they have been a close contact of someone who has omicron?

The First Minister: Yes and, if there is still work to do to make that clear, we will make sure that that is done. Anybody who has been asked to isolate for the longer period because they are a close contact or a household contact of a close contact of an omicron case is eligible for the self-isolation support grant if they are otherwise eligible for the scheme, and we will make sure that the guidance is properly updated to make people aware of that.

Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP): Will the First Minister give an indication of how the new variant omicron is being identified and tested for, and of what measures health boards have in place to identify it?

The First Minister: The omicron variant has a mutation that leads to, as people have heard me refer to previously, the S-gene dropout. Although the S-gene dropout in a PCR sample is not conclusive of omicron, it is highly indicative of it. Previously, that was what indicated presence of the alpha variant. However, because that variant has more or less disappeared from circulation in Scotland, if a PCR test has the S-gene dropout, it is indicative of omicron and gives an early indication of the presence of that variant.

All PCR samples from test sites in Scotland are processed by the Glasgow Lighthouse lab, which can detect that S-gene dropout. Health protection teams are right now treating all such cases as if they were omicron confirmed in their public health response, which influences the approach to contact tracing and isolation. Many PCR cases that have that S-gene dropout then go through whole genomic sequencing, which confirms absolutely the presence or otherwise of the omicron variant. The absence of the S-gene in

those PCR tests is an important way of quickly identifying that a case might be omicron and then ensuring that the public health response is appropriate on that basis.

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): As the First Minister outlined in her statement, continued home working will be a vital tool in our efforts to suppress the virus. I am sure that we have all read comments online from workers who are concerned at the expectation that they be back in the office. What support will be offered to employees who were working from home earlier in the pandemic but who now feel under pressure and are being required to come into work by their employers?

The First Minister: I am making very clear today what the Government is asking of employers. Do not get me wrong—I understand how difficult this is for employers. I also understand that—much different from what was the case at the start of the pandemic—there may be increasingly mixed views among workers about the desirability of home working versus office working. I appreciate that many people who have been working at home for long periods in fact want to get back to the office. However, we know that maximising home working and therefore reducing some of the contacts around office working can help stem transmission, which is very important at this point.

To support workers to work from home, we are today sending a very clear message to employers that they should make sure that that is being facilitated wherever possible. To make that message easier for people to understand, if your staff were working from home at the start of the pandemic, please enable staff to work from home at this stage. At the moment, we are saying that that should be for the next few weeks, until mid-January, when we can review it again having come through this next very difficult period. I believe that, as we have seen before, home working can make a significant difference, and I hope that it will help us avoid the need for any more onerous restrictions.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I have been asked by constituents how and when their booster jab will appear in their vaccination certification. Will the First Minister say something about that?

The First Minister: Booster information will appear in the international section of the Covid status app from 9 December—which is later this week on Thursday—along with negative test status from PCR tests and recovery certificates for those who have previously tested positive for Covid. Those have been developed in line with the standards set by the European Union and are for use for travel purposes only at this stage. Non-app

users will be able to access their booster information on paper or PDF from the week beginning 13 December, which is next week. We will give further information in due course about the incorporation of booster vaccinations for domestic purposes.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): What assurances can the First Minister give to Scotland's small businesses that her Government's upcoming budget will help insulate them from any loss of business caused by the omicron variant?

The First Minister: Right now, small businesses in certain sectors in Scotland have 100 per cent rates relief, which they would not have if they were situated south of the border under the Conservative Government. We can therefore take from the actions in place just now that that is a key priority for the Government. I also know that it is a particular priority for the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, who will of course set out the budget to Parliament later this week.

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of the strain that NHS dentists have been under during the pandemic. I have been contacted by a local dental practice and by patients who are concerned about NHS dental provision. In the light of the new variant, the full resumption of services will have to be done cautiously. Can the First Minister outline what funding has been made available to support practice recovery and remobilise our dental services safely?

The First Minister: Dentists provide essential services and we are doing everything we can to support NHS dentistry. We have provided £50 million of financial support payments throughout the pandemic and additional funding for PPE to help dental services in these circumstances. From February next year, we will bring in new and increased fees for dentists for a range of treatments, which will support them in their efforts to clear the backlog in routine care that built up during the pandemic. Those plans build on recent announcements for funding for new dental drills and ventilation improvements, which are about helping NHS dental teams see patients safely in dental settings.

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): Seafarers returning to Scotland from work overseas are still required to quarantine in hotels at a cost of £2,285, but some employers are refusing to meet those costs. That is not consistent with other sectors such as offshore or the rules in the rest of the UK. Has the First Minister had the opportunity to look at the issue and is she willing to meet the relevant trade unions to discuss how those rules could be made consistent?

The First Minister: The Government would certainly be happy to talk to trade unions about any concerns that they have about the issue. Understandably, concerns have been raised about seafarers in the past and we have looked at those. It is clear that there is a need to have protective measures in place, but we do not want to have measures in place that are any more onerous than necessary. We look at these matters regularly, and I will write or ask the health secretary to write to the member with an update on particular considerations around managed quarantine for seafarers. I would be happy to discuss any remaining concerns with trade unions.

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of calls from the People's Vaccine Alliance for action to tackle vaccine inequality and ensure that life-saving vaccinations are given across the globe. Given that this is a global pandemic that requires a global response, will the First Minister join me in urging Boris Johnson to take action, including backing proposals to waive intellectual property rules, to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines to protect the health of people around the world?

The First Minister: Yes, I support the calls of the People's Vaccine Alliance, and I certainly call on the Prime Minister to take whatever action he can to ensure that we get vaccines equitably to the population of the world as quickly as possible. I also take very seriously the responsibility that is on the shoulders of my Government to make sure that we are doing everything possible.

It is understandable that we often focus on the implications for ourselves and our country, but Covid is an unprecedented global crisis. Earlier in the pandemic, the Government allocated funding for our international development budget to provide Covid support for our partner countries Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Pakistan. The UK also participates in COVAX, which is an important way to help other nations to access vaccines. However, it is fundamentally the case that, as omicron reminds us, until everybody across the world is safe, none of us is truly safe, so we are keen to explore further routes that support equitable access to vaccines. I will write to the Prime Minister on the issue to encourage him to take whatever action is necessary and offer the full co-operation of the Scottish Government in doing so.

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): Can the First Minister tell us when lateral flow devices will be more available for pick up from more accessible places such as shopping centres, supermarkets, sports grounds and petrol stations?

The First Minister: As I said last week, local authorities are planning—I am sure that some are

doing this already—to make lateral flow devices accessible in shopping centres, garages, garden centres and anywhere that they think is appropriate and convenient for people. I appeal to all members, including Pam Gosal, not to give the suggestion to the population that lateral flow devices are not easily accessible right now, because they really are. You can order them online one day and they will arrive through your letterbox the next, and you can pick them up from local pharmacies and test centres.

We should be uniting to tell people that it is really easy to get LFD tests and to ask people to use them before mixing with other people. LFD tests are really easy to use. I repeat my request to members across the chamber to lead by example and say publicly that they are testing themselves every day, and that they will do so before socialising with others over the festive period. Please let us get the message across that LFD tests are easy to get and easy to use, and that using them regularly and repeatedly will help us to break the chains of transmission.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): No one wants further restrictions, and I welcome the cautious approach that is being taken. Can the First Minister provide further information about the steps that are being taken to continue to maximise public awareness of the vital measures that remain in place?

The First Minister: We will continue to take all opportunities to get those messages across, including statements here and in the media. We are also asking members across the chamber to communicate those messages in their constituencies.

In addition, our public awareness campaign will intensify over the winter period. The current campaign, living safely for us all, which reinforces the importance of key safety behaviours, will run until 12 December. A new campaign, living safely this winter, will launch on 13 December and run throughout the festive period. That campaign will focus on the behaviours that we are asking people to adopt over the festive period to help to protect each other. Those behaviours include testing before travelling, socialising, visiting busy places and visiting other people in their houses; taking a PCR test if showing symptoms; getting vaccinated; and, of course, wearing face coverings and following all the necessary hygiene advice.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): Test and trace has been all but abandoned in our schools. Pupil testing is all but non-existent. In the week ending 28 November, just 2.6 per cent of pupils aged 12 to 17 were tested. Siblings are not being required to isolate when one of them has Covid. Public health no longer liaises where there is an outbreak, and the fire doors and windows are

open in our classrooms as temperatures are dropping, yet the Scottish Government's clinical director talked this morning about the risk of school closures. When will we see a return to the support that our teachers, staff, pupils and parents need to keep our schools open safely?

The First Minister: With the greatest respect, that is a gross mischaracterisation of the position. In the period between much earlier this year and now, we have gradually eased up some of the measures in place to avoid the need for mass isolation of classes and closure of schools. Many members across the chamber raised concerns about school closures because of the undeniable impact that that had on children's education.

That is not the same as saying that test and protect—it is not test and trace—has disappeared from our schools. That is not the case. There have been continued targeted approaches to contact tracing and isolation in our schools. Given the new variant, there are now enhanced contact tracing and isolation requirements, which will, unfortunately, as we are already seeing, be likely to have an impact on classes and schools in different parts of the country. That proportionate, targeted approach, in which we scale back, when we can, to reduce the impact on education, and scale up again when necessary—as is the case now—is the one that we will continue to take.

On testing, we cannot force children or staff to test but, as we are doing for the entire population, we strongly encourage them to test regularly and repeatedly, using an LFD test. Again, I ask all members to help us to get that message across in their communications in their constituencies.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Further to the First Minister's answer to Pam Gosal, I suggest that there are two big advantages in distributing LFD tests through supermarkets and garden centres. First, it is so easy for someone to pop something into their shopping trolley—it is almost casually done. Secondly, it will increase education, and the importance of flow before you go.

The First Minister: I said last week that we will, through local authorities, make LFD tests available in shopping centres and garden centres, so I am not arguing against that for a moment. However, I repeat what I said to Pam Gosal. I agree entirely with the member that we should extend access to LFD tests, but please let us not inadvertently send a message to the public that LFD tests are not easily accessible, because they are. Let us say to people that they should get them now and not wait until they become available in shopping centres and garden centres. LFD tests will become available there during the festive period, but people should go on to the NHS inform website

now, order the tests and use them. Next to vaccination, it is possibly the most important thing that we can do to try to stem transmission.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Given the potential risk of further spread of the new variant, will the First Minister set out what contingency plans are in place to provide additional support to care homes to allow our elderly loved ones to see friends and family safely over the Christmas period?

The First Minister: We will keep under very close review the protections that are in place around care homes. The most important protection for people in care homes now is the vaccination programme, which is why we have prioritised care homes in its roll-out. However, vaccination is even more important to anyone—staff or visitors—who is accessing a care home right now than it is to anyone else. It is vital for every person to make sure that they are vaccinated and that they test themselves before they go.

We must ensure that we minimise the risk of the virus getting into care homes. That has always been important, but it is particularly important in the face of the omicron variant.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): With around a third of Scotland's omicron cases being reported in Lanarkshire currently, can the First Minister advise on any additional interventions that can be put in place across Lanarkshire to mitigate more rapid community transmission?

The First Minister: The local health protection teams in Lanarkshire have been working hard through enhanced contact tracing, isolation and targeted testing to try to limit transmission. The same approaches will be used in other health board areas in which we are seeing omicron cases.

Earlier on, I said that we now have confirmed omicron cases in nine out of 14 health board areas—although there may be only single cases in some of those health board areas at this stage—so we are seeing transmission of the variant in pretty much all parts of the country. It is important to be mindful of that.

We know that many cases right now are associated with large events. That is certainly the case in Lanarkshire, and we all have to be mindful of that—the Government certainly has to be mindful of it, as we consider the data and any implications of that in the days ahead. I know that there is concern in the scientific community that the variant has a particular super-spreading risk associated with it. If a person is attending an event, they should ensure that they test before they go. Even although it is not the law to physically distance any more, they should be

mindful of the distance from people in other households. If we take sensible precautions right now, we have a chance of stemming the spread and avoiding the more onerous precautions that otherwise might become necessary.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): The First Minister talked about the importance of taking a lateral flow test. We all agree with that, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to do that for people who have disabilities. At the cross-party group on disability meeting at lunch time today, we heard that a person who is visually impaired cannot see the result and he cannot go out. His wife is also visually impaired. Those who have an upper limb disability, such as me, cannot do the test. We cannot go to a pharmacy, because pharmacies will not allow us to do tests there. What advice does the First Minister have for those with a disability who want to use the test but have no nowhere to do it safely?

The First Minister: That is a very fair and legitimate point. We need to consider a range of different ways, because there will not be one particular measure. The point is so serious that I want to ask the health secretary to consider it more and see whether, as well as extending the accessibility of LFDs, we can provide ways in which those tests for people with particular disabilities can be taken and processed. If Jeremy Balfour is willing to wait, we will look at that quickly over the next couple of days and come back to him with more detail afterwards.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): The First Minister will be aware that different arrangements are in place in the island health board areas for booking booster and third vaccinations. In her statement last week and again this week, I do not think that she has necessarily drawn a distinction between the national arrangements and the arrangements for island health boards. Will she put on the record the distinction that those on the islands will wait for a letter about their vaccination rather than book it through the portal, as those on mainland Scotland will do?

The First Minister: Again, that is a very fair point. I drew that distinction perhaps two or three weeks ago, but Liam McArthur is right to point out that I have not necessarily drawn it clearly enough in recent weeks.

The island health boards are not using the online portal, so people who live in the islands should wait for a letter with the appointment for their booster vaccination. Parts but not all parts of NHS Highland are now using the portal so, again, some people in Highland will get a letter.

There is a clear and important distinction to draw: if you live in the Western Isles, on Orkney or

on Shetland, you do not book your booster online; your health board will contact you with an appointment.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the First Minister's statement. There will be a brief suspension.

15:20

Meeting suspended.

15:21

On resuming—

Maternity Services (Moray)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a statement by Humza Yousaf on the independent review of maternity services in Moray. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:21

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): I am delighted to update members on the action that will be taken following the publication of "Report of the Moray Maternity Services Review: Review of maternity services for the women and families of Moray"—namely, our next steps for the reintroduction of consultant-led maternity services at Dr Gray's hospital in Elgin.

I am currently considering the review's 37 recommendations in greater detail. I want to take the time to do so in discussion not only with NHS Grampian and NHS Highland but, importantly, with local people and communities, including elected representatives. It is important to say that the Government has not ruled out any of the options that are being presented.

Members will be aware that I have been committed to the safe and sustainable reinstatement of consultant-led maternity services at the hospital. That commitment was reiterated as part of our manifesto. Members will recall the members' business debate that Douglas Ross held on the topic back in June.

I welcome the much-anticipated report. In particular, I welcome the thorough and consultative approach that the review team took. I met Ralph Roberts, the chief executive of NHS Borders, who led the review, on Friday. He told me that around 300 individuals contributed views and that the team held nearly 50 evidence sessions. The outputs of those discussions are evident throughout the report.

I thank Mr Roberts and the review team for the thorough and substantial report that they have produced. I also thank the members of staff and professionals from NHS Grampian, NHS Highland and the wider Scottish health service for their contributions. In particular, I thank local people, local elected representatives and, most important, the women and families who shared their views and experiences. Without them, the report would not have been possible. It certainly would not have been as impactful and powerful.

I will speak to the report, but am keen not to pre-empt any final decisions that I will make on the matter. I will then say a bit more about the immediate actions that have already begun, and I will touch on the medium and long-term issues, which are of great importance.

I am heartened by the response to the report thus far. NHS Grampian and NHS Highland have welcomed the report and have signalled their intention to work together and with the Scottish Government to work through the challenges to implementation of the recommendations. The Keep MUM—maternity unit for Moray—campaign, which led and continues to lead the campaign for maternity services, has also responded fairly and positively. It has welcomed the fact that the voices of women and their families have been heard in the review. I know that people need time to digest and consider the findings, and that they are waiting for a strong signal from the Government about the next steps and implementation.

When, in March this year, we appointed Ralph Roberts to chair the review, we asked the review team to work with NHS Grampian, NHS Highland and stakeholders who have an interest in local maternity services to explore the best obstetric model through which to provide a safe, deliverable and sustainable high-quality maternity service for the women and families of Moray, in line with the Scottish Government's ambition as described in "The Best Start: A Five-Year Forward Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Care in Scotland". I am sure that members who have had the opportunity to read that extensive report will agree that it is comprehensive. It is also grounded, pragmatic and realistic. The review report is not the first report into maternity services at Dr Gray's in recent years, so it is important that we acknowledge the work that is already under way in NHS Grampian through the best start north programme to consider maternity services across the whole of the north of Scotland.

This afternoon, I wish to set out how we intend to move forward in the immediate and short terms; I will also touch on the medium and long terms. The report sets out a preferred approach and includes a detailed plan on how that could be taken forward.

The report also has a number of supporting recommendations. On existing service provision, the report highlights actions that will support safe reintroduction of elective caesarean sections at Dr Gray's. On culture, the report covers cross-site working for staff and the commissioning of a cultural safety programme. It demands leadership not just from the board but from the Scottish Government.

The report also makes important recommendations on the workforce and

recruitment, which we know is absolutely key and has been a challenge to long-term sustainability. We are already making inroads through our implementation of "The Best Start: A Five-Year Forward Plan for Maternity and Neonatal Care in Scotland", but I recognise that further work clearly remains to be done.

On infrastructure, I commit today to working closely with NHS Grampian and NHS Highland to secure the future of Dr Gray's hospital. We will invest in its future development, in whatever form that takes.

I want to pause just for a moment to reflect on the fact that national health service staff in maternity and neonatal services, like all our NHS staff, have continued to provide high-quality maternity and neonatal services each and every day for the past 20 months. I pay tribute to them for their on-going hard work, and I thank them for their dedication, resilience and determination in the face of the global pandemic.

I will move on to the immediate actions that we intend to take on maternity services at Dr Gray's. I was able to meet representatives of both NHS Grampian and NHS Highland briefly this morning, and they expressed to me their determination and commitment to taking forward the recommendations in the review. I have made arrangements to travel to Moray in less than a fortnight, on 20 December, to meet local people, including local campaign groups including Keep MUM, clinicians, elected representatives and representatives of the health boards, to discuss the report's recommendations with them. If it has not already sent out invitations, my office will be sending invitations to interested parties by the close of play today. Douglas Ross has told me that that date is his wife Krystle's birthday. I am sure she will be delighted that Douglas has chosen to spend it with me, rather than with her.

We will work at pace with NHS Grampian to consider what is possible in the short term, including the rapid reintroduction of elective caesarean sections, which will quickly double the number of women who can deliver at Dr Gray's to up to 40 per cent, which is around 400 births per year. I have heard the comments that have been made by colleagues including Richard Lochhead, who—members will not be surprised to know—continually, and often, asks me about and raises issues around Dr Gray's. That figure still means that the majority of pregnant women in Moray will not give birth at Dr Gray's. We therefore need to consider the medium and long terms. The issue was also raised during a parliamentary debate in June.

Those discussions will obviously need to include NHS Highland, in recognition that the report highlights the critical role of Raigmore hospital as

a choice of place for women to deliver their babies once the maternity unit has been improved and expanded. I want to be clear, however. For that to be sustainable, a number of relevant actions first need to take place. I know that we have previously tried to implement that model, but it quickly became unsustainable and came undone, so I am determined to ensure that, prior to implementation, we have the relevant infrastructure to support change.

That brings me on to the medium-term and longer-term recommendations in the report—in particular, model 5, which is the development of a midwife-led consultant-supported unit that would be located in Dr Gray’s hospital in Elgin.

I am pleased that the Keep MUM campaign group supported that option in its recent response to the report. Under that model, having consultant-supported births—including emergency caesarean sections and instrumental deliveries—would allow up to 70 per cent of Moray women to deliver their babies in the local community. The report highlights challenges and preconditions for that model that cannot be ignored. The model is set in the wider context of a vision for development of Dr Gray’s that will require a clear strategic plan for the hospital. Serious practical and financial considerations will need to be worked through to support such a change.

That brings me back to the commitment to reinstate consultant-led maternity services safely and sustainably. We want to deliver that commitment quickly, safely and sustainably; I fully expect that models 4 and 5 would allow us to return consultant maternity services to Dr Gray’s in such a way. Without a shadow of doubt, we will do that in concert and in consultation with the local community, clinicians, elected representatives and health boards. The process will be done such that the Government is open and transparent about the challenges, but I hope that the community will see that we will work on it with pace.

I could talk at length about the report, given how extensive it is but, as I said, my focus now is on meeting local people to discuss the findings and on getting on with action. I give the absolute commitment that we will waste no time—there will be no lack of pace—and that we will urgently drive forward our work to restore consultant-led maternity services at Dr Gray’s.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues that were raised in his statement, for which I intend to allow 20 minutes. As ever, members who wish to ask questions should press their request-to-speak buttons or place an R in the chat function now or as soon as possible.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I, too, acknowledge the work of Ralph Roberts and his review team. In particular, I thank the women, families and staff in Moray who shared their experiences. I know from personal experience that the staff at Dr Gray’s and Aberdeen maternity hospital are the very best we could hope for in our area. Throughout the report, they are—rightly—commended by everyone for everything that they do.

The review said that the status quo was “promptly considered to be inappropriate”.

Of the current model, it said:

“both Professor Cameron in his report and the Review Group believe there are potential risks to patient safety.”

Given that, I must ask the cabinet secretary why we have been living with that model in Moray for more than three years.

Does the cabinet secretary believe that the staffing and capacity can be found at Raigmore hospital to take hundreds of additional women from Moray each year, given that the number who are transferred to Inverness has fallen every year since our maternity unit was downgraded? The figure was just 16 last year. I welcome the return of elective caesareans, but does the cabinet secretary believe that induction of labour should also be made available at Dr Gray’s, if possible? Once he has looked through the recommendations, will an action plan with key milestones be provided so that everyone locally can keep up to date with the progress—or otherwise—that is being made?

I hope that as many women in Moray as possible can give birth locally. As a family, we are blessed with two great boys, but they were born in different circumstances. Alistair came into this world at Dr Gray’s and, after a few days of great care and support, we travelled a few miles home with our newborn.

With James, the scenario was different. As Krystle’s labour progressed, his heart rate started to dip every time she had a contraction. Given that she had been on a green pathway up to that point, I was rocked to hear that. I tried to be strong for Krystle, because I knew that the situation was stressful for her. Seeing my wife taken on a trolley through the hospital, strapped into the back of an ambulance and taken to Aberdeen was one of the worst experiences that I have faced. At that moment, you feel utterly helpless, when your wife and unborn child need you most.

Whether it is 40 miles to Inverness or 65 miles to Aberdeen, the journey adds stress, anxiety and worry at an already emotional time. I hope that, across the Parliament, we will agree to do everything possible to maximise the number of

women who can give birth in Moray and to minimise the number who must leave our area to have their children.

Humza Yousaf: I thank Douglas Ross for his questions, and I speak to him first as a father, rather than as the health secretary. I would have hated to be in the position that he was in. When my wife gave birth to our daughter Amal, she was already on a high-risk pathway. We had, unfortunately, miscarried a number of times previously, and my daughter was transverse and therefore not in the right position. In addition, she decided—just for fun—to arrive three weeks early.

We were only 20 minutes away from the hospital where we had to be, but I recognise the feelings and emotions that Douglas Ross expressed around being helpless—let alone having to drive for a period of time while your wife is being transported in the back of an ambulance, as his wife Krystle had to be. As a father, rather than as the health secretary, let me say how unacceptable I find that entire situation.

Douglas Ross asked me whether I found it acceptable that we have had that model in place for the past three years. I do not find it acceptable, and he is right, on behalf of his constituents, to be upset, angry and frustrated. I have no issues with his characterisation of the current situation in that way.

I have been impressed by the cross-party campaign. As I said, my colleague Richard Lochhead was, as members can imagine, one of the first to phone me on Friday, when the report was published, to put to me his constituents' concerns, not as a Government minister but as a local MSP. Douglas Ross has done exceptionally well to raise the issue in Parliament, and I pay tribute to the cross-party campaign.

On the specific question about Raigmore, I asked that very question of Pam Dudek, Boyd Robertson and the team at NHS Highland. As Douglas Ross will know, Raigmore is undergoing significant development and we have promised to invest in that. I absolutely believe that there is capacity in place to deal with the additional women who may have to go to Raigmore, but I will give him further assurances in and around that.

On his question about consultant-led induction of labour, it will be important for me to go up to Moray to visit Dr Gray's hospital and speak to the clinicians. I am not a clinician, and therefore it is not for me to say what can be done safely. I say to Douglas Ross—and to the community that is watching—that we want a consultant-led maternity service in Dr Gray's and that we want as many women as possible, when it is safe, to give birth at Dr Gray's. We will do that with urgency and pace,

but we have to recognise the significant workforce challenges that exist.

That is where Douglas Ross's last point, which I will end on, is really important. There has to be an implementation path with clear milestones. Members might not always like the timescales. They might challenge us and tell us to go even faster—as the local community might, too—and that is their prerogative. However, I will be up front and realistic about the milestones for implementation. The next stages are that I will visit Moray, to speak to the local community, local clinicians and elected representatives, and then come forward—early in the new year, I would hope—with further detail of the recommendations that we are taking forward, with an implementation plan to follow.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the minister's statement. It is positive to see progress on the issue. That progress has been led by Ralph Roberts, who is the chief executive of NHS Borders, in my region. I thank him and the review team for their work, alongside the hard work of local campaign groups that have pushed the issue forward.

Despite the progress that was detailed in the statement, I ask the minister whether he can offer some clarity on what will be done to solve the underlying issues, which—as in many other parts of the country—arise from a lack of staff. There are 365 whole-time equivalent nursing and midwifery vacancies in NHS Highland and 465 such vacancies in NHS Grampian. On top of that, there is a known lack of paediatricians. The minister's statement barely addressed that issue. What can be done about that?

Humza Yousaf: That is a fair challenge, which goes to the crux of the issue that NHS Highland and NHS Grampian spoke to me about today. Plans are already under way to increase recruitment in both health boards. That is the crux of the issue, and it is why I have to be realistic. It would have been unrealistic for Ralph Roberts's report to suggest that model 5 can be implemented in a few months or even a year. There is no way that we would be able to get the required workforce, and there are also infrastructure aspects that we have to develop with that model.

I assure Carol Mochan and the campaigners—I know that they will be watching today's statement—that we understand that the workforce and infrastructure at the hospital are the two key issues that we have to demonstrate both progress on and investment in. I have already given a commitment that we will invest in both aspects.

Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I thank the cabinet secretary for his

statement on this comprehensive report. I also thank the people with lived experience who came forward and shared their experiences, which must have been distressing for them, in order to push for action. I am glad to hear that there will be ongoing conversations with them.

My question relates to the issues that Carol Mochan raised. Will the cabinet secretary outline the action that the Scottish Government is taking to increase the number of appropriately trained clinical staff? He has already answered the question in part, but will the action include other rural healthcare centres?

Humza Yousaf: In short, yes. I know that issues with workforce recruitment and retention have been raised by members across the country, particularly those in remote, rural and island areas. We are working with those health boards, and we understand the unique challenges that exist. In some respects, we have already seen an increase in the workforce; however, in relation to Dr Gray's, we must tackle the workforce challenge, which is the crux of the issue. We must also deal with the infrastructure aspect, although that is the slightly easier part because we can invest in it. The workforce challenge is far more difficult, but we must ensure that there is a sustained effort for consultant-led maternity services in Moray.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): One of the preferred options for Moray is a midwife-led service, like the one in Caithness. The result in Caithness is that fewer babies than ever before have been born there—only about 20 to 30 per cent of all births in the far north happen in Caithness.

What work will the Scottish Government commission to assess whether NHS Highland can truly take on the additional work without disadvantaging its catchment patients? What will be the additional cost and who will fund it?

Humza Yousaf: That is all part of the discussions that are taking place. During my discussion with Ralph Roberts on Friday, he said that there is no doubt that people will make comparisons between the situation in Caithness and what is happening in Dr Gray's, and I can understand why the interdependency and interaction are mentioned. However, we are talking about two different scenarios.

It is fair to ask about the impact that the models and recommendations in Ralph Roberts's review will have on other rural health settings. Therefore, I promise Edward Mountain that our conversations will be focused not only on Dr Gray's, but on some of the other rural health sites that might be impacted by any decisions that are made in relation to the review. If Edward Mountain wishes

to be part of the conversations in that regard, I am more than happy to involve him.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): It is very welcome that the independent review focused on listening to the women, families and service users in Moray, as well as to the staff who are involved in delivering the services.

The cabinet secretary outlined some of the steps that the Scottish Government has taken to ensure continued stakeholder engagement. Does he accept that, for many reasons, not least their mental health, mothers in rural areas must have the choice of having their maternity care close to where they live? Can he provide assurances that their views will continue to be taken into account as decisions are made?

Humza Yousaf: Yes, I fundamentally agree with Gillian Martin's point. In my response to Douglas Ross, I spoke of my experience. I was lucky and blessed that the hospital in which my wife gave birth was 15 or 20 minutes away from our home.

A fundamental recommendation of the best start policy is that women have care delivered as close to home as possible. Of course—I know that every member understands this—that must be balanced with the safety of the mother and the baby.

The introduction of Near Me across the NHS has allowed many women to access care in their local area when they might have previously had to travel to big urban centres. In addition, the development of community hubs and teams under best start will provide as much antenatal and postnatal care in the community as possible.

Ultimately, Gillian Martin is right: the Government's ambition is to provide care that enables women to give birth and have their baby delivered as close to home as possible.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next two colleagues join us remotely.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I, too, welcome the review. I feel for families, who are rightly frustrated by delays. It would be good to have a clear indication of the timeframe for the restoration of full maternity services at Dr Gray's hospital. In the meantime, what accommodation and childminding support is available to families who have to travel to Aberdeen or Inverness for maternity services?

Humza Yousaf: Those are all very fair points. I completely accept the desire of the local community and other stakeholders that have an interest in the matter to see a detailed implementation plan from the Government. We will provide that.

As I have already said a number of times, in the first instance, I would like to meet the local

community, including local representatives. If I have not invited any elected member who would like to be part of the discussions, I ask them please to get in touch with my office. I have no issues with inviting whoever to that conversation.

After that, we will give details of the recommendations that we are seeking to take forward. Alongside that, we would look to bring forward an implementation plan with key milestones.

In his review, Ralph Roberts details what he thinks those timescales should be. As members can imagine, as the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, I want to push those with as much pace as I can.

Rhoda Grant's second question was about the support that is available for women and families who might have to travel to Aberdeen maternity hospital or Raigmore hospital. I will look into that. If we can do anything further in that regard, I would be very open that. The request is a fair one, particularly if accommodation and travel costs are involved. I can look into the matter offline.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have five speakers and five minutes left. There should be succinct questions and responses as far as possible.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The delivery of the recommendations to the timescales that are set out will take time and, critically, dedication by all those involved. Will the cabinet secretary give an update on discussions with NHS Grampian to ensure that the board has a full leadership team in place in a timely manner?

Humza Yousaf: I will respond briefly. This morning, I had a discussion with the health board and I will meet it again on 20 December. I can assure Emma Roddick that the points that she raises are very much part of our discussions, and the health board's input into the matter is of vital importance as we progress the actions.

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The independent review found that

"Maternity services are key to the wider economic and community wellbeing of a population",

so it is vital that Dr Gray's hospital is supported to improve its ability to provide high-quality maternity care for local families in Moray.

The review is not the first. The 2019 Alan Cameron report found that

"Working relationships in the Dr Gray's Maternity Service are dysfunctional and damaged to the extent that they may impact upon patient safety."

Is the Scottish Government supporting Dr Gray's hospital to implement the

recommendations from the Cameron review, particularly the recommendation to develop

"a full package of support for all staff who have been adversely affected by the issues within the Dr Gray's Maternity Service",

so that those recommendations do not get lost as work begins on implementing the new recommendations?

Humza Yousaf: Yes. In short, we will not ignore previous recommendations. As I am sure that Ms Burgess is aware, there is a fair bit of detail on culture in Ralph Roberts's report, and we will take forward those recommendations, too.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): During the pandemic, we have seen the benefits that services such as Near Me, which the cabinet secretary mentioned a short time ago, can deliver to reduce the need for in-person appointments. Will he outline what role he envisages such technology might have in the delivery of services in Moray?

Humza Yousaf: I mentioned the Near Me service in answer to a previous question. Technology has a possible role to play in antenatal care, and in postnatal care. It is a great enabler, but that does not detract from the desire of women, and of their families and the local community, that they should give birth as close to home as possible. That is what we want to progress as a result of the report.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Given the number of patient transfers that have had to be conducted, sometimes at short notice, to either Raigmore or Aberdeen, what impact does the cabinet secretary think the on-going problems have had on the already overstretched Scottish Ambulance Service in the Highlands and Islands?

Humza Yousaf: The obvious answer is that I suspect that it does not help. That is part of our consideration about how quickly we can ensure that more births take place at Dr Gray's and, indeed, as close to home as possible, whether people are in island communities or remote and rural communities.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): A section of the recommendations references

"The importance of culture to quality and safety in any service".

That is not only beneficial to service users but of equal importance to staff. Will the cabinet secretary give an indication of what work will be required to progress the delivery of a cultural safety programme?

Humza Yousaf: In the interests of brevity, I would probably be better writing to Stephanie Callaghan with the detail of that. However, she is right to highlight it. As I said in my response to Ms Burgess, the extensive report from Ralph Roberts goes into the vital importance of culture in the workplace. We often focus on the clinical expertise and infrastructure that are needed to deliver the recommendations in such a review, but the culture of the workforce is also important. Ralph Roberts's recommendation to invest in a cultural safety programme is a vital part of his report, which I intend to take forward.

Just Transition

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place and that face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-02429, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on delivering a just transition to net zero and climate resilience for Scotland.

15:53

The Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work (Richard Lochhead): Scotland's journey to net zero in 2045, which is when we aim to end our contribution to global warming, will transform how we live and work, our economy and our society. Climate change is rightly viewed as a threat to Scotland and the world, but how we respond is important, as it can also be a window of opportunity for a better country and improved quality of life for our people.

We also have to face up to the concerns that many people, businesses and communities will be feeling at the current time. We need to reassure our people that they will benefit from good green jobs and that no one will be left behind or expected to carry a disproportionate burden in terms of who pays for net zero. That is why a just transition is so important.

All of us have a duty to debate these matters seriously in the times ahead and to work constructively together where possible. A just transition matters to the entire country and its full range of jobs and people, from energy to farming, retail, construction and so on. There can be a tendency to focus on specific challenges for individual sectors and regions, but we will deliver a just transition only if it is a truly national endeavour.

At the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—in Glasgow, I heard delegates from all over the world showing great interest in the approach that we have taken in Scotland whereby we are planning to manage the transition to net zero in an orderly manner and in line with the recommendation of our just transition commission.

It is not about simple and easy on-off switches for any particular sector or industry. The emphasis must be on the need to transition over the coming decades, and I recognise the need to ramp up delivery if we are to meet our ambitions. That is very much the message that I took from the Climate Change Committee's progress report that

was published today. As well as challenges, the committee notes that there have been

“significant advancements in Scottish climate policy ambition”

over the past year, as well as in our focus and leadership on a just transition.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Does Richard Lochhead accept that, in this morning’s report, the CCC asked the Government to be more transparent about how policies will deliver the targets that the Government has set?

Richard Lochhead: We have been and will continue to be transparent, and we will, of course, listen to the recommendations in the report and respond in due course.

A cornerstone of a just transition is creating good green jobs and new industries. In the next decade, the jobs that are available and the skills that are required will begin to look very different, which is one reason why we have committed to developing a skills guarantee for workers in carbon-intensive sectors.

There is an opportunity to improve the quality of the jobs that are available to people. I will give one example of how that all aligns. We have committed to investing £1.8 billion in heat and energy efficiency over the course of this parliamentary session, and, through that investment, we will seek to apply fair work conditions, ensuring that the new green jobs that are created as a result are good for both people and the planet.

The transition clearly impacts on livelihoods, but it also impacts on communities. In Scotland, we know all too well the legacy of poorly managed industrial transitions, and many people have drawn parallels with the future of the north-east, which is home to our oil and gas industry. This Government will not stand by and allow the mistakes of the past to be repeated. Communities across the country will see a fair transition to net zero. Anyone who thinks that we can switch off our use of fossil fuels overnight, for instance, does not live in the real world. Likewise, anyone who thinks that change is too difficult and that we should continue with business as usual does not live in the real world—the real world that is endangered by global warming.

There is, understandably, much focus on Scotland’s offshore sector, as the industry has an essential role to play in our transition to net zero. Its pioneering spirit, innovation, investment and experience are all essential for the transition to renewables, and we must harness those. Most of all, the people who work in the industry are pivotal and must have a voice. We must harness their skills, listen to them, use their knowledge and work

with them to drive our net zero transition forward. That is another reason why we have committed to a 10-year, £500 million just transition fund for the north-east and Moray, and it is why our first just transition plan will have an energy focus.

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): Will Richard Lochhead give way?

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Will Richard Lochhead take an intervention?

Richard Lochhead: I thought that that might attract some interventions. If time is added on, I will take an intervention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, which member are you taking an intervention from?

Richard Lochhead: I apologise—I will take Tess White’s intervention.

Tess White: Will the minister welcome the United Kingdom Government’s investment in tidal energy?

Richard Lochhead: I welcome any investments in our renewables opportunities. Tess White will be aware that there was massive disappointment that it was not a much greater investment, which we require to move forward at a faster pace. I hope that she will take that message to the UK Government.

The UK Government has to play its role here, too. It can start not only by addressing the tidal energy issue but by reversing the illogical decision that it has taken to overlook the Scottish carbon capture utilisation and storage cluster for track 1 status. Awarding it that status would have supported more than 15,000 green jobs from next year, using the skills of our oil and gas sector, as is demonstrated in a report by Scottish Enterprise that has been released today.

Liam Kerr: Will Richard Lochhead take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will add on a bit of time for the intervention.

Richard Lochhead: I will take it.

Liam Kerr: Is the minister aware that the selection of carbon capture cluster projects was made on objective criterion? He does not appear to be.

Richard Lochhead: What I am aware of is that Sir Ian Wood and others said that it is environmentally and economically the wrong decision and that it is like leaving the best player on the subs bench when playing a football match. The whole of the north-east is united against the decision that the UK Government took, and it is united in calling on the UK Government to reverse the decision so that we can get on with creating

those green jobs and moving towards our net zero target.

Our net zero ambitions will generate a green jobs bonanza. In fact, that is already happening at pace. Just last week, PricewaterhouseCoopers released a report that placed Scotland as the top performer in the UK in creating green jobs. From climate-savvy gin production in St Boswells to sustainable food packaging made from seaweed in Oban, our economy is changing. Scotland-based firm SSE alone is proposing private investment of more than £12 billion over the next five years to accelerate our net zero journey and create thousands of green jobs across the nation.

I am sure that we will want to welcome last week's news that the Port of Nigg wind tower factory will be built. It is expected that more than 400 jobs will be created at the site. That is another example of how our existing capabilities can be directed towards the transition to net zero.

I can confirm today that our public investment through the green jobs fund has led to £12.3 million being awarded so far this year. The investment is expected to create and safeguard more than 850 green jobs. As numerous recent reports have highlighted, we have the potential to create hundreds of thousands of new green jobs in hydrogen technologies and offshore wind, and through the decarbonisation of heating in our buildings.

We are on the cusp of a truly astonishing green jobs revolution in every corner of Scotland. I can announce that, in the new year, we will publish our work towards a Scottish definition of green jobs, which will help to guide our activity.

I will finish by providing a quick update on the new just transition commission. The remit of the new commission was announced earlier in the year. The commission is asked to provide advice on and scrutiny of the Government's approach to co-designing just transition plans for sectors and regions. I have already confirmed that Professor Jim Skea will continue in his role as chair. We have approached people to be members of the new commission, and I will announce the full membership next week. I can confirm that we will take a dual approach to the commission's membership, with some members being appointed for the full parliamentary session and others being appointed on a fixed-term basis in order to bring their expertise to a particular plan.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must bring your remarks to a close, minister.

Richard Lochhead: We must ensure that, whenever possible, our climate actions support our broader economic and social objectives. That is what the just transition is all about. It is about avoiding past mistakes and ensuring that we plan

the way forward in an orderly fashion to deliver a net zero Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of delivering a worker and citizen-led just transition for Scotland; acknowledges the need to plan for an orderly transition to net zero by 2045, and the need for public and private investment so as to deliver a transition away from a high-carbon economy to net zero and climate resilience in a way that creates good green jobs and business opportunities across the country, and builds a fairer, greener future for all; welcomes the Scottish Government's response to the Just Transition Commission's report and commends the Commission's work; approves of the commitment to a new Commission, and notes that Scotland is the first country in the world to commit to a Just Transition Planning Framework.

16:02

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): The Scottish Conservatives believe in a fair and well-managed transition to net zero. That is critical to safeguarding jobs in the energy sector, to protecting the UK's energy security and to a green recovery.

Decarbonising our economy does not mean shutting down the oil and gas industry as soon as possible. We cannot simply turn off the taps, and we cannot ignore demand, which is set to continue until at least 2050. Instead, decarbonising our economy requires careful planning and collaboration between Governments, businesses, workers, investors and civil society. The just transition commission, which reported in March this year, has helped to focus minds in that regard.

However, as the Scottish Conservative amendment emphasises, talk of a just transition must lead to "meaningful action". This morning, Professor Jim Skea, the commission's chair, said that

"the big message is that we really need to get on with it."

The Climate Change Committee's latest report on Scotland's climate change plan is clear. It says:

"Most of the key policy levers are now in the hands of the Scottish Government, but promises have not yet turned into action. In this new Parliament, consultations and strategies must turn decisively to implementation."

The UK Government's landmark North Sea transition deal, which was developed in partnership with the industry body Oil & Gas UK, is the first of its kind by any G7 country. It contains more than 50 actions to meet the UK's climate targets by harnessing the expertise of the North Sea sector. It is not about managing the industry's decline; instead, it is about managing its diversification to greener and more sustainable energy sources, so that it can thrive for decades to come.

Many businesses in the energy sector are already diversifying beyond oil and gas, but they are experiencing difficulties in recruiting the right technical skills. That is why implementing the people and skills plan in the North Sea transition deal is so important. We know that workers in the sector have skills and knowledge that will transition well to renewables—research from Robert Gordon University shows that that applies to more than 90 per cent of the UK's oil and gas workforce. The loss of their expertise would be a massive blow to our net zero ambitions.

I am an MSP for the north-east, and those families and communities who are supported by the oil and gas sector are at the forefront of my mind today. Yesterday, I met representatives from Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce. They were optimistic about the region's resilience and recovery, but they emphasised that there is still a long way to go. Even before the coronavirus outbreak, the north-east had to contend with the oil price collapse and a significant downturn in the industry. Analysis from the Fraser of Allander Institute suggests that, while other areas of Scotland "have recovered pretty well", the north-east is lagging behind every other region.

Against that background, energy sector workers have listened to language about oil and gas from the SNP-Green coalition Government with alarm.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Does Tess White agree that standing up for 100,000 jobs in the north-east and for energy security is not, as a Scottish Government minister has said, taking a far-right position?

Tess White: I agree with Graham Simpson. Patrick Harvie is not here today, but for a Scottish Government minister with a ministerial car and a salary to match to suggest that only those on the "hard right" support oil and gas extraction is, to be frank, insulting to the workers in the sector. He should try telling that to the engineer who bought a house for his family in Ellon only to be laid off. He cannot now afford to pay his mortgage. For Patrick Harvie to gloat about an exploration project hitting "the skids" when it could have created 1,000 jobs was disgraceful, but it is typical of the short-sightedness of the Scottish Greens. They would prefer us to import oil from abroad, which has a much higher carbon footprint, than to meet demand domestically.

It is dangerous to demonise an industry, particularly when the financial and emotional wellbeing of workers is at risk, as it is in my region. For people to live with the constant threat and worry of not having a job next month or next year is exhausting. The oil and gas industry is not a villain and, as SNP MP Stephen Flynn said last week, it should not be denigrated. Sir Ian Wood has warned that politicians risk creating "an

adverse investment environment" for the sector. There is nothing just or fair about that.

Richard Lochhead: Will the member take an intervention?

Tess White: I am in my final few paragraphs.

Let us not forget that it is the energy companies that are investing their money, time and technical expertise in renewable energy sources.

We all agree that we must work towards a more sustainable future, but our priority must be to secure a fair and managed transition to net zero for those people who rely on the energy sector for their livelihoods.

At decision time today, the Scottish Conservatives will support the SNP motion. We are sympathetic to the Labour amendment, but, if it was agreed to, it would remove our call for meaningful action. Given the findings in the Climate Change Committee's report today, we feel that it is important to press that point. As such, we will not support the Labour amendment.

I move amendment S6M-02429.1, to insert at end:

"welcomes the UK Government's North Sea Transition Deal, which will help to facilitate the reskilling of existing parts of the oil and gas workforce, and contains a commitment to joint investment with the energy sector of up to £16 billion by 2030 to reduce carbon emissions, and believes that discussions around a 'just transition' must lead to meaningful action to safeguard the jobs of tens of thousands of energy sector workers across Scotland, and particularly in the north east."

16:08

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): We know that the clock is ticking if we are to prevent the climate emergency from becoming a climate catastrophe. We also know that COP26 barely kept 1.5° alive, and if Governments do not turn their warm words in the agreement into practical actions on the ground, it will be the death knell for an ambition that is already disastrous for many islands.

Here in Scotland, we may have challenging targets, but we still do not have a clear plan that comes close to delivering net zero by 2045 or—this is arguably more challenging—a 75 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. Scotland continues to consistently miss our emission reduction targets despite significant de-industrialisation in recent years, and the longer we take to put in place a proper plan to meet those targets, the less likely it is that any transition will be a just one.

Labour therefore welcomes the commitment to a longer-term just transition commission, although we believe that it should have statutory backing.

We commend the work of the previous commission, but the Government's response to its recommendations was too timid. It has become the norm that the rhetoric is not matched by the reality. There is still no plan to prevent the weight of climate change from landing on the shoulders of the poor.

Transport remains the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, being responsible for more than a third of those, with levels barely below those of 1990, yet the Green-SNP coalition is hiking up rail fares in a few weeks and axing 300 trains a day from May—that is 100,000 a year, in comparison with pre-pandemic levels. In addition, the Government has still not given councils the powers that I secured in the Transport (Scotland) Bill to run their own local bus services, at a time when our bus network is being dismantled, route by route, and fares rise and rise again—they have risen by 50 per cent under this Government. That is not a just transition.

On agriculture, it is five years since the Brexit vote and there are just three years until the end of the transition period for a sector that, by definition, needs time to plan. Its emissions are still flatlining, yet there are no details from the Government on how future farm and rural payments will deliver any managed transition, never mind a just one.

On heating and buildings, the minister referred to an investment of £1.8 billion, but we know that the bill is £33 billion—£5 billion alone for councils to refit council homes; it is not clear that the cost of that will not land on the backs of rent payers.

When it comes to jobs, we all remember Alex Salmond promising that Scotland would be the "Saudi Arabia of renewables". However, a decade on from the SNP pledge of 130,000 green jobs by 2020, the number of those who are directly employed in the low-carbon and renewables economy is just 21,400—the lowest it has been since 2014.

Tess White: Does the member agree that the Scottish Labour position on Cambo has jeopardised a thousand jobs in the energy sector?

Colin Smyth: The reality is that people in the energy sector are already losing their jobs and are getting very little support from the UK Government, at a time when oil prices are falling, particularly given that there are no proposals or plans from the UK Government to support those workers in a just transition.

It is little wonder that, when it comes to Governments, whether UK or Scottish, delivering a just transition, there is scepticism, even from members of the Scottish Government's own just transition commission. As Richard Hardy, the Scottish secretary of the Prospect union, said, the

Government's response to the commission's recommendations

"lacks any clear strategy for creating new high quality jobs ... This is very disappointing, unions argued long and hard in the Commission for a more interventionist approach on this key issue."

That is exactly what we need. If the transition to a low-carbon economy is left largely to market forces, as the Conservatives want, we will repeat the devastating social and economic impact that was experienced by our communities when the coal mines closed. That will need more than a Government motion that pats itself on the back for a framework that has not even yet been published.

It will need a relentless focus on how a climate recovery will support those who are unemployed as a result of the current economic crisis and the transition that we face. It will need a bold industrial strategy that lays out how domestic manufacturing capacity must evolve to ensure that the growth in domestic renewable energy production translates into new jobs in Scotland.

It will need a jobs-first transition, which is why Labour has established our own energy transition commission, which is focused on how we can protect jobs and deliver energy security, as we move to net zero. It will also need a partnership approach with those workers who are most affected—in particular, oil and gas workers. They are not the hard right. They are not criminals who deserve to be punished. They are ordinary workers, who work in what are often the most trying conditions to meet Scotland's energy needs, with invaluable skills, and they will continue to do so in the energy sector of the future. To meet them and their employers is not something for Government ministers to slag off; it would show respect for the fact that workers understand their industry and that they have the right to plan and shape their futures.

I will therefore be happy to move an amendment in my name that makes it absolutely clear that a transition can be just only when workers have a say in the futures of their livelihoods, communities and climate. It is time for a transition to a modern low-carbon economy, but it must be a just one that genuinely puts at its heart the protection of workers' livelihoods.

I move amendment S6M-02429.2, to leave out from "the Scottish Government's" to end, and insert:

"the recommendations in the Just Transition Commission's report and commends the Commission's work; approves of the commitment to a new Commission, and believes that the new Just Transition Commission should be given a statutory footing; considers that Scotland has huge potential to lead the way in the renewable energy sector, but regrets that, to date, the Scottish Government has failed to translate this into the growth of skilled green jobs; believes that the Scottish Government must

significantly step up its efforts to support the retention and creation of energy jobs in Scotland, and calls on the Scottish Government to set out a clear industrial plan, in consultation with trade unions and workers, particularly from the oil and gas sector, to secure a just transition for workers across Scotland.

16:14

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): The purpose of this short debate is perhaps a little hard to discern. However, if it provides a chance for the Parliament to restate our collective commitment to a just transition that puts workers and citizens first and ensures a resilient economy that is built on green jobs, it may yet be an hour well spent.

Yet the motion is rather self-congratulatory. Of course, ministers like to talk of the Parliament having passed world-leading climate legislation, and I am certainly proud of the role that my party played in pushing the Government to be more ambitious on the interim targets for 2030. The truth, though, is that target setting is easy. Developing detailed plans and committing necessary resources—in short, delivery—is the hard, but crucial, part.

As today's report by the Climate Change Committee shows once again, the Scottish Government's plans are heavy on promises but light on action. The committee criticises what it sees as a lack of detail in ministers' plans for how Scotland's targets are to be achieved if we are to make it to net zero by 2045. That is against the backdrop of Scotland having already missed its emissions targets again and again over recent years. In some areas, such as heat, we are going backwards.

As for the green jobs revolution that we have been promised for almost 15 years, dating back to Alex Salmond's time as First Minister, it is a talk that has never been properly walked. Given the lack of progress made in key areas over recent years, the urgency of the climate emergency, and the importance of securing a meaningful just transition, the Government cannot continue as it has been doing, which is making bold pronouncements and then finding someone else to blame when things are not delivered.

Key to a just transition is the creation of new green jobs. As Colin Smyth rightly emphasised, we cannot afford—nor would it be right—to leave people and communities behind. However, achieving that will require plans that are both radical and credible. That is why Scottish Liberal Democrats want to see home insulation declared a national strategic priority, with a target set to have all areas of the country covered by 2030. That must be matched by budgets to meet the ambition, including a doubling of fuel poverty funding and incentives for householders to take early action.

An initial five-year programme could see improvements made to 80,000 homes per year and an aim to switch 1 million homes from polluting mains gas to heat pumps by 2030. All in all, that has the potential to create an estimated 34,000 new jobs in energy efficiency.

We also want to see the expertise of those in the oil and gas sector put to good use in a just transition. The sector's technical and engineering expertise will be vital in delivering our plans for warmer homes, new heat networks and hydrogen power. We support the development of a centre of excellence for carbon capture and efficient energy generation. We would involve the construction and renewables industries, along with utility companies, in partnership with colleges, universities and planners to ensure that every opportunity is taken to create an economy that is fit for the future.

The potential of such partnerships can already be seen in my Orkney constituency, where proposals have been put forward to redevelop Flotta terminal into one of the world's first large-scale green hydrogen hubs. I had the pleasure of meeting some of those who are involved in the project yesterday. The potential is certainly exciting in a local, national and international context, further enhancing Orkney's reputation as being at the forefront of renewable energy innovation.

Scotland's targets for net zero are bold, ambitious and the right thing to do. However, we need the Government to pick up the pace and start walking its world-leading talk if we are to have any chance of making those ambitions a reality.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I advise members that we have no time in hand and that any interventions must therefore be absorbed in their speaking time.

16:18

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): In 1904, the Oakbank Oil Company built the Niddry Castle oil works at Winchburgh in my constituency. The irony is that, long before the electrification of the nearby Edinburgh to Glasgow railway line, the works were connected to the shale mines in the area by an electric narrow-gauge tramway. For several decades in the 19th century, Scotland was the leading oil producer in the world.

West Lothian has many former coal mining communities: strong towns and villages and people, but brutalised by the unjust transition of the abrupt and political end of coal mining. The consequences of generational mass unemployment can run deep and long and, despite the resilience and capability of the county,

the impact can still be felt. It is therefore not the first time that our workers and communities have faced industrial transition. Yes, the British Leyland car plant in Bathgate got replaced by inward investment with a Motorola plant and 3,000 houses and, yes, Whitburn Polkemmet's smoking bing is now the Heartlands estate. However, not everyone was helped, and people were not always helped with skilled work and good wages.

As the just transition commission report states,

"This transition needs to be a national mission with social justice at its heart: something achieved BY the people of Scotland, not done TO the people of Scotland".

We need a just transition with skills and training that help to secure good high-value jobs in green industries, job security for people in the industries that will play the biggest part in the transition and costs that do not burden those who are least able to pay. However, there cannot be a detailed just transition if there are not detailed climate change plans, and the criticism in the UK Climate Change Committee's progress report must be addressed by ministers.

Government cannot and will not do this by itself—it needs industry, investors, energy companies, unions and the public sector to work together. The £100 million facility that is proposed for Nigg and the prospect of 400 jobs in an offshore wind tower factory is a major step in the right direction.

Scotland will be running on the dual fuel model of carbon and renewable energy for some time and we need a sensible collective joined-up solution for transition; the workers involved need to be reskilled for the journey and job opportunities and investments need to be identified. Oil and gas companies and their workers are and must be part of the just transition.

From COP26, paragraph 85 of the Glasgow climate pact has for the first time a reference to just transition, and how we achieve that is of great interest to others and to other Governments. In a recent report by PricewaterhouseCoopers, Scotland scored 62 out of 100 on the green jobs barometer and was the top-ranked part of the UK; for every green job created in Scotland, an additional three jobs are created elsewhere in the economy.

In a world where international investments can go anywhere, we need to anchor our transition with Scottish-owned companies, not just Scotland-based companies, and we need to build in sustainability for the whole supply chain and for procurement activity. As we know from West Lothian transitions, inward investment is mobile and can leave.

No Government in the world has done enough to introduce the changes that are needed, but

there is no country in the world quite like Scotland, with our experience of shale, coal, cars, electric hydro and nuclear, oil and gas, wind, wave and tidal, and now a focus on and drive to hydrogen.

We will debate, question and scrutinise the steps on the way, but let us stand today united and committed to a just transition for our communities, our country and our climate.

16:22

Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

There is cross-party agreement in the Parliament about the need to transition to net zero in a fair and managed fashion. I agree with many of the headline policies that the Scottish Government has announced to address the climate crisis and with a number of the remarks just made by Fiona Hyslop, but I have genuine concerns about how those headline policies are being implemented and the lack of resource, personnel and budget being dedicated to them. Frankly, I have a genuine question about whether the Scottish Government is more interested in headlines than delivering the transformation that is required.

Those same concerns were expressed today by the independent UK Climate Change Committee in its progress report. It expressed doubts about whether Scotland would reach the 2030 interim targets. It has concerns that there is not enough clarity and transparency on policy, that there is little detail to support the delivery of the policy and that implementation has been lacking.

In the spirit of co-operation, let me try to help the minister by providing some recent examples of what the Climate Change Committee refers to in its concerns. In 2017, the First Minister announced the headline policy of a publicly owned energy company that would tackle fuel poverty, reduce energy prices and help meet climate targets. That remained a key Scottish Government policy for the best part of four years, and £500,000 of taxpayers' money was spent on feasibility studies.

However, the policy was quietly airbrushed away during summer recess and replaced with a new headline policy of a national public energy agency, which was announced with the ambitious objectives of decarbonising homes and buildings and reducing fuel poverty. So far, so good—that sounds like a good policy, but again, on closer inspection, it turned out to be just a headline. The cabinet secretary confirmed to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee that that virtual agency will be no more than a website with no additional resource, budget or staffing—in other words, a headline policy with no substance has been replaced with another headline policy with no substance. I have genuine concerns about that—

the policy intention is good but the delivery is failing.

The same approach has been taken in the Scottish Government motion, which proclaims that

“Scotland is the first country in the world to commit to a Just Transition Planning Framework.”

Richard Lochhead: The member has referred a number of times to the Climate Change Committee report that was published this morning. The report says that if Scotland’s carbon capture and storage projects do not get the go-ahead, we will have to up our commitments to other measures, which, as members have said, is very challenging at the moment. Does it not therefore make sense for the UK Government just to give the go-ahead to the one project that is there and ready to go—the Acorn project—so that we can get on with achieving our net zero targets and creating good green jobs?

Dean Lockhart: I am glad to know that the Scottish cluster is in the first reserve list and continues to get significant support from the UK Government, including £31 million to date. I am pretty sure that the Scottish cluster has a healthy future, backed by UK Government financing. I believe that it has not received any financing from the Scottish Government.

My question to the minister is in relation to the planning framework referred to in the Scottish Government motion. What does it mean and how will it be financed? I do not see any targets or any meaningful way in which the policy can be measured or delivered against.

On the subject of retraining and creating new jobs, there is real concern about how the green jobs workforce academy policy will operate and the resources behind it. The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee heard in evidence that the green jobs academy is just a website setting out a list of jobs. A representative from the Scottish Trades Union Congress told the committee that the green jobs academy

“will not change any of the fundamentals of job creation or the skills offer.”—[*Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee*, 7 September 2021; c 38.]

He went on to say that what is required instead is a far more fundamental policy change to deliver on jobs and a just transition.

I conclude by quoting today’s Climate Change Committee report, which says:

“Although a broad set of policies and proposals have been announced”—

by the Scottish Government—

“there is still ... little detail on exactly how ... emissions will be reduced in practice.”

Most concerningly, the report goes on to say that the credibility of the Scottish climate framework is in jeopardy.

16:27

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): I will use the short time available to me to outline some concerns about the failure, to date, to take the necessary steps to ensure that we create the green jobs that we need. Despite ambitious targets, jobs have not been created in the numbers and with the terms and conditions required to make a just transition possible. Unless we see seismic change, there will be no just transition.

There is no doubt that we need a jobs and workers-led transition, with the trade unions at the heart of the debate in all sectors. The Scottish Government promised 130,000 green jobs by 2020. However, as has been said previously, the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show that an estimated 21,400 direct full-time equivalent jobs were created in the low carbon and renewables economy in 2019—the most recent year for which we have figures. That was a fall from 23,100 the previous year and the lowest direct employment since 2014. My concern is that a strategy has not been presented to us today to describe how we will create those new, high-quality jobs.

The Conservative Party amendment welcomes the UK Government’s North Sea transition deal, which includes a commitment to work with employers to secure joint investment of £16 billion to retrain their workforces, but that deal fails to recognise that many of the workforce are contractors, who will therefore not benefit from it.

The recent debate on offshore training passports outlined the transferable skills that many oil and gas workers have. A Robert Gordon University review found that

“over 90% of the UK’s oil and gas workforce have medium to high skills transferability and are well positioned to work in adjacent energy sectors.”

The review projected that 100,000 of the jobs in adjacent energy sectors are likely

“to be filled by people transferring from existing oil and gas jobs to offshore renewable roles”.

However, we are talking about only approximately half of the workforce. The announcement on *Cambo* makes it clear that change is coming, but well-paid green jobs are not currently being created in the numbers required, and much more needs to be done by both Governments to make them a reality.

Scotland has, of course, huge potential to lead the way in renewable energy. However, our history

is one of innovation and invention, but then failure to turn that into mass production. That is, of course, what has happened in the renewables sector in recent decades.

We need an industrial strategy that lays out how domestic industrial capacity will ensure growth in renewable energy production and new jobs in Scotland. As a first step, we need to create a publicly owned energy company, but we also need to look at municipal energy production, such as the solar energy farms that are being created by North Ayrshire Council. The model of public energy provision is mainstream in many other parts of the world, including Germany and the USA.

I welcome the debate on all sides. However, to deliver a just transition, we need to be more radical.

16:31

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate.

A just transition is key as we move from fossil fuels over the next years. Yesterday, I, along with other Scottish National Party colleagues, met Scottish Renewables, and we heard about the opportunities of the renewables sector in Scotland in delivering an additional 17,000 jobs with an additional £33 billion of gross value added by 2030. Earlier on, we heard from Liam McArthur about the opportunities for 34,000 jobs in retrofitting. Tess White and Katy Clark mentioned the recent report by Robert Gordon University, which stated that 90 per cent of oil and gas industry jobs have medium to high transferability into green and net zero industries. Therein lie the opportunities for us.

On planning for a managed transition, we need this period of change to be shaped proactively. The new just transition commission, which was recently announced, has been mentioned. It is led by Professor Jim Skea who, obviously, has a good background. He is co-chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The commission will provide scrutiny and advice on the on-going development of Scottish Government-led just transition plans. That is quite right, and that is a really important point, which a few people have brought up. Every Government should be held to account, including on the application of the just transition planning framework. The commission will also advise on the most suitable approaches to monitoring and evaluation. I look forward to debating that next year.

The commission will undertake engagement with those most likely to be impacted by the transition, and it will hear from a broad range of representative voices. I think that Katy Clark

mentioned the unions. They are vital as we look at doing that.

As I have said, there will, crucially, be an annual report to reflect on progress and, of course, to hold to account. I know that that was mentioned in the CCC call for transparency this morning.

The initial just transition commission report was organised into four overarching themes: planning for a managed transition; equipping people with knowledge and skills; involving those who will be impacted through co-design and collaboration; and spreading the benefits of the transition widely. In the short time that I have, I want to focus on planning for a managed transition to net zero that maximises economic and social opportunities, while managing the risks, and equipping people in Scotland with the knowledge and skills that they need to engage with, and benefit from, the net zero transition, while putting in place safety nets so that no one is left behind.

On managing the transition and maximising economic benefit, we need to continue to set just transition plans for high-emitting industrial sectors of the Scottish economy. We need to continue to set out clear milestones out to 2045, and work with industry, unions and local communities to consult on the best way to develop and implement those. The public sector must be more strategic in its use of funding streams to build strong and resilient local supply chains and ensure maximum economic benefit. I am already undertaking work with my local authority in that regard.

ScotWind opportunities now and in the future must be utilised to secure new opportunities for the Scottish supply chain. The recent Scottish offshore wind energy council strategic investment analysis report looked at the opportunities for Scottish companies in that developing market and benefits from a growing global market.

In Scotland, we need to ensure that we are equipped with the knowledge and skills that are needed to engage with and benefit from the net zero transition, and we need to ensure that no one is left behind. A just transition will demand a steady adaptation of skills and work practices in a way that protects jobs and meets employer demand while contributing to tackling inequality.

The “Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan 2020-2025”—CESAP—which was published at the end of 2020, set out an overarching approach for managing the skills transition. The CESAP implementation plan outlines an ambitious, cohesive approach to green skills and green jobs. The initial just transition commission recommended the creation of a skills guarantee for workers in carbon-intensive sectors who might find that demand for their skills declines or even disappears as the economy changes.

Renewables present great opportunity. We need to maximise the benefits for Scottish companies with a highly skilled workforce and strong supply chain, and we also need to ensure that there is a safety net to support the transition for workers and that the skills and experience that they have built up over many years are retained in the Scottish economy.

16:35

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Post COP26, this is a critical time at which to double down on the climate science while ramping up action on a just transition. Of course, the oil and gas corporations have funded climate denial for decades, so it is no wonder that recent polling shows that the majority of the public do not trust them to lead the just transition.

However, the oil and gas workers deserve our respect, support and solidarity for the huge contribution that they have made to our energy needs since the 1970s. Those workers should be the people who lead the just transition, but for years they have faced uncertainty in a boom-and-bust sector.

Despite the UK Government's having donated an eye-watering £13.6 billion of tax subsidy to the oil and gas sector since the Paris agreement was signed, major job losses continue; there have been more than 10,000 jobs lost in the oil and gas sector in the past year. That is in a sector that directly employs just over 30,000 people. Nearly three quarters of workers in it are now employed ad hoc, as contractors. It is no wonder that, in a recent survey, more than 80 per cent of oil and gas workers said that they would consider moving to a different sector, with over half of respondents being interested in renewables and offshore wind. Job security was cited as the biggest factor in that survey.

The UK policy of maximum economic recovery of oil and gas does not help with the just transition. It postpones action, drags investment away from renewables and creates a future cliff edge for workers. It also critically undermines the global UN climate negotiations, making it impossible to ask countries to adopt the language of phasing out coal when we will not phase out our own oil and gas.

That policy of maximum economic recovery could lead to a future sudden collapse in jobs, should climate impacts lead to a high carbon price shutting down production. If we can learn anything from the Tories' brutal dismantling of the coal industry in the 1980s, it is that such sudden collapses punish communities for generations.

Liam Kerr: Will Mark Ruskell give way?

Mark Ruskell: I do not have time, unfortunately.

It is absurd to say that stopping the Cambo field would mean turning off the taps on North Sea oil and gas and lead to that kind of unmanaged collapse. There are already 6.5 billion barrels of oil in more than 200 already-licensed fields in the North Sea. That is enough to see us through years of energy transition. It is clear that Cambo would be disastrous. The emissions from burning all 800 million barrels of oil in the field would be 10 times Scotland's annual emissions and would last well beyond 2045, when we are meant to be a net zero country.

Where would the jobs from Cambo be? Siccar Point Energy has said that the engineering and construction work would be outsourced to a firm that is based in Singapore. The operation is designed to need just 100 to 150 staff, who could end up being drafted in from anywhere in the world.

Calling a halt to Cambo and other new fields is the start of a managed transition rather than the start of a future that is based on the economic chaos of stranded assets that we cannot afford to burn. There have been years of warnings—from those by Mark Carney to the ones from the International Energy Agency—about exactly that scenario.

The announcement of the turbine tower factory at Nigg last week was a hugely important step. It needs to be the first of many more announcements that build a high-value supply chain in Scotland with good-quality and fair jobs.

The just transition must follow the climate science, but it must be designed by the women and men whose livelihoods depend on its success, instead of our listening wholly to corporate boardrooms, which have continually let workers and our climate down for many years.

16:40

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): We are having this debate against the backdrop of COP26 having just been held and Patrick Harvie rejoicing in the potential loss of nearly 100,000 energy jobs in Scotland—the same Mr Harvie who insists on giving cyclists a bad name every time he gets on his bike, whether it be for a ministerial photo call or not.

I want to focus my comments on transport, because it is our biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. We need to decarbonise aviation as much as possible, as well as our ferries—which should not involve buying second-hand diesel boats—and we need to decarbonise our trains, buses, lorries and cars. There is a lot to do. We also need to get more people to make very short local journeys

under their own steam, where possible. That means cycling, walking and wheeling.

The Government motion refers to the just transition commission report and the Government's response to it. On transport, the response says that the ambition is that

"Public transport and active modes of travel are the norm, supplemented by zero emissions vehicles, where needed",

which is all fine, but the challenge is in how to get there. If we want to get more people on to public transport, there must be services for them to use, and those services need to have fares that are affordable. Cutting train services is not the way, as Colin Smyth noted. Our having public transport deserts, as we do in some places, is not the way, either. We need to move to a fully integrated system, but we are a long way from that.

Public transport is nowhere near being "the norm". We are yet to have significant reform of the bus system, and we do not yet know what the Scottish Government has planned for our railway; we are months away from it being nationalised. We know that how the ferries are run is in dire need of a shake-up; we just need the Government to accept that.

Active travel is not "the norm" either, but it is affordable for many people, and it is low carbon. In order to encourage more people to take up cycling, we need safe cycling infrastructure—which usually means segregation. I was at the COP26 rally in Glasgow. I cycled there in the rain, and the message from my fellow cyclists was "Our machines fight climate change!" Mark Ruskell was there, too. Investment in cycling is good value for money, and investment in cycling infrastructure and cycling projects creates new green jobs. Cycling can be part of a just transition to net zero, and it tackles transport poverty.

People in low-income households are far more likely than those in richer households to use public transport, rather than own a car. About 60 per cent of households that have an income of less than £10,000 do not have access to a car; indeed, 55 per cent of households in north-east Glasgow have no access to a car. Using a bike is, for many people on low incomes, a much more affordable option than e-vehicle ownership. Some 81 per cent of people say that they would be motivated to cycle if there were more cycle lanes, traffic-free routes and off-road cycle paths, because they currently feel unsafe on the roads.

I will be looking very carefully at what is announced in the budget this week. We will need action on electric vehicles, buses, trains, ferries and active travel, as well as on improving existing roads. Those are all compatible and they must happen. This week can be a key test of whether

either we are serious about change or it is all hot air.

16:44

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to the motion. The issue is so important not just to me, but to my constituents in Aberdeen Donside and to the wider north-east economy. It is no surprise that the north-east has relied on the oil and gas industry for many years to provide vital jobs and investment in the region. As a result, it has flourished.

Everyone in my constituency is involved in or knows someone who is in the industry, whether they are directly employed by an oil and gas firm or are involved in the supply chain. A hard shutdown with no alternative jobs or investment is not an option. If that were to happen, an entire region would collapse, as happened with closure of the mines in the 1980s. We cannot go down that road; we must put jobs in place to support the 100,000 people who work in the industry. That must be done in a fair and just way that leaves no one behind and which provides sustainable and well-paid jobs for years to come.

The UK Government has deserted the north-east on carbon capture. The opportunities that could come with carbon capture, utilisation and storage in the Acorn project could have been transformational for the region. Conservative members have highlighted that the site is on the reserve list for funding if another project falls through, but that provides little assurance for my constituents and people more widely in the north-east. They do not need empty promises and reserve status; they require solid opportunities and funding to achieve a just transition to net zero.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Jackie Dunbar: I am sorry. I do not have time.

There can be no just transition without our taking the north-east along with us. We are being left behind by the UK Government.

The transition away from oil and gas is required in order for us to meet our climate change targets. We have a responsibility to play our part in tackling the climate emergency. Inaction is simply not an option: on that, we can all agree.

I have focused mainly on the jobs aspect of the need to transition, but climate change presents a massive opportunity to strive for high-quality zero-carbon housing, and to tackle inequality. Social justice can also be at the heart of our just transition.

In addition to funding the building of thousands of new homes, the Scottish Government is—rightly—increasing investment in home energy efficiency measures. The majority of buildings in Scotland will continue to be used in the future, so we must retrofit what we have, if we are serious about getting our buildings to net zero. On that note, I am pleased that £1.8 billion will be invested over this parliamentary session to allow us to accelerate energy efficiency upgrades and renewable heating deployment. That will create new jobs and supply chain opportunities across Scotland.

The transition must be just and it must protect the jobs of those who are in the existing industry. The just transition commission will be key to ensuring that no one is left behind. It will engage with people who are likely to be impacted by the transition and it will support and scrutinise the Scottish Government's plans for the transition.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government has committed £500 million over 10 years to support people's jobs and livelihoods in the north-east and to accelerate the plans for a just transition in the region. The energy transition fund will also provide £62 million to support our vital energy sector and promote sustainable and inclusive growth, as we move towards net zero by 2045.

I understand and sympathise with people in north-east Scotland who might fear the transition and might not be able to imagine an Aberdeen without oil and gas. I welcome the establishment of the just transition commission, which will work to ensure that nobody is left behind. We have a good first step to work towards. We must continue to work together to achieve net zero.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that there is no time in hand, so any interventions must be absorbed.

16:48

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): As we have heard, the Scottish Government's response to the just transition commission's report is not bold enough. Four key areas are crucial to delivering a just transition: skills transferability, public transport, fair work and support for consumers with energy costs.

We heard from Katy Clark that the Scottish Government must do more on skills transferability, particularly in the offshore energy sector. Offshore oil and gas workers are being prevented from transitioning into greener jobs by training costs and a lack of common training standards in the offshore energy sector. I have been working with trade unions such as the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and climate campaigners such as Friends of the Earth

Scotland to highlight the need for an offshore training passport.

Douglas Lumsden: Will the member give way?

Mercedes Villalba: I do not have time.

When I first raised the suggestion back in September, the First Minister welcomed it as a "constructive proposal", but the follow-up letter that I received from the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work offered no new ideas. When I raised the issue again in October, the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity said that she

"would be delighted to meet ... to discuss"—[*Official Report*, 28 October 2021; c 46.]

the issue, but that meeting has never materialised. Perhaps the just transition minister can clarify the Scottish Government's position today.

The energy skills alliance is currently developing an all-energy apprenticeship. That will benefit new entrants to the industry, but it will not help the existing workforce. I therefore ask the minister to address, in his closing remarks, whether the Scottish Government will commit to exploring all options for the introduction of an offshore training passport, including through the ESA.

We heard from Graham Simpson that, on public transport, the Scottish Government must do more. It says that it will commission a fair fares review to look at an integrated approach to transport fares. However, many will be wondering why, when integrated fares could be delivered for delegates to COP26, a review is required before the policy can be rolled out to ordinary passengers.

The Scottish Government is also committed to introducing free bus travel for the under-22s, but that does not go far enough. Yesterday, my colleague Paul Sweeney launched his campaign to extend free bus travel to asylum seekers. That would use just 0.0005 per cent of the Scottish budget and, for such small change, would make a massive difference.

Another crucial omission from the Scottish Government's response is the key role that councils could play in providing affordable, accessible and sustainable public transport. Councils now have the power, but not the cash, to implement that. I ask the minister whether he will commit to looking at all options, including providing start-up capital through the Scottish National Investment Bank, to empower councils to set up municipal bus services.

On fair work, there are fundamental barriers such as low pay, insecure work and poor working conditions that often prevent workers from transitioning into green jobs. To ensure that our transition away from carbon-intensive sectors is

worker led, we must ensure that new green jobs are well paid, on secure contracts with excellent terms and conditions. The Scottish Government has committed to introducing a new just transition commission, but that commission must act in the interests of workers. That leads me to my third ask of the minister: will he look at instructing the commission to plan for a just transition framework that extends trade union recognition and collective bargaining rights for workers in all green sectors of the economy?

On public energy, a poll for Citizens Advice Scotland revealed yesterday that more than one in three Scots are struggling to pay their energy bills. Last week, after two years of waiting, the Scottish Government finally released the outline business case for a publicly owned energy company, which revealed that that would produce annual savings for consumers. However, despite so many struggling with energy costs, the Scottish Government appears to be abandoning its pledge to deliver a publicly owned energy company, as Dean Lockhart mentioned earlier—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Villalba, could you please conclude? You are over your time.

Mercedes Villalba: My final ask of the minister is: will the Scottish Government fulfil that pledge, or will it be just another empty promise?

16:53

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): What is absolutely clear from the motion, the amendments and the contributions this afternoon is the importance of achieving, alongside our net zero ambitions, a just transition. Tess White put it well when she said that a just transition

“is critical to safeguarding jobs in the energy sector, to protecting the UK’s energy security and to a green recovery.”

Liam McArthur hit the nail on the head when he said that there needs to be credibility. Those on the Government benches have little of that. Graham Simpson picked up on the shameful comments of a Government minister, who described those who support a managed and fair transition for the oil and gas industry as “the hard right”, and on members of the Green Party celebrating moves that risk up to 100,000 jobs while threatening to

“seize ... assets and prosecute ... executives”.

The usually sensible Mark Ruskell doubled down on those comments in some disappointingly ill-informed remarks. It is that sort of tone that undermines Government credibility in this area.

Mark Ruskell: Will the member give way?

Liam Kerr: I am short of two minutes, I am afraid, Mr Ruskell.

The SNP’s credibility is not enhanced when senior Government ministers argue that the future of the planet depends on Scottish independence. Several members have highlighted the Climate Change Committee’s report, which warns that credibility will be undermined if there is a widening of the gap between targets and achievement. Members will well recall John Swinney’s boast in 2010 that offshore wind energy would create 28,000 posts by 2020. It has delivered fewer than 2,000.

Colin Smyth pointed out that around 22,000 renewable energy jobs have been created in Scotland, but in response to a parliamentary question last week, the minister conceded that

“No data is available to provide ... geographic breakdowns below Scotland level”.—[*Written Answers*, 18 November 2021; S6W-04273.]

The Scottish Government does not even bother to interrogate the data to find out whether job creation is happening in areas such as the north-east, where job losses are greatest.

Credibility is further damaged by Jackie Dunbar’s reference to a just transition fund and the calls for the UK Government to match it. I remind her that the minister’s copy-and-paste responses to my parliamentary questions show that there are no details about when, where, to whom, from whom or for what it will be paid. We do not even know, and we will not know until spring 2022, which budget it is coming from. What a contrast to the UK’s £16 billion North Sea transition deal. It matches the just transition fund 32 times over, will deliver 40,000 jobs and is happening now.

We have heard that achieving a just transition requires us to take a rational approach to the debate, and not to demonise particular industries and companies. Last Friday, my north-east Conservative colleagues and I met BP to discuss its efforts to utilise its skills, leadership and workforce to effect a genuinely fair and managed transition. Most oil and gas companies in the UK are doing similar. I asked who will finance the bulk of the \$70 trillion to \$100 trillion cost of global transition. It will have to be private sources, such as sovereign wealth, pension and hedge funds, asset management companies, investment trusts and energy companies. I know that some members do not like to hear that, but we have to start talking sensibly, scientifically and rationally about the industries that we are transitioning from and to, and how we will do it.

Dean Lockhart pointed out that the Scottish Government specialises in “headline policies” with no substance. Yesterday, Russell Borthwick of the

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce said:

“We need just transition to become a meaningful programme of action, and not just a glib phrase.”

They are both right, so I say to the minister that we will vote for his motion’s warm words, but he must move away from the soundbites and virtue signalling, acknowledge our demand for meaningful action, and vote for our amendment today.

16:57

Richard Lochhead: It is clear from today’s important debate—and I am sure that we will have many more like it in the coming years—that we all approach the agenda from different perspectives and viewpoints. However, there is broad consensus on the urgent need to tackle climate change, and to do so in a way that is fair and brings households, business and communities with us.

I know that many across the chamber have that shared ambition, and I hope that there is opportunity for us to work together to ensure that we get it right in the coming years. Although there will always be some disagreements over policies and priorities, I believe that there is a lot of consensus on the importance of delivering a just transition.

However, that will not prevent me from picking up on some of the inherent contradictions, particularly from members on the Scottish Conservative benches. On the one hand, we hear from Tess White and others that there should be unlimited extraction of fossil fuels. On the other hand, they are complaining that the Scottish Government’s transition is not going fast enough. That does not make sense—it does not square.

Graham Simpson said that he took part in a rally at COP26. Clearly, he thinks that there is an urgent need for action to save the planet. He is willing to talk the talk, but when it comes to walking the walk and the cold reality of taking difficult decisions, he is full of double standards and hypocrisy.

Graham Simpson: I tell the minister that I have no double standards in me. I have been fighting for cycling for years, which is why I went to the rally and stood beside fellow cyclists who were saying that cycling can save the planet. That is not double standards.

Richard Lochhead: The other aspect of the hypocrisy from the Scottish Conservatives today is the non-stop complaining about the lack of action to create green jobs as alternative employment opportunities for those working in carbon-intensive industries, yet the Conservative UK Government

just rejected the Acorn project. The Acorn project was the best project for carbon storage in the whole of the UK and would have created 15,000 green jobs, mainly in the north-east of Scotland.

Liam Kerr: The UK Government has put £31 million into that project so far. How much has the minister’s Government put in?

Richard Lochhead: The Conservatives have turned down 15,000 green jobs at the same time as they are complaining to the Scottish Government that we are not creating enough green jobs for their constituents in North East Scotland. That is more hypocrisy and double standards from those on the Conservative benches.

There were many references to the Climate Change Committee’s report that came out today. The report poses a number of challenges to the Scottish Government. We must take them seriously because, at this time, no one has all the answers to many of the questions or knows how to implement the changes that we will have to make in society in the fairest possible way or where all the solutions will come from.

This morning, Chris Stark, who is the chief executive of the Climate Change Committee, said that there are really positive aspects to the Scottish plans. He said that the focus on a just transition and the clear steps to integrate net zero into ministerial portfolios across the Scottish Government are great, and that it is also good to see ambition raised in other areas, such as agriculture.

Brian Whittle: The minister will also know that, as I mentioned, Chris Stark said that there is no transparency to show how the Scottish Government will reach the policy targets that it has set.

Richard Lochhead: That is exactly the same intervention that the member made earlier in the debate, and I answered it at the time.

There a difference between what we are hearing from some members in this Parliament today and what we are hearing from the rest of world. The rest of the world is looking to Scotland and the leadership that we are showing when it comes to implementing a just transition. That leadership is leading to many green jobs being created in our country.

The Labour Party laments the lack of action on green jobs. I said that the latest tranche of awards through the green jobs fund today will create more than 800 green jobs in Scotland. However, the private sector is creating tens of thousands of green jobs. Those are being pledged due to the leadership that the Scottish Government and,

indeed, Scotland, are showing in moving towards our net zero targets.

Many members have referred to Global Energy Group's proposals for Nigg, which will create 400 long-term direct jobs and more than 1,000 indirect jobs. Some 16,400 green jobs will be created by 2030 through heat pump manufacturing and heat in buildings jobs. The hydrogen policy statement says that up to 300,000 green jobs could be supported by 2045, and Robert Gordon University has said that there is the potential for up to 300,000 offshore jobs in Scotland and throughout the UK.

The Acorn project, which the Conservative UK Government has rejected, would have created 15,000 green jobs—not in 10 years or 20 years, but from next year onwards. I ask members to let that sink in, remembering that there are 70,000 oil and gas jobs in Scotland. The Conservative Party has turned down the opportunity to create 15,000 jobs, which is more than 20 per cent of that figure.

A just transition is about learning from past mistakes. We will stand by those who are working in jobs in carbon-intensive sectors. We will work with them to ensure that workers, and citizens, have a voice in their own future and in Scotland's future.

We will use the challenge of climate change as a window of opportunity to tackle embedded inequalities in society, as well as create good green jobs. This Government, this Parliament and this country can make a contribution to tackling global warming while improving the quality of life of the people who live here.

Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of a legislative consent motion. I ask Jamie Hepburn to move motion S6M-02430, on the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 2 March 2021, relating to research and innovation, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—
[*Jamie Hepburn*]

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

Business Motion

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-02457, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out changes to business this week.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 9 December 2021—

after

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Affairs and Islands

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Supporting Culture in Scotland

delete

4.25 pm Decision Time

insert

5.00 pm Decision Time—[George Adam]

The Presiding Officer: I call Neil Bibby to speak to and move amendment S6M-02457.1.

17:04

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): My amendment to the business motion will extend business on Thursday by 30 minutes, with decision time being at 5.30 pm. There is no parliamentary event more important than the budget, and there has been no year in which the budget has been more important than this year. The people of Scotland, whom we represent, need the budget to be one for real recovery—a budget that sets Scotland on a path to a brighter and better 2022 and that helps to make the lives of the people we represent better. I sincerely hope that it can do so.

We, in the Scottish Labour Party, are determined to play our part in scrutinising Government and in asking questions on behalf of our communities. The Government is perfectly entitled to bring forward a ministerial statement on supporting culture in Scotland on Thursday. I do not know what will be in the statement, but I do know that it is not one of the number of statements that the Opposition has requested.

However, one thing is clear: we must also have additional time in Parliament for more questions on the budget. The Labour Party is currently permitted to ask only five questions in scrutinising the budget. The governing parties, the Scottish National Party and the Greens, will combine to have 15. That may be good enough for them, but

we have many more than five questions to ask on behalf of our constituents—on jobs, hospitals, schools, buses, housing, the environment, our high streets and many more issues.

If the Scottish Government does not agree, that begs the question: what does it have to fear from scrutiny? The budget needs to be one for real recovery and jobs, and we need to do our job. If that means staying an extra half an hour on Thursday to do it, so be it. Scottish Labour is calling on Parliament to back our amendment. We do so in the hope that the budget can truly be made to kick-start recovery and make a difference for the people of Scotland.

I move amendment S6M-02457.1, to leave out “5.00 pm Decision Time” and insert:

“5.30 pm Decision Time”.

17:06

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I rise to speak against the business motion and in support of the amendment. As you know, Presiding Officer, I have been in touch with members of the Parliamentary Bureau over the past few weeks regarding the budget statement on Thursday. Initially, the Government planned that the budget statement would last for one hour: 20 minutes for the statement and only 40 minutes for questions. It is true that the time for the statement was extended from 60 minutes to 90 minutes, but that merely brought it into line with the past few years’ budget statements and was therefore not an extension or any kind of a compromise at all.

As we have heard, there is now to be a statement on culture on Thursday. I am sure that, as he did at the bureau meeting, Mr Adam, the Minister for Parliamentary Business, is about to take umbrage and pretend that my objection is an insult to culture. That is such nonsense—indeed, drivel. The real insult to culture is that it is being used in such a shoddy way, shoehorned in when it was suggested that the time in hand after the budget could be used to provide more MSPs with the opportunity to ask a question. The inescapable conclusion from all the programming shenanigans is that the prime reason why that statement has been added at the last minute is to protect Ms Forbes from answering questions.

I have confidence that the cabinet secretary would be up to answering back-bench questions. Why does Mr Adam not? He refused my reasonable suggestion in the bureau to move the culture statement to next Tuesday, when it would not be overshadowed by the budget. That stands in stark contrast to Mr Adam’s failure to allocate time for a statement on the circular economy during the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—which he

maintained at the time would be overshadowed by the international event. Where is that concern now? This is about protecting ministers from the scrutiny of the Scottish Parliament—[*Interruption.*] What it shows, more than anything else, is a culture of contempt in the Scottish Government for the openness and oversight that the Scottish Parliament brings.

It seems that the Government has no appetite for accountability. It would rather deflect and obscure what is going on in the public finances and any other area of public policy. More time is needed for more questions and discussion on the budget. How can it ever be a bad thing in the Scottish Parliament to ask questions of the Executive? There is a growing danger that, the more the Scottish Government tramples over the Scottish Parliament's business schedule, the more accustomed to that we all become—[*Interruption.*] Back benchers deserve to have their questions answered. The desires and concerns of our constituents—

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Mr Kerr. Can we please hear Mr Kerr, colleagues? Thank you.

Stephen Kerr: Thank you, Presiding Officer. It is the job of the Scottish Parliament to hold the Scottish Government to account. The people of Scotland deserve no less. I therefore urge members to reject the business programme motion in favour of the amended motion.

The Presiding Officer: I call George Adam to respond on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

17:09

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): I have known Kate Forbes for many years, and she does not need to hide behind me.

According to Stephen Kerr, it is this big daft boy fae Feegie who seems to be the one controlling the whole Scottish Parliament, as opposed to us working together in the bureau to create the business of the Parliament. However, after the pantomime that we have just seen, it is time to talk about the facts.

The item of business on the Scottish Government's budget statement this Thursday is scheduled for 95 minutes, which allows for 65 minutes of questioning. It is not my fault, and I cannot do anything about the fact, that the Conservatives are unable to ask any questions that will give Kate Forbes difficulty—that is not my problem.

The time allowed is an increase on the average over the past four years of 58 minutes, which Stephen Kerr pointed out to me in an email last

week. The 95 minutes for a statement and questions is in addition to a stage 1 debate that is due to take place at the end of January, a stage 2 debate in committee at the beginning of February and a stage 3 debate in mid-February. I assure members that adequate time will be given to the budget and that no limitation of scrutiny is being proposed by anyone here.

Thursday's proposed business includes a statement on supporting culture in Scotland, because culture is a key economic sector. In 2019, the creative industries contributed around £4.5 billion to the economy and employed more than 127,000 people. I heard at the bureau meeting earlier today—this was hinted at in the chamber, too—that the proposed business was buffering in some way and that we were using culture to use up parliamentary time. That suggestion is an absolute disgrace, because the culture industry is extremely important to Scotland and our economy. After the 18 to 20 months that we have had, it is important that we discuss what is happening in culture now and what we are doing for the future.

The pandemic has hit the culture sector harder than almost any other sector, and it continues to face challenging conditions. We continue to hear that businesses are struggling for survival, and it is essential that we allow parliamentary time to consider how best we can support this vital sector. It is down to this Parliament to discuss business that involves the people of Scotland and not some flight of fantasy of the Conservative Party.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S6M-02457.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, 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.

17:13

Meeting suspended.

17:17

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We move to the vote on amendment S6M-02457.1, in the name of Neil Bibby. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 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)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-02457.1 is: For 52, Against 67, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-02457, in the name of George

Adam, setting out a business programme, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is now closed.

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

On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I was unable to connect. I wish to vote no.

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

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My device seems to have frozen. I would have voted no.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 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)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 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)

Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-02457, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to the business programme, is: For 67, Against 52, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 9 December 2021—

after

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Affairs and Islands

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Supporting Culture in Scotland

delete

4.25 pm Decision Time

insert

5.00 pm Decision Time

Decision Time

17:22

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-02429.1, in the name of Tess White, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02429, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on delivering a just transition to net zero and climate resilience for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

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)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 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)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 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)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (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)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (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)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)
 (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-02429.1 is: For 31, Against 68, Abstentions 20.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-02429.2, in the name of Colin Smyth, which seeks to amend motion S6M-02429, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on delivering a just transition to net zero and climate resilience for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (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)
 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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (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-02429.2 is: For 24, Against 94, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-02429, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on delivering a just transition to net zero and climate resilience for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 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)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (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)
 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)
 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)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (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)
 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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 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)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-02429, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on delivering a just transition to net zero on climate resilience for Scotland, is: For 96, Against 22, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of delivering a worker and citizen-led just transition for Scotland; acknowledges the need to plan for an orderly transition to net zero by 2045, and the need for public and private investment so as to deliver a transition away from a high-carbon economy to net zero and climate resilience in a way that creates good green jobs and business opportunities across the country, and builds a fairer, greener future for all; welcomes the Scottish Government's response to the Just Transition Commission's report and commends the Commission's work; approves of the commitment to a new Commission, and notes that Scotland is the first country in the world to commit to a Just Transition Planning Framework.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-02430, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, on the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 2 March 2021, relating to research and innovation, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. We move to members' business, and I ask members who are leaving the chamber to do so quietly.

Gender-based Violence

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-01820, in the name of Paul McLennan, on the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite members who wish to participate to press their request-to-speak button as soon as possible or to put an R in the chat function.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes that 25 November 2021, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to 10 December 2021, Human Rights Day, are the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence; understands that 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the Global 16 Days Campaign; recognises that this year's theme is femicide, calling for awareness, action and accountability, all year round; notes the view that all men must take action to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls; praises the work of organisations working towards tackling violence against women across Scotland, including Zero Tolerance, Scottish Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland and White Ribbon Scotland; welcomes these global days of action, intended to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls, and condemns any such violence.

17:31

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I recently met staff from and women supported by Women's Aid East and Midlothian. I heard about the experiences of women who have fled from domestic abuse and I had the opportunity to understand the impact that the violence that they were subject to has had on them and their children. Those brave women had their lives turned upside down after finding the courage to escape their abusers. Thankfully, they were able to do so safely.

Recent figures show that, every three days in East Lothian, a woman suffers and reports domestic abuse—and that is only the cases that are reported. The women told me that, since leaving, they have faced challenges in finding a home to call their own, because services are not designed to support women who flee violence.

About 10 years ago, when I was a council leader, I took part in an event that was organised by Scottish Women's Aid and White Ribbon Scotland. The exercise involved looking at what happens when a case is reported and how many people and organisations it impacts on. It started with a ball of string that represented the woman reporting domestic abuse, which was then passed to people from all the affected organisations. By the end, about 30 of us were standing up. That has stayed with me to this day.

Today's debate pays homage to the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, which is a time to galvanise action to prevent and end violence against women and girls around the world. I am aware that this is the third debate that we have had on the issue in the past 16 days, and I thank everybody who has contributed to these debates so far.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the global 16 days campaign. This year, inspired by the original vision and history of the campaign, which focused on raising awareness about violence against women, the campaign will focus on the issue of femicide, or the gender-related killing of women. That theme feels especially pertinent this year, after the high-profile murder of Sarah Everard by Metropolitan Police officer Wayne Couzens. Sadly, Sarah's murder is not an isolated incident. Since the beginning of 2021, there have been at least 122 cases in the United Kingdom in which a woman has been killed by a man or a man is the principal suspect.

In that period, I have done a lot of reflecting on my role as a man in preventing acts of violence of any kind against women. Last month, Police Scotland launched the incredibly important "Don't be that guy" campaign, which calls on men to consider their potential responsibility for violence against women. The campaign is explicit and the information on it states:

"Men: we can make a real difference by taking a hard look at our attitudes and behaviour, at home, at work and socialising with our mates."

As men, we need to stop contributing to a culture that targets, minimises, demeans and brutalises women. We need to talk openly to our male friends and relatives about behaviour that is damaging to women and that puts men at risk of offending. We need to take women's safety seriously—we cannot say that enough—and we need to do so not just when a woman is murdered but all year round. We must shift the way that we understand violence against women. It is not a women's problem; it is our problem, and it always has been. To do that, we need to redefine violence in our minds.

I recently spoke in a debate about street harassment at the Scottish National Party conference, which was led by my colleague Sally Donald. Street harassment is an everyday occurrence for women and girls in Scotland. I ask the minister to say in his summing up whether he will meet Sally and me to discuss the issue in more detail.

Graham Goulden, formerly of the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit in Glasgow, has called on us men to define violence in a way that would help us individually to prevent it. In a blog for the "Don't be that guy" campaign, he says:

“When I see the term violence, I look at it as more an attitude, a behaviour, rather than a physical act. When we do this, we can start to address behaviours and attitudes that can, if unchallenged, lead to other acts of violence like murder, sexual assault, and rape. ... When we don't focus on these behaviours, when we remain silent about what we see and hear, we give permission for abuse and violence to take place.”

Graham could not be more correct.

Violence against women is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality in our society. Gender stereotypes are enforced from an early age, rape culture and harmful behaviours are normalised, and survivors are blamed for their abusers' actions.

We place responsibility on women to be careful, not to walk home alone—I have heard the comment that they should wear flat shoes—to watch their drink on a night out and to cover up, instead of teaching men not to rape, spike and harm women.

That approach has never been acceptable. I want to see a Scotland where women and girls thrive as equal citizens—socially, culturally, economically and politically. I want to live in a Scottish society where women and girls are safe, respected and equal in our communities, where women and men have equal access to power and resources, and where positive gender roles are promoted.

We need to embed gender competency into our policy making and embed gender-based budgeting into everything that we do. Scotland's equally safe strategy is taking strides towards achieving that goal, but we all have our own role in turning the vision into reality.

It is the responsibility of us all—especially men—to change the culture that we live in that trivialises and condones violence against women and girls. I have a challenge for every male MSP. This time next year, we all need to be able to stand here, put our hand on our heart and say that we have played our part in speaking out against male violence against women—not just today or in the 16 days of the campaign, but every single day.

I am in the process of organising a round-table event for all male MSPs with organisations that are involved in the campaign to support women. I am also arranging a parliamentary reception with the same groups. I hope that the dates for those events will be before Easter.

To conclude the opening of this debate on the annual 16 days of activism, I pay tribute to the strength and resilience of survivors and to the organisations, such as Rape Crisis Scotland, Zero Tolerance, Scottish Women's Aid and White Ribbon Scotland, that work day and night to support women who have experienced male

violence. I want to remember all the women who have not made it this far—those who have lost their lives to male violence.

I end on a quote from the former secretary general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon:

“there is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I advise colleagues that, understandably, there is a large amount of interest in participating in the debate and it is likely that we will have to extend it. We will do that at the appropriate stage in the debate.

17:38

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I thank Paul McLennan for lodging the motion and I acknowledge the resilience of women and girls who are experiencing, or have survived, gender-based violence in Scotland and beyond.

Last week, during our second debate on the topic, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans made a valid point that the experiences of female veterans had not been mentioned. He alluded to the experience of women in the armed forces and made reference to his recent visit to a veterans' facility in Fife that was supporting a survivor of gender-based violence.

I will pick up on that issue today, but, first, I pay tribute to all women serving in, and veterans of, our military, for their commitment, bravery and sacrifice in safeguarding our national security.

There are more than 20,000 servicewomen in our armed forces. Women can now apply for all the same roles as men, and there is no doubt that the armed forces provide women with fulfilling careers and vast opportunities. However, for many women in the military, their experience is very different.

Earlier this year, the United Kingdom Parliament's Defence Committee, following its inquiry into the situation of and challenges facing women in the armed forces today, published its report, “Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life”. The report found:

“There is too much bullying, harassment and discrimination, and criminal behaviour—such as sexual assault and rape—affecting Service personnel”,

and there is no doubt

“that female Service personnel suffer disproportionately.”

It goes on:

“The stories that we heard are truly shocking and they gravely concern us. They are also disappointing given the MOD's commitment to ending unacceptable behaviours”.

The report continues:

“this behaviour is harming the health, careers and operational effectiveness of our Service personnel and has no place in the military. ... The Forces and the MOD must root out these behaviours and must respond better when they occur.”

The report also explored the experiences of female veterans and concluded that, although many reported positive experiences transitioning to civilian life, many reported challenges relating to physical or mental health issues, relationship problems, debt and unemployment.

Dr Beverly Bergman of the Scottish veterans health research group highlighted that there are very few female-specific veterans services in the UK, noting that many women prefer gender-specific services,

“especially if they have been the victim of sexual or domestic abuse or harassment.”

Work is now under way to address many of the issues addressed in the report.

The findings in the report are stark and they must offer an opportunity for change. The Scottish Government strategy, “Support for the Veterans and Armed Forces Community”, outlines our approach to supporting veterans across issues including mental health, homelessness and substance misuse, and sets out the vital role of the Scottish veterans fund, the unforgotten forces consortium, and third-sector partners and charities—all under the watchful eye of our Scottish veterans commissioner.

However, support for women remains limited. Although there are programmes such as the women returners programme, which supports women back into work, there is so much more to do to address the specific challenges that women face as a result of the impact of gender-based violence.

I recognise that defence is a reserved matter, but nonetheless I urge the Scottish Government to use the powers that it has to ensure that women are front and centre in our continuing efforts in tackling the issue. I look forward to working with the cabinet secretary and the minister on that important work.

17:42

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): Last week, I spoke in another debate about violence against women and girls. It is proper—indeed necessary—for us to be debating the topic again today. I congratulate Mr McLennan on securing the debate. Many of last week’s speakers highlighted the reality for women and girls in modern Scotland. This reality can include everyday experiences of discrimination and

misogyny—and then there are the sexual assaults and rapes, drink-spiking predators, violence and abuse in the home, trafficking for sex, stalking, revenge porn and the pressure on young girls to act in a sexualised way. One revelation was that, on average, a woman is killed by a man every three days in the United Kingdom.

The common denominator in all of that is men. Society is beginning to understand that it is on men to accept wrongdoing, to change and to challenge others. As Mr McLennan said, we all bear responsibility.

Last week, I spoke about Esther Brown who was sexually violated and beaten to death in her own home by a registered sex offender, whose 23 previous convictions include the rape of another woman in her home. I asked questions of Police Scotland on behalf of some of Esther’s friends, but we were fobbed off. Despite the rhetoric of compassion, the impersonal criminal justice system suffers from entrenched secrecy. That secrecy, and an accountability vacuum, means that victims will continue to be failed.

Today, I would like to speak about another disturbing case in which I have had direct involvement. It is a partially told account of a paedophile ring operating in the heart of Edinburgh. In 1997, a girl aged 10 accused a man called David Scott of sexually abusing her. She says that she was not believed and that she was punished for speaking out. She tried to take her own life. She lives with the trauma of abuse every single day.

In 2018—more than 20 years later—Scott was finally jailed for sexually abusing her and five other girls over a 45-year period. Why, his victims ask, was that prolific paedophile free to target other children for two decades?

After reporting on that horrific case for the BBC, I spoke with the family of one of Scott’s later victims. She was aged eight when the abuse began. However, Scott did not act alone. The girl gave the police a detailed account of being targeted by five other men at a flat in Blackfriars Street, which is only half a mile from this spot. She saw Scott taking cash from the men, and her family urged the police to investigate.

Just last week, one of those men was jailed for 11 years for abusing this same girl, and a boy. Gary Thomson is that man: he was the tenant of the Blackfriars Street flat. Only now is the link between Thomson and Scott being made public. Evidence of paedophiles colluding in organised abuse is shocking and obscene. What of the other men in the flat? Police Scotland tells me that inquiries are continuing.

Anyone who has any concerns or who is seeking information on abuse should go to the

website of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The next time that a child speaks out, they must be listened to.

I conclude by echoing Mr McLennan's comments that activism and awareness are not just for 16 days; they should be for every single day.

17:46

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): First, I thank Paul McLennan for bringing this subject to members' business this evening. I apologise to you, Deputy Presiding Officer, and to members, as I will have to leave a wee bit early to attend a session with the Presiding Officer this evening. I hope that members know that I am absolutely committed to this important issue. This is the third time that I, like others, have spoken on it in the past couple of weeks.

In recent times, we have witnessed an increase in domestic violence, the murder of women and so on. That is a reminder, if it was ever needed, that, sadly, violence against women is endemic in our society, and it is a global problem. We face the endemic problem of violence against women by men not just in Scotland and the UK, but across the world. We must do our bit.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, violence against women is men's violence against women. When some men say, "It's not all men," they are perhaps missing the point. Of course not all men are violent. The point that I hope Paul McLennan is trying to make—and I agree—is that men must be part of the solution. We cannot do it without men. Men must address the problem among their own sex.

The issue of violence against women has probably not had the highest priority that it should have. This Parliament must make a difference. We must believe that, by the end of the four-and-a-bit years that we still have to go in this session, we will begin to change the picture and reverse the statistics. For decades, there has been a lack of male voices speaking about violence against women. I hope that that is changing—and it may be changing.

It is important to have a serious analysis of why women are subjected to everyday sexism and workplace sexism. The speeches that have been made already have addressed different parts of our society, but sexism is everywhere we might want to look. I recently read the story about women in the military, who said that it became commonplace for them to be expected to be groped in training sessions. That is in our military—and we know that we have endemic problems in our police service, too.

I believe that there is a big connection with what happens in our schools and the way that women and girls are treated. I was shocked to watch the recent BBC documentary with Zara McDermott, "Uncovering Rape Culture", which examined the burgeoning rape culture in British schools. Last week, I called for an assessment of whether we have that problem in Scotland. I would be surprised if we did not. It was shocking to learn that boys as young as nine or 10 were viewing online pornography, and I believe that that affects the way that they view girls and understand sex.

A recent report by academics from University College London and the University of Kent, among other institutions, highlighted that the sending and receiving of unsolicited sexual images is now becoming "dangerously normalised". Such normalisation gives me cause for concern, especially for girls. The study, which involved young people who were aged between 12 and 18, found that most girls had received an image of male genitalia, often from adult men who were strangers. The report said:

"Unfortunately, this form of image-based sexual harassment was often experienced on a regular ... basis."

More than half the boys and girls who received unwanted sexual content online or had their image shared without their consent did nothing about it. Girls felt pressured into trading intimate images with boys who sent unsolicited pictures. Girls were mocked or bullied, and their photos were shared among their classmates.

We must know whether that is happening in Scottish schools and we must understand the connection with how girls and women are treated. Social media such as TikTok and Snapchat must be tackled, because they enable some grooming to take place.

I whole-heartedly agree with the motion. The situation must change, with the collective efforts of the parties and the individuals who have spoken eloquently, who believe with all their heart in doing that. For women and girls in our country, we must use the Parliament to make a fundamental change in the figures and stop women being violated and girls being abused.

17:51

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Paul McLennan on securing the debate, and I am happy to support his continued efforts to raise awareness of the issue. It continues to blight our society, but too little focus and attention is given to changing the culture that allows it to continue unabated.

Two weeks ago, I spoke in the Government debate on the international day for the elimination

of violence against women and girls. I emphasised the role that we men must play in changing the culture and, as I usually do, I shared that speech as widely as I could on social media. We all use such platforms to convey all sorts of messages, and the chamber is exactly the place to express messages.

When, in defence of the Scottish brand, I post about my dismay at photographs of boxes of eggs that display a union jack rather than a saltire, my social media accounts explode. I switch off the sound of notifications, because they do not stop for days on end. The outrage and sheer fury from the grossly offended are palpable and can set off a chain sideshow of explosions that continue in my notifications, sometimes for weeks.

However, when I post a speech about the savagery of male violence against women and girls, about sexual assault, rape and murder and about how we males must take a stand on behalf of women and girls, and when I ask how we can help to change things, what is the response? It is muted at best. Where is the anger? Where is the outrage? Where is the explosion of fury and support for women and girls and the condemnation of male violence that is perpetrated against them?

Sadly—and even more predictably—the outrage and fury did not materialise. Social media can be a powerful tool to raise awareness, start debate and engage with people whose opinions often differ from our own. As long as we can hold that space for such debates to happen with fairness and without the vitriol that I often see, we should continue to engage in all political matters online—and especially this one.

I know that the discussion is painful and uncomfortable for men. The fear is that, if a man sticks his head above the parapet, he might draw attention to himself, and someone, somewhere might remind him about a time when he might have been that guy, so it is better not to be reminded or risk the embarrassment. However, if we all admit—together and to ourselves—that at one point or another most males have done something that would now give us pause, and if we are forced to accept the difficult and uncomfortable memory of that version of ourselves, when we know that we most definitely were that guy, it will become easier to identify such behaviour in the next generation of boys and men and stop it at its root.

Part of that is the growing-up process in a patriarchal system, which not only does not condemn such behaviour but actively encourages it in all the ways that I spoke about two weeks ago. Most of us grow out of the behaviours and can chalk them up to experience—to growing up or

whatever we want to call it. However, some men never grow up.

Even if we grow or learn, let us not forget to ask: at whose expense does that come? When men are doing all that growing up and learning, it is women whom they are trying the behaviours out on. The women are learning that they need to protect themselves and cannot know which of the boys will grow out of it and for whom it will escalate.

We need to address the real issue of ignoring male violence against women and girls, and treating it as something that others do, and therefore not our problem, unless it happens to one of our own, or to someone whom the media deems worthy of wall-to-wall coverage. As I said, the conversation should make us all at least a little bit uncomfortable.

If we are honest with ourselves, we all know exactly what I am talking about. We learn the boundaries, we know what flirting is, we know what a compliment is, and we know when the interaction is accepted and reciprocated—it is really obvious to us all. However, we also know what “no” means, and when our embarrassment leads to aggression or inappropriate continuation of advances, and we all know someone in our group as we grew up who might just have been capable of going that bit further than they should have done. Yet, we say nothing about it, because that is not what guys do.

As men, there is no doubt that the debate is difficult for us, but by avoiding it, we enable society to continue to mute the misogyny, sexism, objectification, violence, sexual assault, rape and murder of far too many women and girls every year. I believe that we can and must do more to change that. We can change that culture by example—we can cross the road and give women space, we can remain respectful in every setting, we can use the appropriate language, and we can take the eight seconds of discomfort in calling it out, which is made all the easier by the phrase, “Don’t be that guy”. We can teach our sons what is acceptable and unacceptable, and how not to cross the line. As important, we can teach our daughters not to accept that line being crossed.

I firmly believe that huge impacts can be made when small changes are made by the many, and I call on everyone to be more mindful, recognise the behaviours that we know cross the line, and create a different culture in which to bring up the next generation of boys to men.

17:56

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I congratulate Paul McLennan on securing this important debate, and I thank all those who

supported him to enable it to happen. I also thank him for his excellent opening speech.

Gender-based violence is a stain on our society. Our streets should be safe—places for everyone—but we know that far too many women and girls are not safe. We only have to look back at the horrific crime that took place in London on 4 March this year. When walking home, Sarah Everard was kidnapped in the street and driven away to be raped, strangled and murdered. That the murder was perpetrated by a police officer is truly shocking. It was his duty to protect people and make the streets safe, but he abused his position to murder an innocent woman. We have a long way to go.

Women should feel safe in their homes, in the streets and when they are going about their daily business. I remember, just a few years ago, talking to a group of young women who came to see me to tell me about their experience of the issue. They told me terrible stories of the lack of respect and the casual harassment that they and their peers have to put up with daily. They were subject to leering, groping, intimidation and sleazy behaviour by some of the young men around them. When one person can treat another person in a derogatory way, or when they show so little respect that they make another person feel objectified or intimidated, we are all made smaller. Such casual objectification leads to escalating levels of disrespect. One small, aggressive statement, or one casual, unwanted touch is the first step on a path that can lead to something far worse and far more serious. We cannot disregard such issues. We have a long way to go.

Earlier this year, the UK Parliament passed the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The act will transform the support that is available to women across our society, and it will ensure that perpetrators feel the full force of the law. It is a step in the right direction.

Inadvertently, but entirely predictably, the steps taken to avoid Covid have exacerbated the issue that we are addressing. Across the world, Governments responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by initiating lockdowns to slow down the spread of the virus. One side effect of that policy was that it was even more difficult for vulnerable women to get away from an abusive partner. Between April and June 2020, there was a 65 per cent increase in calls to the national domestic abuse helpline compared with the number in the first three months of that year. Karen Ingala Smith, who runs the counting dead women project, has estimated that, during the first three weeks of the first lockdown, there were 16 domestic abuse killings of women and children in the UK. That was the highest figure for at least 11 years. We have a long way to go.

The escalation of violence towards women during the Covid-19 pandemic can also be seen overseas. The Victims Commissioner for England and Wales, Dame Vera Baird, said that China saw a doubling of domestic abuse during the height of the pandemic. With cases rising all over the world, the UN secretary general has described a

“horrifying global surge in domestic violence”.

As legislators, we must be constantly vigilant about how the law can be used and kept up to date to reduce violence against women and, as leaders, we must set an example. In the three debates that we have had, I am glad that I have seen so many men standing up in the Parliament and committing to work to eliminate violence against women and girls, and I thank Paul McLennan for the initiative that he announced in his speech at the start of the debate.

It is true that we have a long way to go, but I see hope. I can see that much more needs to be done. As a nation, as a country and as a human race, we must look into our hearts and establish the true cause of violence. The legal abolition of violence must be accompanied by the abolition of toxic and hateful environments and the acceptance of compassion and respect. We have a long way to go, but I have faith in the goodness of humanity to get to the place where all women and girls feel safe, respected and valued in our society.

18:01

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank Paul McLennan for securing this additional debate, which allows us once again to raise the important issue of gender-based violence in the week of international human rights day and to mark the 30th anniversary of the 16 days of activism. I share the sentiment that has been expressed in the debate, and I want to add to other members' voices.

In 2021, violence against women is, sadly, not only still a major concern; it appears to be getting worse in Scotland and around the world. If anyone imagines that it has become a thing of the past, they are sorely mistaken.

As a new member who has been offered the opportunity to contribute to this debate, I see that Paul McLennan has become a champion of the issue and has called on men to take their responsibility in society seriously. I thank him, and in the last debate on this issue I thanked Jim Fairlie for raising the issue of the number of men in attendance in the chamber. I also thank them for the call to action in reminding all male MSPs to join the debate tonight and other debates.

In making this speech, I reflected on the fact that the motion marks 30 years of the 16 days of

activism against gender-based violence. Although that work is to be commended as absolutely essential, it should spur members on to realise that we have a responsibility to work hard, to make decisions, to focus on action, not rhetoric, and to ensure that we do not have to make the same remarks in years to come.

The motion quite rightly seeks to acknowledge and praise services that are devoted to supporting the elimination of violence against women. It is genuinely sad that the campaign for 16 days of activism is in its 30th year, but we know that the violence continues and that accountability is severely lacking.

When I made my first speech at the start of the 16 days of activism against violence against women, we knew that, in the UK this year, at least 126 women had been killed by a man, or a man was the principal suspect in their death. Since then, we know of other women who have been subjected to violence and women who have, sadly, lost their lives. How can we look at those numbers and think that there is not a serious problem in our society with the way in which men view and treat women? Whether we are talking about domestic violence, sexual harassment or, indeed, rampant misogyny, women continue to be the target of the terrible behaviours and aggression of far too many men. If we cannot understand how serious that is today and address its root cause, we do not deserve to be standing in this chamber.

Members across the chamber have raised many important issues in many debates in the Parliament. We need many vital changes in our society, from calling out language and misogyny to changes to the justice system. I have often wondered whether the statistics would be the same if so many men said that they had fallen victim.

My previous contribution focused on the establishment of institutions that feel at times that they are above the issue. I want to mention that again. Each woman who is the victim of violence must be treated equally and fairly by an establishment that understands, or at least seeks to begin to understand, what they have gone through. That begins with accepting that gender-based violence is a serious problem that we do not have under control. It requires more direct engagement with grass-roots organisations and health and recovery charities, and institutions opening their eyes and ears to what is going on.

We need to think about the sort of attitudes to which we are exposing young men, which encourage a culture of entitlement rather than one of respect. If we can approach the problem as a societal issue that is mixed in with the way in which men think that it is acceptable to behave,

we can begin to tackle it. Until then, we will just have more talk and the issue will not be taken seriously enough. If we want to make a change, we have to do something about it.

I thank all the members who have attended this important debate.

18:05

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I thank Paul McLennan for securing this evening's debate.

I swithered over whether to speak in the debate, but here I am. I am here because I can be. I have a voice, and I can use it. Not all women have that privilege. So, I have a responsibility to use my voice in the on-going fight for gender equality, even though it is often an exhausting, frustrating and demoralising fight.

We know that gender-based violence is a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. We also know that there is nothing inevitable about it. We still live in a deeply patriarchal world. However, I am not going to rehearse the arguments for equality here, or talk about the policies that we need to achieve it. I am not going to repeat the statistics on inequality or its impact on society, though they are harrowing, life changing and life ending. I am not even going to relay examples of the trauma that women have experienced. What I want to use my voice for this evening is to challenge each and every man in the chamber to up his game.

In Paul McLennan's email about this evening's debate, he specifically asked men MSPs to be here. On 25 November, we had a debate on violence against women and girls. On 30 November, we had a debate about justice and the 16 days of activism. Over the course of those two debates, eight men spoke—four in each debate—whereas 23 women spoke. In the justice debate, there were three interventions, all by men, two of which were in speeches by women.

Why do those numbers matter? Well, I think that it is telling that, in a Parliament in which just under 35 per cent of members are women, 75 per cent of speakers in those debates were women. On the face of it, that is not surprising—women face the consequences of gender inequality every day and have lived experience of it. Of course we can expect women to have lots to say about it, and it is right that we listen to women, but that only eight of 84 men thought that they should contribute to those important debates speaks volumes, too, because it is men who are the perpetrators of the vast majority of violence against women.

So, I challenge all the men in this Parliament to look critically at your behaviour, as you have a

responsibility here: a responsibility to call out sexist behaviour and language whenever you encounter it, including in your own heads, 365 days a year; and a responsibility to consider your behaviour in this place of work, in social, private and intimate settings and—importantly—in this chamber. Even in this chamber, gender inequality is obvious, and it is damaging.

In the recent debates that I referred to, I have paid tribute to the organisations and individuals who work to support survivors, who raise awareness of gender inequality and who put their bodies on the line, every day, to do that work. This evening, I want to close by paying tribute to one of those organisations—the Women’s Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre Dundee and Angus—and all those who turned out to support it at last night’s event in the cold and dark on Dundee’s waterfront.

The keys to a safer future event saw people gather to write messages—mostly of hope—on tags and tie them with a key to the waterfront fencing. Many women, probably including many of us in this building, have carried keys or similar in their fists—in our fists—as defence against the fear and intimidation that we face on a daily and nightly basis. The event in Dundee was a bold statement of intent to reject the fear and intimidation that for so long have kept women afraid and prevented them from walking alone. I was not able to be there, but I want to close with the words that were written on one of those tags and one of those keys to a safer future:

“May my granddaughter wrap herself in the velvet darkness and lose her gaze in the stars without fearing the shadow at her shoulder.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am conscious of how many members still want to contribute, so I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to half an hour. I call on Paul McLennan to move such a motion.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[Paul McLennan]

Motion agreed to.

18:10

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate on the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and I congratulate my colleague Paul McLennan on securing it. The theme this year is calling for awareness, action and accountability all year round, with a focus on the importance of all men taking action to prevent violence against women and girls. Jim Fairlie described that well. I, too, thank the organisations that work to tackle gender-based violence, including Zero Tolerance,

Scottish Women’s Aid—including Wigtownshire Women’s Aid and Dumfriesshire and Stewartry Women’s Aid—Rape Crisis and White Ribbon Scotland. The recollections of women who have experienced violence and abuse are not easy to hear. As Audrey Nicoll stated, women who are survivors should be commended for their resilience.

There is no place for harassment or abuse in any form, whether in the home, schools or the workplace or in wider society. Violence against women and girls and against LGBT+ people and other groups is unacceptable. International awareness-raising activities such as this debate are crucial to raising the profile of gender-based violence and to tackling its causes.

The group UN Women has called violence against women during the Covid-19 pandemic the shadow pandemic. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, emerging data and reports have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, have intensified. The shadow pandemic needs a global collective effort to stop it. I ask members to please check out the shadow pandemic campaign on the UN Women website.

One of the best ways to tackle gender-based violence is by education. I welcome the Scottish Government’s determination to ensure that children and young people receive high-quality education in schools. Campaigns such as Police Scotland’s “Don’t be that guy” campaign are crucial educational resources, as they encourage frank conversations with men about gender-based violence and negative stereotypes. The Scottish Government has a number of policies to deal with violence against women and girls and to advance gender equality here and abroad. Whether in Scotland or around the world, violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights, and this is human rights day.

The Scottish Government is investing in front-line services and has introduced new legislation to tackle gender-based violence and discrimination. Scotland rightly aims to set an international example of good practice on gender equality and the eradication of gender-based violence, and in creating a world in which women and girls are safe and can achieve their goals.

In Scotland, we are seeing the implementation of “Equally Safe: Scotland’s strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.” The strategy rightly deals with issues of gender-based violence in Scotland, but it also has a commitment to preventing international discrimination against women.

Members might recall that last January I brought forward a debate on UN Security Council resolution 1325, on women, peace and security, which was unanimously passed by the Security Council more than 20 years ago. The resolution was the first of its kind, in that its aim was to specifically address the impact of war on women and the value of women as conflict resolvers.

At the heart of the equally safe strategy is the principle that all women and girls, regardless of background, race, religion, sexual orientation or age, should feel safe in their communities and should live without fear of violence or abuse.

On an international level, Scotland, working in partnership with the UN, has pledged practical and financial support for women and girls to achieve that goal and learn peace-building and conflict-resolution skills. The programme that is supported by the Scottish Government consists of talks, seminars and lessons and gives women and girls access to international experts and female role models in positions of power, so that they have the opportunity to learn from each other about the fundamentals of peacekeeping. Such actions should be commended; they contribute to the strengthening and empowerment of women and girls.

The steps that we in Scotland are taking—such as equally safe, equal representation on public boards, gender-balanced cabinets, and commitments to a wellbeing economy and the education of women and girls to tackle gender-based violence—are also welcome. It is important that the Scottish Government will introduce legislation to protect the anonymity of complainers of sexual crimes under Scots law. I also welcome that serious consideration will be given to the introduction of special courts and to allowing victims to prerecord their evidence.

I welcome this debate. I join the calls for men to call out gender-based violence, and I welcome Scotland's outward-looking approach to tackling gender-based violence.

18:16

Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): I thank the members who are here for the valuable contributions to the debate that we have heard so far. It is an honour for me to follow my colleagues Pauline McNeill and Carol Mochan. I thank many members for their work in raising awareness of gender-based violence, but particularly Paul McLennan for bringing this vital debate to Parliament and for his encouragement of male MSPs to participate in it and to show a willingness to lead by example and take action.

What we have heard already about the murders of women and girls is shocking. Circumstances

have been articulated particularly powerfully by colleagues. That day-to-day experience of violence and the fear of violence is harrowing, and it should shock us all.

I pay tribute to the work that is done by many organisations, such as Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, as we have heard, to take action and to support women and girls year after year.

As we gather again to mark another 16 days of activism, we have once more seen instances of domestic violence and abuse go up. That pattern increases year on year. It should be abundantly clear to us all that much more needs to be done. Women and girls should not have to go about their day-to-day lives in fear of what might happen to them. They should not have to change their behaviour. Our mothers, daughters, sisters, cousins and friends should not have to think about their route home, where they run or where they go for a night out. We can do more, and we must do more. Men can do more, and must do more.

As we know, we are marking the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. That campaign is important because it helps to shine a spotlight on what can be done to begin to stop the horrific violence that happens in our communities. We are marking 30 years of the 16 days campaign, and I was three years old when it began. I have been reflecting on the fact that, during all my time growing up and going to school, I was not aware of the 16 days of activism—I was struck by Pauline McNeill’s contribution in that regard. I was not aware of the need for men and teenage boys at school to take account of their actions and to think about their attitudes. There was very little in the way of educating, involving or helping young men to think about their role in all of this. As Pauline McNeill articulated clearly, we must do more in our schools so that young men in particular reflect on their behaviours. The Police Scotland campaign is a start in relation to making young men in particular think about not being “that guy” in what they do and say.

I will highlight the work of White Ribbon Scotland. I had the great honour of getting to know that campaign well through my work at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, as I am sure that Paul McLennan also did. That campaign asks men to make a pledge to call out inappropriate behaviour when they hear it and see it, and to be clear that they will never walk on by when they see that behaviour and never condone violence against women or excuse it as just a joke or just par for the course.

The reality is, however, that that pledge is a starting point. It will never be an end in itself, but it is about all men in Scotland being able to take that pledge to make a contribution. It is about all men saying that, in their own sphere of influence—

whether that be in their workplace, their home, the pub or wherever they socialise—they have a duty to call out those around them and to ensure that they take action so that we can begin to make clear that violence against women and girls is never acceptable, and that we all have a role in ensuring that we put an end to it.

18:21

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP): I thank Paul McLennan for highlighting activism against gender-based violence. To mark the start of 16 days of activism on 25 November, hundreds gathered at a march to reclaim the night in Dundee. I pay tribute to the Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre in particular for leading that event, as well as to all the other groups involved in making the march and other events a success.

I thank them not only for their contribution to the march, but for the work that they do every day of the year. They include the Dundee Violence Against Women Partnership, Dundee International Women's Centre, Women's Aid, Rape Crisis Scotland, the university societies and local secondary schools across Dundee. I also pay tribute to the V&A Dundee, Police Scotland, the Dundee city churches, the Hot Chocolate Trust, Dundee City Council, Leisure and Culture Dundee, Dundee Contemporary Arts and the University of Dundee for hosting workshops and lighting prominent buildings in our city to mark the occasion. I also pay tribute to all those across Dundee, elsewhere in Scotland and around the world who lit candles, torches and lights to make sure that the day was properly remembered and recognised.

Over the 16 days, there have been arts and crafts classes and musical events all over Dundee, and I know that that kind of activity has been replicated across Scotland and around the world. The buzz created by those events has been immense. However, it is crucial to remember why the 16-day event is required. While all that incredible work has been going on, I have been contacted by constituents who have reported women being spiked by injection in licensed premises in Dundee. There have been newspaper reports of further cases, and I know that Police Scotland is investigating several complaints. Members across the chamber will no doubt have received similar correspondence.

We know from work published by the United Nations that one in three women worldwide—an estimated 736 million—have experienced physical or sexual violence. We also know that the consequences of such violence are often devastating for those women. We know that 15 million adolescent girls—aged 15 to 19—worldwide have experienced forced sex. We know

that an average of 137 women are killed by a member of their own family every day. We know that fewer than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort. We know that violence against women disproportionately impacts on lower-income areas.

Those are just some of the horrifying numbers reported by the United Nations. They make for hugely uncomfortable reading, particularly for the men in the chamber and in society. Behind every one of those statistics is a woman. We must endeavour to remember that and to make a difference. Although not all men commit violence against women, it is incumbent on all of us, as many members have said, to call out such violence and help to end it.

I join Paul O'Kane and colleagues across the chamber in making the White Ribbon Scotland pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about men's violence against women in all its forms.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr FitzPatrick. I echo that pledge, too.

18:25

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I applaud all the work that is being done as part of the 16 days of action against gender-based violence, from the international level down to the work that is being done by local councils and organisations in my West Scotland region, which have chosen to establish their own 16 days initiatives. I applaud Paul McLennan for his important motion and for securing the debate.

It is a truly shocking state of affairs, however, that this year marks the 30th anniversary of the global 16 days campaign, and that that campaign is apparently needed now more than ever. The appalling and sickening murder of Sarah Everard in March was a reminder, as though one were needed, that women cannot feel safe on our streets.

As other members have done, I urge every man who is listening to really think about that and what it must feel like to feel vulnerable to physical violence and sexual attack from the moment that you leave a home or workplace and enter a street or any public space. For most men, we rarely, if ever, have to think about that, but for women, it is automatic—every day, all the time.

I have talked to women in my family and office who have spoken of the daily precautions that they take to avoid the threat of male violence: walking, even on a busy street in daylight, close to the road edge of pavements in order to avoid alleyways and doorways; carrying their keys between their fingers in case they need an improvised weapon

without notice; and, of course, just not walking home, just not travelling on public transport or just not going out at all because of all the worries and logistics that it entails.

If men had to live like that, I suspect that the problem would have been dealt with a very long time ago. However, most of us do not; we rarely have to think or worry about it. Well, we should think about it. We should talk about it, as Jim Fairlie said, and we should have the political will to do something about it, as Pauline McNeill and Carol Mochan said. We should try to imagine what it feels like to live like that day in, day out. It is an outrage that anyone should have to live like that, never mind half the human population.

What is more, many women are not safe from violent men even in their own homes. According to the figures that Russell Findlay referenced, a woman is killed by a man in the UK every three days. Most such women die at the hands of domestic partners. Many suffer long-term abuse prior to their deaths at the hands of those men.

As Stephen Kerr said, the Covid pandemic has made matters worse for women for whom home is anything but a sanctuary. UN research has found that, since the pandemic began, women on a global scale feel significantly less safe and secure. That is because of male violence. Of course, not all men are violent predators, as Joe FitzPatrick said, but we must take collective responsibility for our collective behaviour as a sex.

As the motion states,

“all men must take action to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls”.

We must appreciate that women and girls do not know who might be a threat. We must be sensitive about our behaviour and speech, and how it might be interpreted by others. I agree with Maggie Chapman and many other members that we must call out and challenge unacceptable male behaviour whenever we see it.

Clearly, there is a huge role for Government, the police and public policy. I agree with Paul McLennan that real change is needed urgently—certainly before we debate the subject next year. I commit to working with him and all other members on this important issue.

I also agree with Mr McLennan and others that the onus is on men—all men—to recognise the reality of life for our daughters, wives, partners, friends and mothers. Men need to face the fact that women live every day with the spectre of male violence. That should sicken us and call on us to act.

18:29

The Minister for Social Security and Local Government (Ben Macpherson): As other colleagues have done, I congratulate Paul McLennan on securing the debate, and I thank all members who supported his motion. I pay tribute to all members who have contributed to this evening's important discussion and to those who contributed to the debates that we had on 25 and 30 November.

It is with profound sadness that I begin by sending my thoughts and condolences to the family of Amber Gibson at this extremely difficult time. I understand that Police Scotland is treating Amber's tragic death as murder. Tragically, shockingly and sickeningly, her name joins those of Sabina Nessa, Sarah Everard, Nicole Smallman, Bibaa Henry and far too many other women and girls who have been senselessly and heinously killed in our country and around the world.

The Scottish Government agrees with what all colleagues have said today: if gender-based violence is a function of gender inequality, it is an abuse of male power and privilege. As Russell Findlay rightly stated and as others have emphasised, the common denominator is men. Gender-based violence takes the form of actions that result in physical and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, and it is an affront to their human dignity.

The Scottish Government is already doing a lot of work and taking a large number of actions to support victims of gender-based violence and to address the misogynistic attitudes that perpetuate such violence. For example, we established an independent working group, chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, to specifically consider misogyny in Scotland and to explore whether there should be a stand-alone offence to tackle misogynistic conduct. The working group has concluded its evidence gathering, and it has confirmed that the report on its findings and recommendations will be published in February 2022.

When it comes into effect, the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 will provide new powers for the police and courts to make emergency orders that are designed to protect people who are at risk of domestic abuse from someone they are living with. The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 has made a meaningful difference as a gold-standard piece of legislation in strengthening the law, and it gives the police greater opportunities and powers to tackle this insidious crime. Very early data shows an encouraging 84 per cent conviction rate.

We need to consider how we can do more in the criminal justice space as well as elsewhere in Government policy. On behalf of ministers, I accept Paul McLennan's request for a meeting. If he follows up in correspondence, we will decide which ministers should be most engaged in that. I thank him for that constructive proposal.

Pauline McNeill: I commend the minister for the excellent speeches that he has made on the subject and for the work that the Scottish Government is doing.

However, twice in the chamber I have raised the question of what has been happening in some schools in England, where girls have been subjected to unsolicited graphic images—and boys, too, to an extent. Paul O'Kane's point was well made. There is an issue, but we do not really know what is going on in schools. Has the Scottish Government thought about addressing that by trying to find out what is actually going on? Perhaps the gender stereotyping of boys and the expectations on them are a factor in all this—we can perhaps make a direct connection there. In some ways, things might be worse for young people now than they were in my day. Does the minister agree that we need to explore the matter in Parliament?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you the time back, minister.

Ben Macpherson: Pauline McNeill raises important points, which I was going to come to later in my speech. In answer to her question, as part of Mr McLennan's work, we need to consider the educational environment, to look purposefully at the analysis that has been done of the attitudes of young men growing up in Scotland and to consider what we can do to change those attitudes and make them more positive, where that is required.

So many good speeches and points have been made in the debate that I will not manage to address them all, but I will try to cover as many of them as possible in the time remaining.

I have spoken about legislation as an important tool in making a positive contribution to tackling gender-based violence. Also important is our support for organisations that work to support victims and survivors and to discourage gender-based violence. Over the past 18 months, the Scottish Government has invested an additional £10 million to allow rapid redesign of services and address backlogs, thereby supporting organisations such as Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland.

As part of our £100 million, three-year commitment to tackling violence against women and girls, we have created a new delivering equally safe fund, and have recently confirmed

allocations to 121 projects from 112 organisations that are working to provide key services and prevent gender-based violence.

In October, we opened a new victim-centred approach fund, worth at least £30 million over the next three years, to support victims of crime. In all policy areas, gender equality is a focus of the Government—that point was well made by Audrey Nicoll. In the new social security system, which is one of my responsibilities, there is, quite rightly, considerable emphasis on gender equality. I regularly meet organisations that are involved in such work, such as Engender.

In the time remaining, I will focus on the key points in Mr McLennan's motion, which many other members have touched on. As a society, we need to do more across the board, but together and as individuals, men can do more to address the issue and change cultural and social attitudes. Some men—the perpetrators—are more to blame, but as Jim Fairlie emphasised, we have a collective responsibility across all ages to do more.

Gender-based violence is a manifestation of toxic masculinity, the commodification of women, porn culture and the existence of an immoral set of attitudes, including a sense of sexual entitlement, in the minds of too many men in our society and around the world. It is men who have created the imbalance in our society, so men have a duty to lead the change that is needed.

Men need to look in the mirror, and to do so critically, as Maggie Chapman said. To address the issues, it is vital that we bring about change that is societal, behavioural, cultural and systemic. We need that change in all settings, including workplaces, nightclubs, bars and in the streets. Police Scotland's new "Don't be that guy" campaign encapsulates how gender-based violence is not simply made up of the most severe crimes that come to mind when we talk about it. As Stephen Kerr said, there can be a process of escalation.

It is not enough to say that we are not that guy; we also have to change our collective behaviour, and to call out the behaviour of the men around us. I say to men that the onus is on us to modify our collective behaviour, and to do so in a way that is sensitive to the situation that women around us face. That is why I support campaigns such as White Ribbon and HeForShe, which promote the positive and active steps that men and boys can take to challenge violence against women and girls, and misogyny, when they see them. I encourage all men to make the commitment to do more.

My message to men and boys is that, collectively, we need to do more to tackle and prevent violence against women and girls. We

need to be that guy who calls out his mates when he hears or sees sexism, misogyny, abuse or harassment. We need to be that guy who modifies his behaviour to make women feel safer, for example by crossing the road, as one member said earlier. We need to be that guy who plays a part in bringing about the change in culture that we need to see.

From today, there is a collective call for action from Government, society and individuals, as more must be done. Rightly, Paul McLennan asked us as MSPs to do more. As part of the work that will come out of the 16 days, I and other ministers will look at what more can be done across Government. As MSPs, when we speak to schools and sports clubs, we should think about how we can create greater awareness of the need for men to take responsibility.

The momentum that we have seen over the course of the 16 days of activism so far is important. However, after 10 December, we must not relent—we need to move forward and do more. We must remain united in our condemnation of violence against women and girls in all its forms, in Scotland and around the world, and recommit to doing all that we can to tackle it and end it as soon as possible.

Meeting closed at 18:39.

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

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