



OFFICIAL REPORT  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament (Hybrid)

Thursday 10 March 2022

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Thursday 10 March 2022

CONTENTS

	<b>Col.</b>
<b>GENERAL QUESTION TIME</b> .....	1
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill .....	1
Co-operative Development.....	3
Ayrshire Economy (Scottish Government Investments).....	4
Trunk Road Network Safety (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire).....	6
Offshore Wind and Green Economy Jobs.....	6
Economic Growth (Transport) .....	8
<b>FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME</b> .....	11
Energy Security .....	11
Rail Accident Investigation Branch Report (Stonehaven) .....	16
Ukrainian Refugees (Visas).....	20
Borders Railway (Extension) .....	21
In Vitro Fertilisation (Suspension).....	21
Gas Prices .....	22
Motor Neurone Disease (Barriers to Accessible Homes).....	25
Covid-19 Booster (Spring Roll-out).....	26
House Insulation (Western Isles).....	28
Out-of-hours General Practitioner Services (Clackmannanshire) .....	29
Ukrainian Seasonal Workers (Support and Assistance) .....	29
Deaths of Young People in Custody .....	30
<b>SOCIAL CARE STAFF PAY</b> .....	32
<i>Motion debated—[Alex Rowley].</i>	
Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) .....	32
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP) .....	34
Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con).....	36
Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab) .....	37
Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green).....	39
The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care (Kevin Stewart) .....	41
<b>SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY CORPORATE BODY QUESTION TIME</b> .....	44
Scottish Parliament Building (Lighting).....	44
Scots Language.....	45
Constituency and Regional Offices .....	46
Scottish Parliament Crèche .....	47
Ventilation in Constituency Offices.....	48
Policy on Party Affiliation in Publications.....	49
<b>PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME</b> .....	51
<b>CONSTITUTION, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE</b> .....	51
Platinum Jubilee (Support for Communities and Organisations) .....	51
Independence Referendum Bill (Legal Advice) .....	52
Proposed Legislation .....	53
Ukraine (Support and Aid).....	55
Ukrainian Refugees (Accommodation) .....	56
Peace Institute .....	58
Scene Stirling (United Kingdom City of Culture 2025) .....	59
<b>CARMONT PASSENGER TRAIN DERAILMENT</b> .....	62
<i>Statement—[Jenny Gilruth].</i>	
The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth) .....	62
<b>CLIMATE EMERGENCY</b> .....	77
Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	77
Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con) .....	80
The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson) .....	83
Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con).....	85
Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab).....	87
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....	90

Natalie Don (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP) .....	91
Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con) .....	93
Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP).....	94
Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab) .....	96
Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP) .....	98
Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green) .....	99
Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP) .....	101
Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con) .....	103
Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab) .....	104
Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con) .....	106
The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater).....	108
Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP) .....	110
<b>UK WITHDRAWAL FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION (LEGAL CONTINUITY) (SCOTLAND) BILL</b> .....	114
<i>Motion moved—[Angus Robertson].</i>	
<b>DECISION TIME</b> .....	114

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# Scottish Parliament

Thursday 10 March 2022

*[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]*

## General Question Time

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** Good morning. I remind colleagues of Covid-related measures and that face coverings should be worn while moving around the chamber and the wider Holyrood campus.

The first item of business is general question time. As ever, I would appreciate succinct questions, with answers to match.

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill

1. **Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its plans for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill. (S6O-00846)

**The Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey):** We remain committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law to the maximum extent possible as soon as is practicable.

Although the Supreme Court's judgment means that the bill cannot receive royal assent in its current form, we are urgently and carefully considering the most effective way forward for the legislation, to ensure that incorporation can happen as quickly as possible and with confidence that amendments to the bill will not attract further challenge.

Our preference is to address the Supreme Court's judgment by returning the bill to Parliament via the reconsideration stage. In parallel with planning for that, we are also exploring options for extending our powers to incorporate the UNCRC beyond those that are available under the current devolution settlement. The Deputy First Minister issued a copy of his exchange with the Secretary of State for Scotland about that in an update to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** Next Wednesday will mark a year since the UNCRC bill was passed unanimously by the Scottish Parliament. I am concerned about the letter that the minister referred to, because it suggests that, in the reconsideration process, the Government is seeking further powers in order to make the bill competent, rather than working with the United

Kingdom Government to make the bill competent within the powers that it currently holds.

Political point scoring over the constitution by the Scottish Government has already delayed the bill, and it seems that it will continue to do so. In the meantime, young people have no idea of the timescale that the Government is working to or of how long the process will take. They need to be reassured that the Government remains committed to their rights and to bringing the bill within the Parliament's competence as soon as possible, and they deserve to know when incorporation of the UNCRC will be a reality.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** When will the Government bring back the bill?

**Clare Haughey:** The Deputy First Minister has committed to keeping Parliament and the committee updated on progress with the bill.

It is important to recognise that the majority of the work in relation to incorporation of the UNCRC is continuing at pace.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Stephanie Callaghan, who joins us online, has a brief supplementary.

**Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** The "Make it right" campaign, which is led by the young people of North Lanarkshire, is encouraging other local children to better understand their rights. The young people have even created and starred in their own social media video.

What steps is the Scottish Government taking to involve young people in raising awareness of children's rights ahead of incorporation of the UNCRC in Scots law?

**Clare Haughey:** Scottish Government officials are due to meet North Lanarkshire Council later this month to learn more about that excellent project and to discuss how we can share good practice.

The Scottish Government commissioned Young Scot and Children in Scotland to work with children and young people to develop resources to raise awareness of children's rights across all sectors. In September 2020, materials were published to coincide with the introduction of the UNCRC incorporation bill to Parliament.

Good work is under way in schools. UNICEF UK's rights respecting school awards provide a framework for embedding the UNCRC strategically and practically in schools, thereby ensuring awareness of children's rights among children and young people. In addition, the Children's Parliament has recently launched a complementary resource, "Dignity in School",

which aims to demonstrate ways in which primary schools can adopt a rights-based approach and help to make rights real for children.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** People get fed up when our two Governments cannot just sort things out, especially when it comes to the issue of rights for children.

Last week, we heard about the number of children who are locked up in prison when they should not be, so the matter is real. Rather than hunting for a never-ending battle with the Conservatives, when will the Government sort this out? We need a date.

**Clare Haughey:** As I said in my answer to Pam Duncan-Glancy, the Scottish Government is working at pace on the issue. The Deputy First Minister will write to the relevant committee and inform Parliament.

### Co-operative Development

**2. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on co-operative development in Scotland. (S6O-00847)

**The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee):** We are committed to working through Co-operative Development Scotland and the enterprise agencies to support the growth of co-operative and other alternative business models, which we know can deliver strong outcomes on fair work and bring benefits to local communities.

The Scottish Government is determined to significantly increase the number of co-operatives, social enterprises and employee-owned businesses in Scotland, while supporting regional regeneration and the wealth of local communities. Our recently published 10-year national strategy for economic transformation sets out our commitment to undertake and publish a review of how best to do that.

**Richard Leonard:** The Scottish Government has stated that its goal is the creation of 500 employee-owned businesses by 2030. In 2018, it set up a Scotland for employee ownership group to achieve that. Co-operatives and employee ownership were mentioned again in last week's economic strategy.

The problem is this: the co-operative development team in Scottish Enterprise was dismantled and Scottish Enterprise axed the budget for awareness raising about co-operatives. Grant support to cover 30 per cent of the cost of the transaction to convert a business to worker ownership has been withdrawn. The Scotland for employee ownership group has become little more than a ministerial photo opportunity.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please ask a question.

**Richard Leonard:** As a result, Scotland is going not up but down the United Kingdom worker-ownership league table. When will the Scottish Government finally address that, stop paying lip service, put in place a credible industrial strategy, back that with the resources that it needs and show that it really is serious about co-operative development?

**Ivan McKee:** I clarify that Co-operative Development Scotland is the arm of Scottish Enterprise that works in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise to support company growth through collaborative, co-operative and employee ownership. Regarding the number of such businesses, Scotland continues to be ahead of the rest of the UK.

We are focusing on all alternative business models, including social enterprises. The member will be aware that, in the past two years, we have doubled our funding for social enterprises to almost £2 million over three years to support the activity that is happening on that.

Resources are in place and Co-operative Development Scotland continues to work as part of Scottish Enterprise. The Scottish Government remains committed, as we have highlighted in the national economic strategy, to developing co-operatives, social enterprises and other alternative business models in Scotland, because we recognise the value that they bring to communities, to Scotland's employees and to its economy as a whole.

### Ayrshire Economy (Scottish Government Investments)

**3. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how its investments have helped the wider Ayrshire economy. (S6O-00848)

**The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee):** The transformational £103 million Scottish Government investment in the Ayrshire growth deal supports projects that are identified as having the greatest potential for long-term inclusive growth. Regional partners have estimated that the deal will create 7,000 new jobs across Ayrshire and will unlock an additional £300 million from the private sector.

The projects that are included will transform the regional economy through high-value jobs creation and strong regional supply chains, and through tackling weak productivity and delivering skills across Ayrshire. Ayrshire has also benefited from investment from a range of regeneration programmes that support development and

delivery of local solutions to tackle poverty and disadvantage in communities across Ayrshire.

**Willie Coffey:** Can the minister confirm that the investments that are being made by the Scottish National Party Government are making a positive impact on the Ayrshire economy, in particular at Prestwick airport, where financial intervention has saved many jobs directly and even more in the wider economy, and will support the potential for thousands more jobs across Ayrshire, in association with the Ayrshire growth deal?

**Ivan McKee:** Without our intervention in 2013, Prestwick airport would have closed. Hundreds of jobs would have been lost as a result, but were saved by our actions at that time. We were clear that closure would have had a significant impact on the local economy through job losses at the airport and in the other businesses that rely on the airport's operations.

We will invest £30 million in projects in and around Prestwick airport over the course of the growth deal. Four space and aerospace projects will benefit from that investment. Those projects will deliver significant economic benefit and will play a key role in signalling Prestwick as a major inward investment destination for the international space market. Regional partners have estimated that more than 7,000 new jobs will be created as a result of the deal, with that number expected to include more than 2,700 direct, indirect and construction jobs within the Prestwick hub.

**Sharon Dowe (South Scotland) (Con):** In a letter to the Scottish Government, the Ayrshire economic joint committee notes that projects in the Ayrshire growth deal have seen an increase in costs since they went to tender. It writes that councils might require contingency funds for some projects, but that budget pressures might make that impossible. What funding will the Scottish Government provide? Will it guarantee that all projects that it is involved in will be fully funded and delivered on time?

**Ivan McKee:** Sharon Dowe will be aware that some of the growth deal money has been agreed between the Governments, and that we are working with local partners to direct how the funds will be spent. We are well aware, as the whole economy is, of the on-going cost pressures in construction and other sectors. The Scottish Government procurement team is working hard to do what it can to mitigate them and to provide advice and support, where possible, to partners across the public sector that are facing on-going cost challenges.

### **Trunk Road Network Safety (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire)**

**4. Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on any safety issues on the trunk road network in the Perthshire South and Kinross-shire constituency. (S6O-00849)

**The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth):** The trunk road network in Scotland is subject to an annual road safety review based on statistics that are recorded by Police Scotland, and measures are then prioritised where they are expected to contribute to the Scottish Government's 2030 casualty reduction targets. That process has identified road safety investigations on the A85, the A9 and the M90, which are currently under way. They are considering trends of recorded injury accidents as well as focusing on vulnerable groups such as motorcyclists. Any recommendations for improvement work such as signing, resurfacing and speed management that emerge from that will be considered and prioritised for construction as appropriate.

**Jim Fairlie:** The minister may be aware that there is growing community concern about the planned new junction on the A9 at Shinafoot, east of Auchterarder. Residents have concerns about road safety and speeding issues, the location of the proposed junction and the fact that it appears to have been scaled back from a two-way to a one-way system. Will the minister agree to meet me on site to discuss the concerns with local representatives?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I am aware that the Shinafoot junction proposals are intended to support developments that were identified in the Perth and Kinross local development plan and that they address junction issues that would otherwise exist on the A9. The design of any new junction on the A9 would, of course, be subject to a safety audit and other checks.

I recognise that, as Mr Fairlie outlined, concerns have been raised by members of the community that he represents. As I understand it, they relate mainly to local roads access to existing communities and new developments. I will, of course, be more than happy to meet Mr Fairlie and members of the community that he represents on site, because it is essential that we get road safety improvements right for the communities that they serve.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Questions 5 and 6 have been withdrawn.

### **Offshore Wind and Green Economy Jobs**

**7. Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is

taking to increase the number of jobs in offshore wind and the wider green economy. (S6O-00852)

**The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater):** The Scottish Government is determined to maximise the economic opportunity for the Scottish supply chain from our offshore wind potential. We will drive forward offshore wind skills development, working with stakeholders to focus on the opportunities for diversification and skills transfer from our oil and gas sector, in line with our commitment to a just transition.

The introduction of ScotWind's supply chain development statements demonstrates how serious the Scottish Government is about holding developers to account if they do not honour their supply chain commitments and create green jobs.

**Brian Whittle:** To make the most of the opportunities in the development of the green economy, we must ensure that our education system produces a skilled workforce with skills that are appropriate for future jobs. We missed that boat with the development of onshore wind, but we now have opportunities with offshore wind, hydrogen, electric power and all the associated servicing skills. What is the Scottish Government doing to embed the green economy in the education system?

**Lorna Slater:** It is not easy to overstate—it really cannot be overstated—what an enormous opportunity ScotWind is. The number 25GW will not mean much to many people, but it is huge. The ScotWind leasing round will provide a strong pipeline of projects through the current decade and beyond. To prepare our workforce for those skills, we have the future skills development plan and the climate emergency skills action plan. It is vital that we equip the people of Scotland—young people who are coming up the way, people who are transitioning from high-carbon industries and people who are returning to work—with the skills that they need.

Our national strategy for economic transformation commits to lifelong learning for all the people of Scotland and the appropriate skills development that we need for the green industrial revolution.

**Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** Given the importance of transitioning from oil and gas to green energy such as offshore wind, this matter is of great importance to businesses and residents in my constituency of Aberdeen South and North Kincardine and in the wider north-east. How is the Scottish Government engaging with north-eastern employers in the energy sector, particularly given that this is Scottish apprenticeship week, to ensure that

support is in place to train apprentices and reskill existing employees?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Be as brief as possible, minister.

**Lorna Slater:** The north-east has enormous potential not only in offshore wind but in green hydrogen. Looking at the Scottish ports—and in particular at the opportunities in Aberdeen, in that respect—the Scottish Government is completely committed to supporting the north-east through the energy transition, including with skills development.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mercedes Villalba has a very brief supplementary question.

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Previously, the Scottish Government promised to deliver 130,000 green jobs by 2020. However, just a sixth of that number have been delivered. Latest figures reveal that the number of green jobs is falling, with the loss of nearly 3,000 since 2014. Will the Scottish Government support Labour's call for the £700 million from the ScotWind licensing, and all annual income, to be ring fenced for investment in the creation of green jobs?

**Lorna Slater:** Applicants to the ScotWind leasing round were required to submit a supply chain development statement to set out the anticipated level and location of the supply chain impacts, including jobs. Developers can update their statements throughout the developmental phase. The introduction of that statement demonstrates how serious the Scottish Government is about holding developers to account if they do not support their supply chain commitments. We fully expect developers and original equipment manufacturers to engage with the domestic supply chain to create green jobs and to fulfil their commitments.

### **Economic Growth (Transport)**

**8. Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how the country's transport system can help to improve economic growth. (S6O-00853)

**The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth):** Supporting inclusive economic growth is at the heart of the national transport strategy. We have a vision for a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system that helps to deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors. All our investment in transport aligns with that vision, as we have set out in the second strategic transport projects review. By focusing investment on sustainable transport options and continuing to invest in green innovation, we are making Scotland more accessible for residents, visitors

and businesses, and we are supporting Scotland's workforce.

**Graham Simpson:** Last week's so-called national strategy for economic transformation said of the country's transport network that there remain opportunities to improve connections within and between certain areas, and it said that the trunk road network is a crucial facilitator for the national and local delivery of goods. Given that, is the minister now prepared to break free of the shackles of the extremist Greens and commit to properly funding improvements on the A77, A75, A83, A9 and A96?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I remind Mr Simpson that, since 2007, the Government has invested approximately £9.5 billion in managing, maintaining and improving Scotland's trunk road and motorway network. The £3 billion investment to dual the A9 between Perth and Inverness is one of the biggest transport infrastructure projects in Scotland's history.

I turn to his substantive point on the national strategy for economic transformation. That sets out the priorities for Scotland's economy as well as the actions that are needed to maximise the opportunities of the next decade to achieve our vision of a wellbeing economy. Scotland's transport network has been identified as a key driver in helping to achieve the ambitions and the vision that are outlined in the refreshed strategy.

He will also be aware that the recently announced strategic transport projects review 2 is highlighted as a means to improving connectivity and infrastructure, which he touched on. STPR2 is currently out for public consultation until April. A meeting with Mr Simpson next week will be welcome, and perhaps we can discuss some of those matters in more detail.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Fiona Hyslop has a very brief supplementary question.

**Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** The minister will be aware of the reopening of the Bathgate to Airdrie line, which has brought great economic and social benefits to my constituency and across central Scotland. Will she identify how many transport projects the Scottish Government has invested in? I am sure that, like me, Graham Simpson will want to welcome them all and the economic contribution that they have made.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Minister, bear in mind that you can write with further detail.

**Jenny Gilruth:** Fiona Hyslop is absolutely right to highlight the huge investment that the Scottish National Party Government has made in transport infrastructure. For rail alone, we have invested £1 billion, including £300 million on the Airdrie to Bathgate rail link improvement, which brought

three new stations and a 31 per cent increase in the number of passengers at existing stations; and investments in the electrification of all rail routes between Edinburgh and Glasgow—and to Stirling, Alloa and Dunblane.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes general question time. There will be a slight pause before we move to the next item of business.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Energy Security

#### **Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):**

It is now two weeks since the Russian war against Ukraine began. Yesterday, the tragic events hit a new low, with a children's hospital being reduced to rubble. The Russians bombed a hospital and targeted children. Young, innocent lives have been lost in the most despicable and atrocious way. It is hard to express the anger and grief that we all feel at that appalling act.

I had the honour of being in the United Kingdom Parliament on Monday, to hear President Zelensky address the chamber. He spoke then of 50 children already having died in this war. Following yesterday's bombing, more young lives have been lost because of the actions of Putin and his forces. The people of Ukraine are all in our thoughts and prayers just now.

I know that we all agree that more needs to be done to help refugees who are escaping war, and that needs to happen now. The situation has to be urgently addressed, because those who are fleeing for their lives need safety and security here in the United Kingdom, and we have to do everything that we can to support them.

In the light of Russia's actions, will the Scottish Government update its energy strategy to outline how it plans to protect our energy security?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** All of us are horrified and deeply distressed by what we are witnessing unfold in Ukraine on not just a daily but an hourly basis. Yesterday's developments were a new low—a low that I believe that all of us hoped we would never see: the targeting of children and babies in a maternity hospital.

Vladimir Putin is committing, on a daily basis, crimes against international law. He is committing crimes against humanity. He is committing war crimes. It is important to do everything that is possible to stop Vladimir Putin, and it is also important to ensure that he pays the severest price for the actions that he is undertaking and the crimes that he is committing now.

I welcome the limited movements on refugees that we heard this morning from the Home Secretary, but they need to go further. I repeat my appeal to the Prime Minister to emulate the example of the Republic of Ireland and countries across the European Union: to waive visa requirements and put sanctuary first and paperwork second. I intend to write to the Prime Minister later today, to make that call again, and I

would welcome the signatures of Douglas Ross, Anas Sarwar and Alex Cole-Hamilton on that letter. I will liaise with their offices later today.

These are important matters. Although refugee entry is a reserved matter, let me be clear that the Scottish Government is actively working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, councils and the Scottish Refugee Council to make sure that we are ready and able to welcome refugees from Ukraine and give them the support that they need.

On the question that Douglas Ross posed, as he knows, the Scottish Government is in the process of updating our energy strategy. That work commenced prior to the horror that is now unfolding in Ukraine, but, of course, the situation in Ukraine has an implication for energy prices. There is not so much of an implication for energy supply in Scotland or the UK, because we are not dependent on Russian oil and gas in the way that many other countries are, particularly in Europe, but we will all bear the burden of increased prices. Obviously, those developments will now be factored into the work on the energy strategy, which will be published when that work is complete.

**Douglas Ross:** All week, I have been working with colleagues in the UK Government to see what more can be done on refugees. I welcome the steps that the Home Secretary took this morning, but I agree that much more needs to be done to protect people who are fleeing for their lives.

The First Minister mentioned the updated energy strategy, but Russia's appalling actions have put a renewed focus on energy security. In Scotland, we have the natural resources to protect our own supply and the resources to export to other countries, to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas. Last night, a former SNP energy minister said:

"In principle, we do need more oil and gas."

He continued:

"we need all the oil and gas production we can get".

I agree with Fergus Ewing—*[Interruption.]* Patrick Harvie laughs, but we can protect Scottish jobs and secure our energy supply.

First Minister, surely, now is the time to maximise oil and gas production in Scotland, using the energy on our own doorstep.

**The First Minister:** These are important issues. In light of what is happening in Ukraine, we have to look carefully at all the issues. As I said, the work on our energy strategy is under way, and it will allow us to properly understand our energy requirements as we make the transition to net zero.

I think that around 80 per cent of North Sea production is already exported—a fact that it is important to bear in mind. We need to consider very carefully the implications for us of the current volatility in the energy market. I repeat: for the UK, this is not an issue of security of supply. Only around 3 per cent of our gas supplies and around 8 per cent of our oil and petroleum supplies come from Russia, but we will all bear the burden of global price increases for energy, and, indeed, for food, which are driving inflation and the cost of living.

It is important that we understand the realities here. Even if we were to put to one side the environmental considerations—which none of us should do, because the climate crisis has not gone away—given the timescales and practicalities involved, it is not credible to suggest that the short-term solution to the crisis lies in increasing North Sea production. Existing fields in the North Sea are not currently operating under capacity. Expanding existing fields is possible, but that would take months, if not years. New fields take years, if not decades, to plan and develop. We should not go after solutions that might sound superficially attractive but whose practicalities and realities do not stand up to scrutiny.

In the short term, what we must see, in response to rises in global prices, is substantial and significant action from the Chancellor to shield households across the UK from that impact, including, as suggested from a sedentary position behind me, action on reducing VAT.

In the medium to longer term, as I have heard UK ministers and the European Commission say in recent days, the action that the world needs to take to reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels is exactly the same action that the world needs to take to address the climate emergency. We must accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels to renewable and low-carbon energy, and that is what the Scottish Government remains focused on.

**Douglas Ross:** The First Minister started her answer by saying that she and her Government would look at all the issues and all the options, but she refused to say whether she agrees with me and the Scottish Conservatives that we have to maximise oil and gas production in Scotland at the moment to help with the current crisis and the crisis going forward.

The First Minister has said previously that no new oil fields should be developed. That is just not a realistic solution. It will simply lead to more imports from other countries. Right now, we purchase £3 billion of oil and gas every year from other countries, including Russia. If the First Minister is not prepared to move on domestic oil and gas supply, what are her alternatives?

Scottish Conservatives support the increased use of nuclear energy. It is low carbon and it is safe. Should not nuclear be in Scotland's energy mix, if we want to stop relying on Russian oil and gas and move to net zero?

**The First Minister:** If Douglas Ross had listened, as I am sure that he did, he would know that I am trying to explain the practicalities in the short term.

He quoted my colleague at me, which is perfectly legitimate. Let me quote one of his colleagues at him. On Sunday past, the UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Kwasi Kwarteng, said:

“For as long as we depend on oil and gas—wherever it is from—we are all vulnerable to Putin's malign influence on global markets.”

That is true, that is the reality, and if Douglas Ross's colleagues recognise that, perhaps he should as well.

Douglas Ross is right to ask what our solutions are. All of us are grappling with what the right, best and deliverable solutions are. In the short term, given rising prices, it is inescapable that we need to see a substantial financial intervention from the chancellor to shield households across the country from the impact of rising inflation.

Of course, we need to look at our energy mix going forward. However, I go back to my practical point: increasing production from the North Sea in the short term is not a practicably deliverable solution. Take Cambo, for example; members may disagree about whether Cambo should get the go-ahead, but, even if it were to get the go-ahead, 2026 is when it would first produce oil. The same is true of nuclear. Even if—and, for the avoidance of doubt, this is not a position that I support—we were to give the go-ahead to new nuclear energy today, it would be years if not decades before any of that came on stream. That is the practical reality.

We need to find solutions now and we need to ensure that we are accelerating the transition to renewable and low-carbon energy because that is not only the solution to the issue of dependence on Russian oil and gas over the medium to long term, but the responsible action to take in response to the climate emergency, which—I repeat—has not gone away.

**Douglas Ross:** It has not gone away, which is why I mentioned the drive towards net zero in my questions. However, we also have to see that the situation has changed fundamentally, not just in months and years but in recent weeks. The First Minister's position does not seem to recognise the new reality: Russia's war has changed the situation and we must accept that.

Scotland could deal a blow to Vladimir Putin by increasing domestic oil and gas production. We could increase that production now and end the need to import foreign oil and gas and could export more to reduce international reliance on Russian energy. Now is not the time to be ideological; now is the time to be practical and realistic. We have heard that from SNP voices—Fergus Ewing and Ian Blackford—so why do we not hear it from the First Minister?

**The First Minister:** I am not being ideological. I am trying to set out hard, practical reasons why what Douglas Ross is calling for is not a solution. We all feel a desire right now to find solutions to what is happening on a humanitarian level—even on a military level—and in terms of the implications for energy, inflation and the impact on us all. However, we do no one any favours if we suggest solutions that do not provide that panacea in the short term.

Douglas Ross has not engaged with what I have said at all. Right now, if we were to give the go-ahead to Cambo, for example, 2026 would be the earliest that it would start producing oil. If we were to give the go-ahead for new nuclear today, it would be years if not decades before that came on stream. Even if I were to agree—and I do not agree on all those matters—that those were the right things to do, they do not offer the solution that Douglas Ross is trying to suggest that they do. That does no one any favours.

We have to look at what the solutions are. In the immediate term, financial intervention to shield people from the impact of inflation is essential. Perhaps we would be better advised to come together in the Parliament to call on the chancellor to do that and act as he did at the start of the pandemic to provide that assistance. Then we can come together to look at every opportunity to accelerate the transition to renewable and low-carbon sources of energy.

The other point that Douglas Ross did not engage with in his latest questions is the Kwasi Kwarteng quote that I have just shared:

“as long as we depend on oil and gas ... we are all vulnerable to Putin’s malign influence”.

That is the point.

**Douglas Ross:** Produce more domestically!

**The First Minister:** Douglas Ross is saying that we should produce more domestically. Twice, now, I have set out the timescales for new production, and existing fields are not operating under capacity. We all want to find the solutions, but we must look at realistic ones. Let us avoid the tendency to use the issue as a way to have a go at each other and instead come together to find

sensible solutions in the interests of the people we serve.

### **Rail Accident Investigation Branch Report (Stonehaven)**

2. **Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab):** First, I join other party leaders in expressing our continued solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We continue to be horrified and heartbroken by the scenes that are rolling across our screens of the tragedies that are taking place in Ukraine and of the people suffering and fleeing war. However, nothing is more heartbreaking than the sight of a maternity unit being bombed by Russian forces. Vladimir Putin must fail, but let us also be clear that he is a war criminal and he must face justice.

I want to make two other points. First, I thank all those across Scotland and the United Kingdom who continue to donate to appeals to support the people of Ukraine and all those who do collections to send supplies to Ukraine. However, there are frustrations about how those supplies get to Ukraine and the neighbouring countries. We all need to do more to encourage the free flow of supplies.

My second point is about refugees. This goes beyond party politics; it is about people fleeing war and needing not just sanctuary but a home in Scotland. I am willing to join every other party leader in calling on the Home Secretary and the Home Office to do everything necessary to allow people to flee and make their home in Scotland.

Today, my thoughts and the thoughts of everyone in the chamber will also be with the families and friends of Brett McCullough, Donald Dinnie and Christopher Stuchbury, who died in the Stonehaven rail crash in 2020. Their deaths were a tragedy, and they were avoidable.

This morning’s report should shame Network Rail and Carillion, but there are questions for Abellio and the Scottish Government, too. The train that operated on that route was decades old. The trains were first introduced into service in the mid-1970s, and they did not comply with safety standards that were set in 1994. The report says that it is

“more likely than not that the outcome would have been better if the train had been compliant with modern crashworthiness standards.”

It goes on to say that the damage to the train

“was very extensive. A significantly higher casualty toll would have been likely if the train had been heavily loaded with passengers”.

Why did the Government agree to run trains that were over 40 years old and did not meet modern safety standards? Will the First Minister listen to staff and unions and withdraw them from service?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** My thoughts today are very much with the families and friends of Donald Dinnie, Brett McCullough and Christopher Stuchbury and, indeed, all those who were injured and affected by the dreadful crash. Today will be an extremely difficult time for the families of the three men who tragically lost their lives, and we should all be thinking of them.

I am sure that this will be of no comfort to his loved ones, but it is important to point out that a key finding of the report is that there was nothing in the way that Brett McCullough drove the train that caused the accident. He drove within the rules and within the instruction given to him. It is important to record that.

I thank the Rail Accident Investigation Branch staff for their important work and thorough approach, and for the clarity of their findings and recommendations. It is important that those recommendations are now implemented.

On the specific point that Anas Sarwar raised, it is important to say—indeed, the report notes this—that the refurbished high-speed train that derailed was fully compliant with legal requirements to operate. However, since it was designed and constructed, railway standards have continued to improve, to reflect lessons learned from such investigations. The train operator—in this case, ScotRail—has the statutory duty to ensure that the trains that it operates are safe, and, of course, it is the statutory duty of the Office of Rail and Road, as the regulator, to oversee that duty, with enforcement if and when necessary. The Office of Rail and Road will monitor the work that is undertaken to address the Rail Accident Investigation Branch's recommendations. That duty will, of course, pass to the new publicly owned and controlled ScotRail on 1 April. However, at the time of the crash, ScotRail was not owned by the Scottish Government as it will be in the future.

The final point that it is important to make is that, although the report is very important, it will not be the last report on that tragic incident. A further report is being undertaken by the Office of Rail and Road, which involves a joint investigation with Police Scotland and the British Transport Police. That investigation will report to the procurator fiscal later this year, which will allow prosecutors to consider questions of criminal prosecutions and a fatal accident inquiry. However, those are, of course, matters for the Lord Advocate.

**Anas Sarwar:** It is safe to say that we should not have allowed unsafe trains or trains that did not meet standards to be on our railways. I hope that, when ScotRail is under public ownership, that will be corrected immediately.

Three families have been failed, and staff continue to be failed because they are being asked to operate on trains that do not meet safety standards that were—I repeat—set in 1994. We know that Network Rail has plans to make more than 2,000 staff across the UK redundant, which is unacceptable. The Scottish Government, which will take ownership of ScotRail in a few weeks, is still refusing to rule out compulsory redundancies here, in Scotland. Let us not forget that we are talking about workers who kept us going through the pandemic. We cannot have a safe railway if we do not have a properly staffed railway.

In the light of today's report, will the First Minister commit to no compulsory redundancies? Failing that, will she at least commit to no compulsory redundancies in safety-critical roles on Scotland's railway?

**The First Minister:** I repeat that the thoughts of us all are with the families who have lost loved ones. It was a tragedy, and nothing that any of us or any report can say will remove or lessen the pain that they are going through. However, it is important that lessons are learned from any tragic incident such as this, and it is important that that is the case for this incident.

I will not repeat what I have already said in regard to the train, but it is important to underline the point that, according to the report, the accident was caused by a failure of the infrastructure and not the train, which was confirmed to have been properly licensed and approved to operate, albeit that I refer back to the comments that I made earlier.

On the transfer of ScotRail to public ownership, which I am proud that this Government is undertaking, we will, of course, continue to negotiate with the unions on all these matters, as would be expected of us. I will not pre-empt any of that, but I will say that this Government has a very strong record of no compulsory redundancies in the agencies for which we have responsibility. That commitment is important across a whole range of our responsibilities. The principles that have guided us to date will continue to guide us as we take over ownership of and responsibility for ScotRail next month.

**Anas Sarwar:** The rail unions will welcome an unequivocal confirmation from the First Minister that there will be no compulsory redundancies, particularly in safety-critical roles.

Despite today's report, there are still unanswered questions. We cannot allow it to be a report about which people say warm words but from which no meaningful action follows. The First Minister is right to say that we still have criminal investigations to conclude. There remain

questions about the standard of trains and the levels of staffing.

What we must never forget is that at the heart of this are victims and families who have been failed by a powerful corporation and public bodies, and they should not have to wait years to get answers. We cannot allow this to become yet another in a long line of public scandals and tragedies in Scotland for which no one is held to account and from which institutions protect themselves rather than the public. As Kevin Lindsay of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen—the train drivers' union—said, we must do

“everything we can to bring the people responsible for this catastrophic event to justice.”

Will the First Minister do the same?

**The First Minister:** I read ASLEF's comments this morning, and I totally understand, without hesitation, why it feels so strongly about the report and its findings. The rail family in Scotland, as in many countries, is a very close-knit one. They have lost one of their own in the tragedy, and I absolutely understand why they are making the comments they are making.

Anas Sarwar rightly poses his questions to me, but it is important to stress the independence of the investigations and to repeat—he has acknowledged this—that not only is the report not the final report but the remit of the Rail Accident Investigation Branch is to investigate such incidents on a no-blame basis. It is not there to apportion blame; it is there to establish the facts, which is what it has done.

The further investigation that is under way by the Office of Rail and Road, in parallel with Police Scotland and the British Transport Police, will report to the procurator fiscal, then it will be for the law officers and the Crown Office to determine whether there should be criminal prosecutions or a fatal accident inquiry. That would be the moment to consider any wider issues of accountability. It would be completely wrong for me to pre-empt the investigations or to try to curtail them in any way by commenting on the appropriate timescale. As I understand it, the latter investigation is due to report later this year.

The comments that have been made about the train are, of course, for the operating company. That is ScotRail, which, from 1 April, will be publicly owned. The comments in the report about the infrastructure—the report found that there was an infrastructure failure—are matters for Network Rail. I again point out that Network Rail remains a reserved body that is accountable to the UK Government and not directly accountable to this Government.

Railway safety is also reserved. Perhaps one of the wider, longer-term lessons on which the Parliament will want to reflect is whether that is right or whether the Parliament could come together and make the case for it to change, so that we have devolution not just of the operation of the railway but of the infrastructure on which it operates.

There are lots of lessons to learn, and I am committed to doing everything possible to ensure that they are learned.

### Ukrainian Refugees (Visas)

**Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** When talking about emergency visa waivers at Westminster yesterday, the Ukrainian ambassador to the United Kingdom told the Home Affairs Committee:

“At particular times, drastic measures should be taken. I believe something like a drop-in could be considered as well.”

In the light of that direct plea from the ambassador of our war-ravaged European neighbours, does the First Minister agree that the UK Government should adopt the position of the Irish Government, which has removed all visa barriers, to allow refugees to be welcomed quickly, safely and securely without delay? Does she agree that post-arrival paperwork and biometric work should be conducted in concert with the Ukrainian consul so that arrivals can securely settle anywhere across the UK's common travel area?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Yes, I strongly support that position. It is the position that the Republic of Ireland and countries across the European Union have adopted.

Yesterday, I spoke to a Ukrainian who lives in Scotland—a man who lives in Glasgow. His will be one of many stories. He spoke to me about the efforts to get his family members—his sister, in particular—to this country. She had managed to get to Poland after an arduous journey and the wall of bureaucracy that met her when she then tried to get to the UK was mind-boggling and inhumane in the circumstances.

As I said earlier, I welcome the movement that we appear to have had from Priti Patel and the Home Office this morning. When I came to the chamber, I was still trying to absorb all the details but, as I understand it, Ukrainians with a Ukrainian passport will now be able to apply for a visa online—but only through the family route, which is the only route that is open right now—rather than have to go to a visa application centre.

That is movement. I understand that, for such people, the biometric processes will be completed

when they come to the UK. However, that approach still requires a visa application process, which is not good enough. We need to waive that process, allow people to get here and do the paperwork after that. That is not only the humanitarian thing to do; it is what other countries are doing.

We hope that, over the next couple of days, we will have confirmation from the UK Government of the opening of the community sponsorship route. That is being overseen by Michael Gove rather than the Home Office. I have had constructive discussions with him about it in the past couple of days. The Scottish Government has put to him and his officials a proposition that would allow us, in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, to run the scheme in Scotland so that we can ensure that people who come through it get the right support. The vast majority of people in Scotland want to welcome them with open arms, and that is what we are intent on doing if we possibly can and if the UK Government procedures allow us to do so.

### **Borders Railway (Extension)**

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** Scottish Borders Council papers reveal that the Scottish Government seeks the removal from the local development plan of any indication of a preferred route for a Borders rail extension from Tweedbank to Carlisle via Hawick. Will the First Minister give my constituents assurances that the Scottish National Party Government will not derail the project and that the route will go via Newcastleton?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** As I understand it and as I recall, those matters are being considered as part of the borderlands deal. We want to encourage the greatest possible connectivity and to get the greatest possible benefits from the Borders rail link and any extension to it. I will ask the Minister for Transport to write in greater detail about the processes that will be followed.

### **In Vitro Fertilisation (Suspension)**

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** On Christmas eve, in vitro fertilisation treatment was suspended across Scotland for women who are not up to date with their Covid vaccinations. Scotland was the only part of the United Kingdom to do that and it was the only service in the national health service for which treatment was conditional on vaccination.

Last week, the chief medical officer announced that the service would resume, which is welcome. However, women arriving for IVF treatment have been sent away because a consent form from the

Scottish Government's central legal office had not yet been processed. That causes a continuing delay to treatment, which reduces the chances of women falling pregnant. Will the First Minister intervene to ensure that IVF treatment is not delayed any further?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** First, it is important to stress that the recommendation to temporarily defer fertility treatment for women who have not been fully vaccinated was taken as a clinical decision in response to emerging evidence and clinical concerns about the risk to mothers and babies of not being vaccinated. Those concerns were raised by lead clinicians in the four national health service assisted conception units.

The concerns were based on patient safety, and the decision affected a small number of patients, although I understand the distress and trauma that it will have caused. For the vast majority of women, treatment was able to proceed without delay. The chief medical officer is now recommending that fertility treatment for unvaccinated patients no longer needs to be deferred. That decision will be given immediate effect, so that the treatment of patients can recommence. I am not aware of the administrative issue that Jackie Baillie has raised, but I will look into it and make sure that, if the issue subsists, it is rectified as soon as possible.

### **Gas Prices**

**3. Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government will do to mitigate the impact of volatile gas prices. (S6F-00874)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Rising gas prices are causing many people to worry about energy bills, especially with the price cap increase due in April. Alongside a wider package of cost of living support, the Scottish Government is providing a further £10 million for our fuel insecurity fund to ensure that support remains available for people who are at risk of self-disconnecting or severely rationing their energy use. However, energy markets are reserved, so we urge the United Kingdom Government to do significantly more to support consumers, which should include a cut to VAT on energy. As I reflected earlier, in the longer term, the gas price surge reinforces the need to end our dependence on fossil fuels and accelerate the green transition, which the European Commission and UK Government ministers have been calling for this week.

**Ariane Burgess:** The Conservatives have shamelessly used the Russian invasion of Ukraine as an excuse to further expand fossil fuel production. Indeed, Douglas Ross has just called for the Scottish Government to ignore climate

science and ramp it up. Not only does that dismiss the advice of the United Nations, the International Energy Agency and the Climate Change Committee, it also contradicts the integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy, which states:

“Ensuring the supply of secure, affordable and clean energy is essential to the UK’s national interests.”

Is it not the case that the best way that we can promote peace and security, tackle fuel poverty and secure our energy supply is by reducing our reliance on gas through the net zero buildings strategy, and by supporting a scaling up of renewable energy?

**The First Minister:** I agree with that. I will not repeat all the points that I made in response to Douglas Ross. Although I do not agree with the UK Government on all those matters, those arguments are being made by Government ministers, too.

Anybody who thinks that the horror in the Ukraine, although it is rightly taking all of our attention at the moment, means that the climate crisis has gone away need only read the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s latest report, which was published last week. The crisis has not gone away. Indeed, the impacts of climate breakdown are accelerating and we have a duty to take that extremely seriously. It is right that we have to accelerate the transition to clean sources of energy for the sake of the planet, but that is also right for the wider reason of energy security. We must all focus on doing that, which, of course, is what the Scottish Government is doing.

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** Fergus Ewing MSP has said that voluntarily ceasing exploration in the North Sea would increase Scotland’s carbon footprint by making it more reliant on fossil fuels from other countries. Alyn Smith has said that whether North Sea oil and gas production should be extended amid the war in the Ukraine is a “legitimate question”. Ian Blackford has pointed out that we can bring

“maximum pressure to be felt by Putin”

by cutting off western demand for Russian oil.

Does the First Minister recognise that support for her opposition to further North Sea exploration is now crumbling within her party, and that it is time to change course?

**The First Minister:** Members of my party are engaging in an intelligent way on the issues, and it is incumbent on us all to do that. On Ian Blackford’s comments, we should cut off demand for Russian oil and gas. For as long as states or companies are buying that, we are inadvertently helping to fund Putin’s illegal war and probably

prolonging that war in the process. Therefore, I call for import bans on Russian oil and gas by countries and states, and I welcome the albeit still limited action that the UK Government announced in that regard earlier this week.

I do not know whether Douglas Lumsden listened to the answers that I gave to Douglas Ross. I obviously take a different view on some of the issues but, even if I were to stand here and say that we should increase North Sea oil and gas production, the timescales and practicalities involved mean that that would not offer a solution to the immediate challenges that we face. I set out in some detail the timescales that would be involved. In the case of Cambo, which is the project that is closest to potentially being given approval by the UK Government, 2026 would be the earliest that it would start producing oil.

Let us not grasp at false solutions. Instead, let us focus on our obligations. Oil and gas are part of our energy mix right now, and will continue to be so during the transition. It is important to recognise that, but existing fields are not operating under capacity.

We must now focus on ensuring that the transition is a just one, that we invest in alternatives and that we protect jobs, because that is in the interest not just of helping to defeat Putin but of ensuring energy security and protecting our planet.

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Research by Energy Action Scotland shows that nearly 40 per cent of households will no longer be able to afford to heat their homes adequately due to rising energy prices. However, the Scottish Government has rowed back on its promise to create a publicly owned energy company, despite the outline business case showing that it would have produced annual savings for customers.

I seek clarity from the First Minister. Does she believe, as I do, that essential resources such as energy must be available to everyone on the basis of need, not ability to pay?

**The First Minister:** We have set out our position on a publicly owned energy company, why we changed our previous position and what we are focused on delivering now, so I will not rehearse all of that today.

I agree that energy is not a luxury; people have to be able to heat their homes. That is why it is so important that we do everything that we can, within our powers and resources, to help people to do that. However, such matters remain largely reserved to the UK Government, so it is incumbent on us all to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take the requisite action.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Come on!

**The First Minister:** I can understand why the Tories might groan at that answer, but I really do not understand why Labour members are doing so, because I am making exactly the same arguments that their colleagues in London are making right now. The chancellor must step up and act in order to protect households the length and breadth of the country. The question, and the mystery, is why Labour members are so upset by the fact that we are calling for that action.

#### **Motor Neurone Disease (Barriers to Accessible Homes)**

4. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the MND Scotland report "No Time to Lose: Addressing the housing needs of people with MND", which highlights the barriers faced by people with motor neurone disease in securing adaptations or accessible homes. (S6F-00873)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I welcome the report that has been produced by MND Scotland, and I recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that people with degenerative illnesses such as motor neurone disease have the choice, dignity and freedom to access suitable homes. We know that there are issues with the way in which adaptations are being accessed and delivered locally, so we are considering how the process can be streamlined and made easier for people who need adaptations.

We are working to increase the supply of accessible and adapted homes. Whenever possible, all new affordable homes are designed to be flexible so that they meet people's needs as they change over time. We are also delivering a programme to retrofit homes in the social rented sector to make them more accessible.

**Bob Doris:** The report tells of one man who was being washed on his decking because his family were awaiting accessible shower facilities. Average life expectancy for people with MND is just 18 months from diagnosis, so some will never get the adaptations that they need. As the report rightly states, people with MND should be making precious memories with friends and family during the time that they have left; they should not be fighting for the adaptations and accessible homes that they urgently need.

Will the Scottish Government meet MND Scotland to discuss the report's recommendations and do all that it can, in collaboration with partners in local government, to ensure that people with MND can live in accessible homes with the care and dignity to which everyone is entitled?

**The First Minister:** Of course, we want everyone, particularly at a time in their life when they are living with ill health or a condition such as MND, to be given the support that they need in order to live in their own home, and we want it to be suitable for them and their needs.

As I said a moment ago, I know that the adaptation system requires improvement and I recognise the particular need for speed for those with MND. As we take forward the review of the adaptations process, I or the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government would be happy to meet MND Scotland representatives to listen to their views and hear more about the MND Scotland report and its recommendations.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** Last night, the Glasgow film festival premiered a film about Ady Barkan—a man with MND—and his activism, and I commend the film to all in the chamber.

At present, only 1 per cent of housing is fully accessible for wheelchair users; around 10,000 disabled people are on waiting lists; and I have constituents—disabled people—who have waited more than six years for an accessible home. Does the First Minister agree that that is unacceptable? What urgent action will the Scottish Government take to meet disabled people's housing needs?

**The First Minister:** I have already made the point that more action is needed. In 2020-21, 95 per cent of new-build homes that were delivered by housing associations and councils—where information was returned on housing for varying needs—met the accessibility standards, but much more needs to be done across all tenures of housing.

We are currently reviewing "Housing for Varying Needs: a design guide", which is a good standard but is now more than 20 years old. We also have flexible grant funding arrangements in place to ensure that specialist housing provision, which is identified by local authorities as a priority, can be supported. We will continue to focus on all these issues and I have already recognised how important they are for everybody who has particular needs but particularly for those who live with conditions such as MND.

I will make a point of watching the film that Pam Duncan-Glancy has brought to my attention.

#### **Covid-19 Booster (Spring Roll-out)**

5. **Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the First Minister whether she will provide an update on the spring roll-out of the Covid-19 booster vaccine. (S6F-00884)

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** Of course, vaccination remains a critical component of our Covid response. To date, 86.3 per cent of eligible people in Scotland aged 18 and over have received a third or booster dose of vaccine, and our vaccine delivery rate continues to be the highest of anywhere in the United Kingdom. We welcome the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's recommendation that we offer some of the most vulnerable groups an additional vaccine dose in the spring of this year. From the start of this week, we began the process of delivering that in care homes and also started to invite all those who are now eligible for their additional booster. Those vaccinations will continue over the next few months, as those individuals become eligible when they reach six months from the date of their last dose. We continue to act on JCVI advice and we are planning for a number of scenarios, including an annual booster programme for those who are most at risk.

**Donald Cameron:** The First Minister will recall that, during a previous vaccine booster campaign, there were several issues with the roll-out in the Highlands and Islands, including incorrect details on letters that went out to the public about where people should go to get their booster. Given that the spring campaign is targeted at the most vulnerable groups in society, what action has the Scottish Government taken to prevent such mistakes from happening again?

**The First Minister:** We have had engagement and dialogue with NHS Highland about the previous experience, and I hope that that mistake will not be repeated. However, it is important to point out that, among JCVI priority groups, NHS Highland uptake has generally been very good, particularly among care home residents, 98 per cent of whom have received a booster or third dose. Therefore, the delivery roll-out has gone well but, of course, we take action to ensure that administrative difficulties are learned from and not repeated. That is the case with NHS Highland and any other health board.

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I welcome the programme for the roll-out of boosters in the spring, and I declare an interest, because I might be lucky enough to be in one of those cohorts. However, with the potential removal of mandatory face coverings and social distancing and the increasing prevalence of Covid infections, does the First Minister agree that lateral flow tests should remain funded and free on request? What discussions has the Scottish Government had with the UK Treasury in that regard?

**The First Minister:** Given that I know the age of people to whom we are now offering the additional

boosters, I am too scared to suggest whether Christine Grahame is likely to be included in those groups, so I will err on the side of caution on that front.

Testing is an important issue. As I set out in the chamber a couple of weeks ago, we are developing a managed transition plan to ensure that Scotland continues to have an effective, albeit proportionate, testing response and an effective surveillance infrastructure. Access to polymerase chain reaction and lateral flow tests will continue to be supported throughout the transition phase and they will remain free of charge for any purpose for which we continue to advise that testing is required.

The health secretary and I have been in regular dialogue with the UK testing programme but, unfortunately, we still do not have clarity on the impact on Scottish Government funding. We continue to engage urgently with the UK Government to gain that clarity and I hope that we will do so soon.

**The Presiding Officer:** Question 6 has been withdrawn. I will take a couple of brief supplementaries.

#### House Insulation (Western Isles)

**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** The First Minister will be aware that Tighean Innse Gall, the housing agency in the Western Isles, announced last week that it would no longer be able to administer Government-funded insulation projects. That is not for any lack of funding but because of PAS 2035 regulations on ventilation, which have caused demand for such schemes to collapse in the islands. Given that the Western Isles is almost certainly one of the most fuel-poor communities in Europe, what can the Scottish Government do to urgently ensure that those vital insulation installations continue?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** First, I understand that what is a new United Kingdom-wide set of retrofit standards has created challenges in the Western Isles. Over the past week, we have followed that up with the housing provider and the council, restating our commitment to finding a solution that enables them to continue to improve the warmth and ventilation of people's homes. I know that Dr Allan has raised the issue before and I believe that he has received a copy of the most recent correspondence.

Officials are also working with the British Standards Institution to further improve the new retrofit standards to ensure that circumstances in remote rural and island communities are taken fully into account. We value the housing work that is done in the Western Isles and hope that the

issue can be reconsidered now, in light of our further discussions, and that we will continue to see that expertise applied in the Western Isles.

### **Out-of-hours General Practitioner Services (Clackmannanshire)**

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Clackmannanshire's out-of-hours general practitioner service is in crisis. Late last year, assurances were sought regarding the situation and reassurance was given by the local MSP and the council group leader that NHS Forth Valley remained committed to providing services in Clackmannanshire. However, despite the rhetoric, the service is being eroded. GPs who had been appointed to the service are being told that they are no longer required and NHS Forth Valley regularly goes into code black. The situation is jeopardising the safety of patients. What action can be put in place to maintain, retain and sustain the service for the people of Clackmannanshire?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** That is an important issue. I am aware of the difficulty that NHS Forth Valley is facing and I have been assured that it is working hard to continue to provide a service and that it remains committed to doing so, which is important. The Scottish Government is currently working with NHS Forth Valley to review the service. That review is in its early stages, but the aim will be to ensure a safe and sustainable service moving forward. Officials are also following up with the chief executive as a matter of urgency to identify and secure solutions for the current situation and to develop longer-term plans. I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has asked this week for further details on how the board intends to address the shortages. I am sure that he would be happy to correspond with the member with further detail when he receives that.

### **Ukrainian Seasonal Workers (Support and Assistance)**

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Today's announcement from the United Kingdom Government on the Ukrainian humanitarian scheme is significant, but I agree with the First Minister that it does not go far enough. Ukrainian seasonal workers across Scotland, many of whom are my constituents in Fife, are still barred from bringing their family members to safety and still subject to the abhorrent no recourse to public funds conditions. What further support and assistance can the Scottish Government provide to Ukrainian seasonal workers who are still at the harsh end of the UK Government's hostile environment?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** We are trying to influence UK Government decisions on

the matter every day right now. Currently, the only route open for Ukrainians is the family reunification scheme. It is still too limited, in my view, and it is also, as we have painfully seen in recent days, horrendously bureaucratic. We are asking for that to be streamlined and asking for visa requirements to be waived, but we are also seeking assurances, which I hope will be given, that people coming here, whether they come under that route or the community sponsorship route that I hope will open in the next few days, will be able to work and have access to public funds, and that the Scottish Government will be able to work with our partners to ensure full support for everybody who comes here.

We continue to pursue those discussions with the UK Government. No country should have to be shamed into doing right by refugees. It is appalling that that is the case. As I said the other day, I hope that we get to a position in which we open not only our hearts to people in Ukraine—I think that we have all done that—but our doors, by allowing them to come here and ensuring that they have the support that they need to recover from their trauma and to try to rebuild their lives, while we all hope for peace in their country.

### **Deaths of Young People in Custody**

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** Jack McKenzie, Katie Allan, William Lindsay, Robert Wagstaff and Liam Kerr—those five young people all took their own lives at Polmont young offenders institution within the past five years. The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland believes that the conditions for children in prison were in breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the prohibition on torture, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment in article 3 of the European convention on human rights. How many more damning reports will be published and how many more young people will have to die before this shameful situation comes to an end?

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I make it very clear that we fully support a presumption against any people under the age of 18 being dealt with through the criminal justice system.

Since the shift towards prevention in 2007, there have been positive changes in youth justice. According to official statistics, at 30 June 2007, there were 221 young people under the age of 18 in custody. As of Tuesday this week, the figure was 15. Between 2008-09 and 2019-20, there was an 85 per cent reduction in the number of children and young people who were prosecuted in courts and a 93 per cent reduction in the number of 16 and 17-year-olds who were sentenced to custody.

However, there is more to do. In line with our commitment to keeping the Promise, we are committed to reducing that number further. We all

want Scotland's young people to be safeguarded within the youth justice system and kept out of young offenders institutions, and we will consult shortly on necessary legislative changes to underpin the changes in practice that I have just narrated.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes First Minister's question time. There will be a brief pause before members' business.

## Social Care Staff Pay

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-02777, in the name of Alex Rowley, on the long-standing underpayment of social care staff. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the belief that the longstanding underpayment of social care staff should end, and that action must be taken to address the inequalities across the health and social care sector in order to deliver greater dignity and respect within the profession; considers that the rate of pay for social care staff, including in the Mid Scotland and Fife region, does not come anywhere near to recognising the complexities and challenges of the work; further considers that the main underlying cause of recruitment and retention issues in the care sector is a result of poor pay and unequal terms and conditions; condemns what it considers the poor treatment faced by many care workers in the course of their employment, which, it believes, would not be acceptable in any other profession, and notes the calls for all workers being hired directly or indirectly to deliver key public services to be paid the proper rate for the work they undertake.

12:54

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I thank those members who made today's debate possible by signing my motion. In particular, I thank Willie Rennie and Murdo Fraser for signing the motion allowing the debate to take place.

I was surprised that the Greens refused to sign the motion, given the fact that the treatment of workers that it describes happens every day in every community across Scotland. The refusal of Scottish National Party members to sign what is a factual statement demonstrates the "stick your head in the sand and hope it fixes itself" approach to a growing crisis that is impacting on older people in Mid Scotland and Fife and across all of Scotland.

Let me be clear. I do not intend the debate to point blame at any political party—far from it. I am attempting to say that, unless we act now to address the unequal and unfair treatment of care workers, we will not fix the growing crisis in the provision of community care in Scotland.

It is a fact that care workers on the poorest terms and conditions and the lowest pay are walking away from being carers. Why would they stay when they are treated so poorly? When we look at the way that some care workers are treated, is it any wonder that firms cannot recruit new staff and are losing the staff that they have?

Some will say that there are labour shortages in many sectors and that Brexit has made those challenges even more difficult. That is true. Why,

then, would someone choose to work in a sector with very demanding jobs when those jobs have some of the worst terms and conditions in Scotland's labour market?

Last week, while giving evidence to members on the Public Audit Committee on his report into social care, Scotland's Auditor General, Stephen Boyle, said that improvements must be made urgently and warned that some things

"cannot wait until the establishment of a national care service."—[*Official Report, Public Audit Committee*, 3 March 2022; c 23.]

The committee heard that there are

"major problems with recruitment and retention"—[*Official Report, Public Audit Committee*, 3 March 2022; c 3.]

in the social care sector and that existing staff do not feel valued or properly paid.

I have talked to care workers who work an eight-hour shift but are paid for only five or six of those hours because they are not paid for the time that they use to travel between clients. They tell me that they often work 10 or 11 hours, because they are on a split shift with a two-hour break in the day, and, if their clients are miles away from where they live, they have to sit in their car during those hours. They are given a mileage allowance of 25p per mile for travel between clients, but they are not paid for their own time. They get 25p per mile when MSPs get 48p per mile, as is the case for the majority of public sector workers.

The difference between council staff working as carers and those in the private sector is astounding. It cannot be allowed to continue. Council staff will be paid for the hours that they work, not only for the hours that they spend in a person's house. They will get the same travel allowance as all public sector workers. How can it be that we have two sets of workers, doing the very same job and being paid by the public purse to deliver the same public services, being treated so differently?

As the Auditor General told members last week:

"The predominantly female workforce does not feel adequately rewarded or valued. There are also major problems with recruitment and retention ... The Scottish Government now needs to take action to improve working conditions for this vitally important workforce, otherwise it will not be able to deliver its ambitions for social care."—[*Official Report, Public Audit Committee*, 3 March 2022; c 3.]

On Tuesday, the Government launched a consultation on what is working well and what needs to change in social care. The health secretary, Humza Yousaf, said:

"I want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow old, with older people living full and rewarding lives, contributing to society and actively involved in their health and social care."

I am here today because older people are having their care packages cut. People in desperate need are not able to get a care package. The number of people who are trapped in hospital because they cannot get home as there is no care package to support them is increasing. What is the reason for that? The private companies that have been commissioned by the health and social care partnerships through a procurement process to deliver half-hour and hour blocks of care say that they can pay the staff only for what they are being paid for, which is the blocks of care that have been commissioned.

As a result, the care workers end up being treated poorly. That is the main point. The workers might be paid by private companies, but the money comes from Government. The contracting and commissioning is done through the Government's health and social care partnerships. Putting the work out to tender through the commissioning regime means that it is cheaper for the partnerships. Let me be clear that that practice, which results in appalling treatment of care workers, has been practised by all political parties when in power. It is not about trying to blame one political party; it is about recognising that care on the cheap does not and will not work.

I am well aware of the on-going debate about a national care service. I and my party will fully engage in that, but I stress that, unless we deal with the poor terms and conditions and low pay of care workers now, the problems will just get worse and worse, and older people will pay the price through their suffering. Let us deal with this issue and deal with it now.

13:01

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate and I recognise Alex Rowley for securing it. He has just outlined the complexity of the care system. My first job when I left school, before I started my nurse training, was in a care home. I know that that was a long time ago, but I remember the complexity of the work that we were trained for and asked to do.

I want to be clear from the outset that our social care workforce here in Scotland are absolutely valued. They do crucial work every day, often in very challenging circumstances. The Covid-19 pandemic has emphasised the need for our social care sector to be supported and valued.

Social care includes all types of personal and practical support for children, young people and adults who require it. It includes a wide range of roles, such as home carers, care home staff, activity and care co-ordinators, care managers, social work assistants, children and young

persons support workers, day centre staff, cleaners in care settings, admin support staff and many others. It is important to keep that in mind when discussing the sector. It is more complex than just being about one job, one role or one pay scale.

Social care is an investment in Scotland's people, society and economy. Many of us or our family members or friends will already use social care, and many of us will need to use it at some point in our lives.

The social care sector in Scotland employs approximately 200,000 people and has an estimated financial value to Scotland's economy of £3.4 billion. The sector is hugely important, and a lot of work is going on to improve it and the experience of its workforce.

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting people to stay at home or in a homely setting with maximum independence for as long as possible.

It is crucial to attract and retain the right people to work in social care, support and social work. That has not been helped by the withdrawal from the European Union, as Alex Rowley said.

We need to raise the status of social care as a profession. We have discussed that in the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, of which I am a member. To do that, the Scottish Government has embarked on the largest reform of adult social care in Scotland. Working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, people with lived experience, unpaid carers and other stakeholders, the Scottish Government has developed priorities that are currently being implemented when it comes to social care. They include

“a shared agreement on the purpose of adult social care support, with a focus on human rights”

and

“social care support that is centred on a person, how they want to live their life, and what is important to them”.

What matters to them is important. Another priority is

“changing attitudes towards social care support, so that it is seen as an investment in Scotland's people, society and economy”.

That is also valuable. A further priority is:

“strengthening the quality and consistency of co-production at local and national level”.

Derek Feeley's independent review of adult social care was a crucial step towards the creation of the national care service for Scotland. It will enable us to improve the experiences of everybody who works in or uses social care. The review was comprehensive and found many aspects of our adult social care system that are

worthy of celebration, such as the introduction of self-directed support. The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 is also important, as is the introduction of free personal care.

Given the aims that the Government has in mind, which also include the principles of fair work, we need to welcome the fact that the Scottish Government is taking issues forward, and I look forward to working further with the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee to look at what we can do. I also look forward to hearing from the minister in his response.

13:05

**Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con):** I thank Alex Rowley for securing what is an important debate, for his considered contribution and for his long-standing commitment to social care.

I start my speech by thanking everyone in the social care system for all the work that they have done and that they will go on to do. I also thank those unpaid carers—some very young and some much older; often family members—who look after many in our communities. They are unsung heroes.

We are all accustomed to paying tribute to the valuable work that is done by our national health service staff, but our care and support workers do not always get the public recognition that they deserve. However, never has our front-line workforce demonstrated such extraordinary dedication, compassion and selfless commitment.

As Alex Rowley said, the Government urgently needs to address the social care crisis. Pay and conditions are part of the solution to that crisis. Heroic staff are overwhelmed, and care is still being provided on the cheap. Staff went above and beyond during the pandemic, but they have not been given the leadership or the appreciation that they deserve, and people who require care services are suffering as a result.

Audit Scotland's report on social care, published in January, should act as a wake-up call. The report revealed a social care system in which

“Staff are not adequately valued, engaged, or rewarded for their vitally important role.”

Audit Scotland also reported that the average hourly rate across all care in Scotland is just £9.79. We must also bear in mind the fact that the new £10.50 rate will not apply to all who work in social care.

We must remember that 15 per cent of social care workers work unpaid overtime, 13 per cent of the workforce work more than 50 hours a week, and two in 10 are not on permanent contracts. The industry is undermined by long hours, low pay and low recognition, which means that care providers

struggle to keep staff. It cannot be right that supermarkets and shops often pay more and appear to offer a greater sense of career progression. That is wrong and must change.

It angers staff when they are described as low skilled when, in fact, their roles are highly skilled and complex. They have to understand medical needs, deliver medication and possess soft skills such as empathy and tact.

It is clear that there are problems of recruitment difficulties, rising sickness absences and high vacancy levels. The SNP's solution to that, in part, is to develop a national care service. However, far from being a positive step, that could be perceived as a direct assault on local government by removing accountability and, potentially, undermining patient care. Instead of reorganising the chairs on the deck, ministers must now urgently and meaningfully engage with carers, staff, those who work in the sector and those who need support.

Dr Donald Macaskill, the chief executive of Scottish Care, has warned that the industry is at risk of disintegration and collapse. We simply cannot wait for a national care service.

I accept that additional funding has been made available. In 2024-25, Scotland will benefit from an additional £1.1 billion as a result of the health and social care levy. However, if the Government is really committed to ensuring that every person receives the care that they need in order to be provided with the dignity that they deserve, it must take urgent action to address the needs of the workforce. That means better workforce planning. We need to show the people who show an exceptional level of personal commitment and accountability that they are valued when it comes to pay and conditions. It is time to respect and reward those who work in social care and to end providing care on the cheap, as Alex Rowley rightly said. Too often, staff are on the forgotten front line. We look to the Government to change that.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Paul O'Kane, who joins us remotely.

13:10

**Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** I thank my colleague Alex Rowley for securing this extremely important debate and for his powerful speech outlining the issues. I pay tribute to all our care workers across Scotland, who work, day in and day out, to look after and care for older people, people who have disabilities and people with long-term and life-limiting conditions. Their contribution is immense and their work brings dignity, respect and, indeed, happiness to the lives of so many and their families.

Caring is an essential service in our communities, but it is more than that. It is a vocation; a role that dedicated and compassionate people offer themselves to—and we know from the figures they are very often women.

Colleagues might not know this, but, when I was a student, I worked in a care home. I was an activities organiser, which means that, among other things, I can call a really mean—*[Inaudible.]*—bingo. The experience taught me a lot about older people and the challenges of living with an illness such as dementia. Although I played a small part in a wider team, it was nothing compared with the contribution of the care staff: they taught me the most.

I was always in awe of the dedication and patience of the care staff and the genuine care with which they supported the people living in the home. They took time to get to know them and their families, found ways to brighten their day with stories or songs, fiercely protected their dignity and independence, and shared with families all the news and important moments that they may have missed during the day or week.

In my job prior to being elected to the Parliament, I had the honour of helping to tell some of the most amazing stories about personal assistants at Enable Scotland and the work that they did during lockdown. That work included recreating at home the Friday nights spent at the favourite social club of the person whom they cared for, arranging for local pipers to play outside people's homes and linking people up with their loved ones via digital methods. They went above and beyond because they cared.

Respect for their work and the rates of pay never matched what those staff gave, despite the efforts of some employers—particularly in the third sector—and they still do not today. That should shame us all. We must acknowledge the skilled and vocational nature of the work and pay people what they deserve, as the motion calls for.

I was struck by the recent Common Weal report highlighting the current failings in our care system and calling for ambitious reforms with the advent of a national care service to deliver the changes that we need. As I have said in the chamber many times, this has to be about values, not structures, and those values begin with our people—the people who deliver care across Scotland.

We do not have to wait—we can act now. Scottish Labour has joined our trade unions—particularly my union, the GMB—in calling for a £15-an-hour minimum wage for care workers. We advocated for that in the last two budget processes, but it has been rejected in favour of a 48p rise. If we are serious about honouring what was said in the pandemic about the value of

carers, who were called “Covid heroes”, that must be matched by our action.

There is more to do. We need to provide better support for the wellbeing of care staff through breaks and the supply of food, rest areas and support services; more standardised qualifications that can be accredited and recognised across the care system; apprenticeships in care, which would show that it is a valued and important career choice for our younger people; and clearer progression routes for workers, so that they can get on.

It is clear that we owe all our carers across the country a huge debt of gratitude. We trust them with the most precious thing in our lives—our family members—in often difficult and challenging circumstances, so we should offer them a rate of pay and a set of conditions that meet that huge responsibility and reflect their talent and dedication.

Labour members will continue to urge the Government to act, while offering our own vision of what care should be in Scotland.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Gillian Mackay, who joins us remotely.

**The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care (Kevin Stewart):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. It was quite difficult to hear Mr O’Kane. I picked up the bulk of what he said, but it was not easy. If we are to hear from Ms Mackay online, could we try to do something to boost the sound a little bit, please?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you for your point of order, minister. I noted that the sound was patchy. I am sure that the broadcasting unit has heard your plea, and I hope that it acts on it. Let us see how we go with Gillian Mackay, who is there and ready.

13:15

**Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I will try to use my outside voice, just in case the sound is still quiet.

Care workers perform an extremely challenging, complex and skilled role. They look after our loved ones, often when they are unwell, vulnerable or coming to the end of their lives. I offer my heartfelt thanks to care workers for all that they do.

For too long, the enormous contribution of care workers to our society has gone unrecognised. They were classed as low skilled by the United Kingdom Government, and we all know that that is simply not true.

It was international women’s day on Tuesday, and the theme was “break the bias”. In light of that, it is worth noting, as many other members

have done, that with women making up approximately 85 per cent of the workforce, the failure to properly appreciate social care workers is linked to how we value caring roles, which are traditionally performed by women. I was struck by the words of Fiona Collie from Carers UK, who said in evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee:

“We often talked about the important role that the national health service plays, but we talked less about the significant role that social care plays in maintaining people’s independence and enabling them to live good and positive lives ... The role of social care has been very hidden.”—[*Official Report, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee*, 22 February 2022; c 2.]

It is right that social care has now become a national focus—that is long overdue. The pandemic may have highlighted the undervaluation of care workers, but that has been a problem since long before any of us had heard of Covid 19. Care staff were often working in difficult conditions before the pandemic, contending with low pay, long hours and insecure work, but for the past two years, they have also had to deal with a dangerous virus that has devastated care homes.

The interim findings of a workforce survey conducted by Scottish Care were published in September. One finding was that the number of hours that staff were working was markedly high, with increasing pressure on them to maintain the same quality of care while working longer hours. Almost 50 per cent of organisations relayed that their staff were working more than 35 hours a week. I am extremely concerned about the physical and mental wellbeing of care workers who have been under such sustained pressure. As we seek to help social care recover from the pandemic, we must prioritise workplace wellbeing. Some care workers may have been traumatised by their experiences and they must be able to access mental health support when they need it.

As we enter the recovery period, we are also creating a new national care service, the cornerstone of which will be improved terms and conditions for staff, with the Greens and the Scottish Government committing to deliver ethical commissioning that promotes fair work. That is vital. The report “Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland” highlighted that

“The current approach to commissioning and procurement is characterised by mistrust, conflict and market forces.”

At the moment, commissioning and procurement processes are largely focused on cost, which can squeeze pay and conditions. Ethical commissioning would shift the emphasis from cost and cover a range of factors, including workforce terms and conditions, investment by providers in training and support for staff, and the

quality of care. We must ensure that staff can access the training that they need, as well as opportunities for career development and progression. That will be key to improving both recruitment and retention. That is why we have also committed to a system of national collective bargaining, through which we will deliver improved pay, terms and conditions.

The increase in the minimum wage for adult social care staff to £10.50 is an initial step in improving pay for care workers, but we recognise that the work is far from over, and we will continue towards delivering pay that recognises the incredible work that care staff do.

Once again, I extend my thanks to everyone working in the social care sector. We recognise that care workers' pay, terms and conditions must continue to improve. We will continue to work towards that, and we will create a national care service in which staff are properly valued and respected.

13:19

**The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care (Kevin Stewart):** I thank Mr Rowley for his considered contribution today, and for the tone and tenor of what he outlined. If we took that approach more often in the Parliament, we would do a lot better, so I thank Mr Rowley for that.

I thank the social care workforce for their remarkable work in providing critical and invaluable support to people across our country. Although a lot of attention has been paid in the debate to the social care workers who deliver care, like Emma Harper, I also acknowledge the domestic, cleaning, maintenance and administration teams whose vital work keeps these critical services running. Therefore, I thank every member of the social care workforce, including two of my nieces who are social care workers—although one of them is currently having a wee bit of time off on maternity leave.

I thank Mr Rowley for bringing this important debate to the chamber, and I thank members for their contributions. However, I object to the idea that the Scottish Government does not value the social care workforce, because we do, and we are fully committed to improving pay and conditions for the predominantly female workforce. The social care system as it stands is complex, with more than 1,200 employers and huge variation across Scotland, as Derek Feeley acknowledged in his report "Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland". Despite that, we are taking action, with partners in local government, to make improvements now.

Since 2016, the Scottish Government has provided funding to ensure that adult social care

workers who are delivering direct care are paid at least the real living wage. We have led the way across the UK in ensuring that those workers have that minimum rate of pay, and the Welsh Government is following our lead by adopting that policy from April this year.

However, we are now going beyond that. In the past few months, we have committed to deliver two significant increases in pay. A mid-year uplift was delivered in December, which meant that adult social care workers' pay increased to at least £10.02 per hour—an increase of more than 5 per cent. In April, the minimum hourly rate for those providing adult social care will rise to £10.50 per hour—a further increase of 4.8 per cent. For a full-time adult social care worker on the minimum rate, the increase to £10.50 per hour represents an uplift of more than £1,600 over the next financial year.

The £10.50 hourly rate in Scotland is 60p higher than the real living wage rate of £9.90 per hour that will apply to workers in Wales from April. In addition, Scotland's minimum rate is significantly higher than the national living wage rate that is paid to many social care workers in England and Northern Ireland, as workers there receive £1 an hour less than workers in Scotland.

Of course, those are minimum rates of pay; Mr Rowley is right to point out that some folk are paid more, and that there sometimes seems to be an unfairness in that regard. We have heard from the Labour Party and others about proposals to increase pay to £15 per hour. However, that would cost £1.75 billion. We need to have a discussion on how we can do better while being realistic about what is achievable, because we cannot spend money twice, which is what some of the suggestions would mean. I am more than willing to speak to Mr Rowley and others on those points, and we need to go further, but we all have to grasp the reality that we will have to work through some of this and find the money, because we cannot spend that money twice. My door is open to Mr Rowley and others to bring forward any credible ideas that they may have.

**Craig Hoy:** I thank the minister for his commitment to fair pay for the sector. When the Government is changing pay rates in social care, can he tell us what assessment it makes of the issue of differentials, where there is an impact on other care home workers? The Government may not reimburse private sector providers, in particular, for those increases, which will then feed through the system.

**Kevin Stewart:** There is a huge complexity to all of this. The two recent pay rises do not come without difficulties. What we have to do, in partnership with others, is ensure that the money that the Government has provided actually gets

into the pockets and purses of the workers. Given that there are 1,200 different employers, that is not as easy as it sounds. The discussions that we have had with COSLA, local government, health and social care partnerships and others, including third sector and private sector employers, have thrown up other anomalies that we have to work through. In the very near future, I will be having meetings to discuss what has happened and the impacts on other sectors. We are looking at the issue that the member raised, too, but, as it stands, at this moment in time, it is immensely complex.

Mr Rowley was right to highlight the different forms of procurement, some of which certainly did not happen when he and I were in local government. There has been too much emphasis on getting value for money instead of ensuring quality services for people, including by paying staff well and having a workforce with the freedom and autonomy to do what is right for the clients they visit and care for on a daily basis.

That is why the ethical procurement that Gillian Mackay mentioned is so important. We have to get this absolutely right. Ethical procurement includes fair work, but I would point out that it is not just about that. Caring is a profession, and, in order to attract new—and young—people into it, we must ensure that they see an opportunity to advance in their careers. That is why it is so important that we have the right apprenticeships in place and that we enable people to continuously improve, get qualifications and swap careers between social care, social work and the NHS if and when it is right to do so. I am committed to doing all of that.

We must build a social care system for the future that has human rights at its very heart and that takes a person-centred approach, and we must include in all of that fair pay and fair work for the people who work in it. We will continue to engage with our national care service proposals to get that right. However, we cannot wait for the national care service itself to make some of those improvements. In that respect, I will continue to talk to COSLA, which has been very positive with the Government as we have looked at what more we can do.

The Government is absolutely committed to improving the experience of the workforce through fair work practices. We deeply value and respect the vital role played by social care workers in our communities. Let us be honest: without them, life over the past two years would have been very different for many people. My plaudits go to them, and my door is open to others to see how we can work together to improve things further on this front.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate. I suspend the meeting until 2.15 pm.

13:28

*Meeting suspended.*

14:15

*On resuming—*

## Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** Good afternoon. I remind members of the Covid-related measures and that face coverings should be worn while moving around the chamber and the wider Holyrood campus.

The next item of business is Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body questions. As ever, I invite members who wish to ask a supplementary question to indicate that during the relevant question. If questions can be succinct, with answers to match, that will allow us to make more progress.

### Scottish Parliament Building (Lighting)

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, in light of the symbols of solidarity seen across the world, whether it will, and has the equipment necessary to, light the Scottish Parliament building in the colours of the Ukraine flag at night. (S6O-00860)

**Claire Baker (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** The demonstrations of solidarity with the people of Ukraine across Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom are important and show that we support their struggle.

The corporate body recognises that the Scottish Parliament wishes to play its part. In response to the events in Ukraine, the Presiding Officer instructed officials of the Parliament to fly the Ukrainian flag. That started on Monday 28 February. The Parliament held a debate in the chamber and showed its solidarity. Unfortunately, the Parliament does not have the technical infrastructure to illuminate the building at this point in time.

**John Mason:** There might be other occasions when we want the Parliament to make a statement. Nowadays, lighting up a building in the colours of a particular organisation or country is the expected way to do that. The Queen Elizabeth hospital in Glasgow, for example, has that facility. I ask the corporate body to reconsider the matter and examine what the cost might be.

**Claire Baker:** We work closely with Poppyscotland and, as part of that relationship, the Parliament has been illuminated. We had then to hire equipment.

We want to ensure that any displays that we do are respectful to the organisation concerned. There are some technical difficulties with lighting

this building—its construction and design make it difficult to project things on to it—but we are happy to take the matter away and look at it again. The costs previously seemed prohibitive, but I take on board John Mason’s comments about the need for Parliament to show connection with certain organisations. Lighting up the building is an effective way to do it.

### Scots Language

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what action it is taking to advance and support the use of the Scots language across the Scottish Parliament campus. (S6O-00858)

**Christine Grahame (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** Fur historical forby cultural reasons, the Scots Pairlamentary Corporate Body leid policy taks tent o the yaise o Scots.

For historical and cultural reasons, the SPCB language policy recognises the use of Scots. We support MSPs in using Scots in a number of ways: in the chamber, in committees, with constituents and when taking their oath or making their affirmation. For example, MSPs can use Scots in the chamber and committees. If it is just a few words and the meaning can be readily understood or the MSP immediately translates, that can readily be accommodated. For more lengthy speeches, the prior agreement of the Presiding Officer or convener is required.

**Emma Harper:** Muckle thanks tae Christine Grahame fur thon repon. Oor Pairlament’s committee reports and ither warks are awready available, by request, in Gaelic, British Sign Language or ither accessible formats—which is, o coorse, walcome. As wark is gan on tae support fowk tae yaise their ain leid—that it is gree’d that they can yaise and that is yin o oor three national leids—wull the SPCB commit tae explorin whither the executive summaries o committee reports could be publishit in Scots, as we pit a refreshed focus on Scots in oor ain national Pairlament?

If ye want me tae translate it intae English, Presiding Officer, Ah wull.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I think that that is fine.

Christine Grahame, do you want a translation, or are you okay?

**Christine Grahame:** I think that I shall cope. We shall find out.

As is reflected in our language policy, all bills, delegated legislation and their accompanying documents are in English. When an MSP or a committee considers that there are good reasons for translation into a language other than English, it can be requested through the clerks. However, I

am not clear whether that covers executive summaries of reports. I will discuss that with my colleagues, confirm it and return to the member when I am clear.

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** Would the corporate body hae a thocht tae the idea that, if a motion is pit in in the mither twang o the member—fur exemple, the Doric—or the subject o the motion is the mither twang, wir practice the noo is flipped ower so that the mither twang motion is first and nae the English een?

Ah can translate if needed.

**Christine Grahame:** At the moment, I am afraid that they are published first in English and then in another language. Scots includes the Doric—indeed, it is a range of dialects such as Lallans and Scotch, as well as more local dialects such as Buchan, Dundonian, Glesga and Shetland—so it is more complicated. Nevertheless, Scots, which includes the Doric, continues to be recognised by the SPCB.

With a languages bill expected from the Scottish Government, we will have to allow that political process to progress. The SPCB will reflect any legislative or policy changes to its operations, including the *Official Report* and the *Business Bulletin*.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you. As Neil Gray would confirm, Orcadian will also be recognised.

### Constituency and Regional Offices

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body how many members have been unable to establish a constituency or regional office. (S6O-00821)

**Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** And in English. It goes without saying that all members who are entitled to a constituency office must be able to find a route to access one. Currently, four members have yet to secure an office and are still looking for one. Most members have secured, or are in the process of securing, either an office or a second office. A small number have decided not to have an office.

**Miles Briggs:** It is my understanding that both constituency and regional members of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh and the Lothians have been the last to be able to source office spaces. That has also presented issues with regard to the need for individual members to meet the additional access and security requirements that the corporate body is now suggesting that all MSPs take into account. Will the corporate body investigate a potential Edinburgh weighting for allowances? Will it look at how we can utilise all our allowances in the way we would like to so that

we can represent our constituents in the Parliament?

**Jackson Carlaw:** The corporate body has had fairly extensive discussions about office accommodation. We recognise that there are variable office accommodation costs in the different regions and cities in Scotland and that those costs are not equal. We also understand that there is a particular issue in Edinburgh and the Lothians and that costs there are particularly high. We recognise that and have tried to build additional funding into the scheme. We are prepared, where it can be evidenced that reasonable premises can be found, to seek to identify additional funding that can be allocated to assist members in that process. There have been no such applications so far for this session. Two such applications were considered in previous sessions.

We understand the nature of the issue and I know that officials are keen to work with members who are still unable, or are struggling, to find appropriate accommodation in order to identify and secure that at the earliest possible date. There is no doubt or debate that that should be possible and that that issue should be resolved.

#### Scottish Parliament Crèche

**Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what progress has been made on reopening the Scottish Parliament crèche. (S6O-00857)

**Claire Baker (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** The Scottish Parliament originally established a crèche to improve public access and engagement for those with young children. In session 2, that service was extended to parliamentary passholders. The crèche closed in March 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions, and in October 2020 the corporate body agreed to temporarily discontinue the crèche contract due to the on-going pandemic. I am pleased to say that, at a recent SPCB meeting, we agreed that, as the building reopens to the public and as working from home measures are eased, we will immediately procure a new crèche contract.

**Foyso Choudhury:** As the corporate body is aware, in the past the Parliament has celebrated the provision of a high-quality crèche service in the building, which allows parents and carers to access parliamentary business and to meet more easily with members of the Scottish Parliament. In October 2020, the SPCB committed to having a new contract in place as soon as possible at the start of the new parliamentary session. What steps are being taken to speed up that process, including consulting not just members but constituents, in the interests of supporting wider engagement with the Parliament?

**Claire Baker:** I recognise the value of the crèche—I used it when my daughter was pre-school—and I recognise how important it is for visitors and constituents. We have consulted passholders in the Parliament, and I thank everybody who responded to the survey. The procurement process will take around 12 months, but anything that we can do to shorten that process and get the crèche open as soon as possible, we will do.

#### Ventilation in Constituency Offices

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it will provide an update on whether it will support MSPs to install ventilation solutions in their constituency offices with funding outwith the office cost provision. (S6O-00859)

**Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** Apologies, Presiding Officer—I have realised that I am slightly behind in my notes.

SPCB staff have held a drop-in session on ventilation guidance and offered a one-to-one consultation to look at each local office's circumstances and provide recommendations to improve ventilation where it is needed. So far, 12 offices have been provided with recommendations and a simple specification to help them discuss ventilation with their landlord, who may well be an appropriate route to underwrite the funding of any alteration, but also, if required, to seek two quotes for the work. Three offices have so far provided quotes to officials.

A deadline of 31 March has been set for the return of quotations from local offices. The SPCB will then consider whether additional support is needed for ventilation solutions in local offices or whether such costs can be met within the current office cost provision limits of the members' expenses scheme. However, we would quite like to see the scope of the particular requirements before finally deciding on that point.

**Stuart McMillan:** I confirm that I am one of the three who have got quotes and sent them back in. I know that every single office will be different and will have a different set of requirements. I ask the SPCB to be as timeous as possible when it takes the decision on the matter at some point post 31 March, so that any installation that can, and needs to, take place can happen as quickly as possible to help protect staff and any constituent who comes into the office.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I can give that assurance. We understand that many MSPs have constituency offices that are in fact shop units. It is normally regarded as ventilation if the door opens and shuts, because it is a shop. Obviously, when the

space is used as a constituency office, the door is not opening and closing in that way, so we appreciate that ventilation issues accrue.

If members who are pursuing those opportunities can ensure that they have two quotations so that we have an idea of the scale of the demand, we will respond as quickly as we can to facilitate the introduction of appropriate ventilation measures.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 6 has been withdrawn.

### **Policy on Party Affiliation in Publications**

**Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body whether it will consider amending its policy on party identity or affiliation appearing on publications paid for by the SPCB. (S6O-00854)

**Jackson Carlaw (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body):** Publications that are funded from parliamentary resources must be factual and relate to the member's work as a parliamentarian and must not be party political in nature. Therefore, the SPCB's policy on members' publications and the policy on the use of the Scottish Parliament corporate identity by MSPs do not permit the use of political party logos or emblems on parliamentary-funded publications, which helps to ensure that parliamentary-funded publications remain non-party political in nature and are not confused in any way with party-funded political publications.

However, under the policy, members can include their party affiliation in the format that is laid out in the policy—member of the Scottish Parliament for X constituency or Y region, followed by their party in brackets. There are no plans to review the policy at this time. That dispensation is not granted to MPs, for example.

Members' publications are for many an essential means of communication—they certainly are in my case, in the absence of any local newspaper—and the one opportunity that there is to communicate with all constituents. For them to be seen to be compromised in a party-political way would undermine public confidence and trust, and there would be calls, which would be much more difficult to withstand, for us to end the ability of MSPs to send out annual reports.

**Jeremy Balfour:** I agree with the member completely, but there seems to be some confusion, because, when I put my report in this time, the "Conservative" title was taken out and was not allowed to go through by the officials.

I wonder whether that could be looked at again and absolute clarity given, particularly for regional MSPs. I think that about 40 or 50 people

responded to me saying, "Which political party are you from?" It would be helpful for them to know which party the seven regional MSPs come from. If that could be clarified and some information could be sent to regional MSPs, I would be grateful.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I will certainly take that issue back. Some members are particularly canny in identifying their party-political affiliations, because their leaflet is bright yellow, blue, red or green, and that gives it away slightly.

Notwithstanding that, it is absolutely the case that all MSPs should be able, within the context of the annual report, to identify the region or constituency that they represent, followed by the party affiliation in brackets. I do not know why that would not have been allowed in that instance and I am happy to take that experience back to officials to get some understanding as to what might have happened.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** With apologies to those members whom I was not able to call, that concludes SPCB question time. Before we move to the next item of business, I will allow a short pause for members on the front benches to change places.

## Portfolio Question Time

### Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

14:31

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** We will be tight for time over the course of the afternoon, so we will press on to the next item of business, which is questions on the portfolio of constitution, external affairs and culture. Members who wish to ask a supplementary question should press the request-to-speak button or type R in the chat function during the relevant question.

I call question 1. [*Interruption.*]

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I am sorry for being late, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** What you lose in Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body questions, you gain back very quickly in constitution questions.

#### Platinum Jubilee (Support for Communities and Organisations)

**1. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is offering communities and organisations across Scotland to mark the Queen's platinum jubilee. (S6O-00838)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** I am delighted to hear the question. The Queen's platinum jubilee is a significant milestone and the Scottish Government welcomes the celebrations that will take place across the country throughout this special year.

Jubilee celebrations are commonly community led and Scottish Government officials are ensuring that lord lieutenants, community councils and local authorities are informed of opportunities to be involved in the celebrations.

**Rachael Hamilton:** The cabinet secretary will be aware that the United Kingdom Government has funded the Queen's Platinum Jubilee fund 2022 and, crucially, that £70,000 has been earmarked for Scottish Borders Council. What specific support is the Scottish Government offering to local communities, local authorities and charities, to help their celebrations of that magnificent milestone in Her Majesty the Queen's reign?

**Angus Robertson:** Scottish Government officials are working with Her Majesty's personal

representatives in Scotland, the lord lieutenants, to promote the community-led events that are so much a part of the historical celebrations of royal jubilees. We are also engaged with the Queen's Green Canopy, via our executive agency, Forest and Land Scotland. I would be delighted to hear about anything particular that is planned for Scottish Borders Council, as well as any suggestions about how those particular projects can be further supported.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 2 was not lodged.

#### Independence Referendum Bill (Legal Advice)

**3. Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on any legal advice it has sought for its proposed independence referendum bill. (S6O-00840)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** It is the long-established convention of this and previous Governments that legal advice is not disclosed, other than in exceptional circumstances. That reflects the public interest in the provision of free and frank legal advice and maintains the right to confidentiality of communications between legal advisers and clients.

**Donald Cameron:** I have a very specific supplementary question. I am not asking for the content of any legal advice, but I am asking whether the Scottish Government has taken legal advice—internally or externally, from the Lord Advocate or any lawyer—on the question whether its proposed independence referendum is within the legislative competence of this Parliament. Can he answer yes or no?

**Angus Robertson:** I will rest on the answer that I previously gave to the learned gentleman, who, as a member of the Faculty of Advocates, is well aware of custom and practice in relation to the convention on legal advice. I will not depart from that tradition today, although I am grateful for the opportunity that he gave me to do so.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There are two brief supplementaries on the legal advice.

**Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that, if members of the Opposition are so keen to discuss the ongoing preparatory work for an independence referendum, they should join us in calling on the United Kingdom Government to honour the democratic mandate granted by the Scottish people, so that an open and fully-informed dialogue on the opportunities of independence can begin as soon as possible?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, that question was not directly related to the legal advice, so please give a brief response.

**Angus Robertson:** I agree; and I welcome the point raised by my colleague. Seventy-two of the 129 MSPs elected to the chamber were elected on manifestos that commit them, and this Parliament and Government, to holding a referendum on Scottish independence during this parliamentary session. The Bute House agreement reached between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party confirms and strengthens that clear mandate. It would be disappointing if democratically elected members of this or any other Parliament sought to undermine the democratically expressed wish of the electorate in elections, as was cast last year.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** It is extraordinary that the cabinet secretary cannot even acknowledge whether he has sought advice—not what that advice is, but whether he has even asked for that advice. I think that the Parliament deserves to know whether the Government has done its due diligence and carried out all the right preparations on a legal basis. I am not asking what that advice is, but whether he has even bothered to ask. Will he give us an answer? Has he asked for and has he received advice?

**Angus Robertson:** Forgive me—I do not know whether Willie Rennie came into portfolio question time without having heard my earlier answer, because it has not changed. Rather than reading out the question that he wrote before arriving, perhaps he could have listened to the answer that I gave earlier. I rest by it.

### Proposed Legislation

4. **Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will ensure that any proposed legislation in the constitution, external affairs and culture portfolio is brought forward in a fair and transparent manner. (S6O-00841)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** All legislation that the Government brings forward will continue to be of the highest standard and open to the full scrutiny of the Parliament.

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** Unfortunately, that response and the responses that he gave to my colleague Donald Cameron and to Willie Rennie strike at the very heart of fairness and transparency and suggest that what he says is not the case. If the cabinet secretary is to maintain the ridiculous position that, in his own Government's words, it is

“not in the public interest”

for the people of Scotland to know about even the existence of advice on the legality of its proposals, it is clear that secrecy has trumped transparency. I will give the cabinet secretary another opportunity to answer. Has the Scottish Government taken legal advice on its plans for another referendum? If he still refuses to say, will he at least tell us whether it will spend taxpayers' money defending and trying to hide that information from the public this time around, as it did in 2013?

**Angus Robertson:** It is a curious thing that we now have a third member who did not listen to the answer to the question—*[Interruption.]*

Forgive me, Presiding Officer. Give me a moment so that I can answer the question in exactly the same way as I already have. With your indulgence, it reads as follows: It is the long-established convention of this and previous Governments that legal advice is not disclosed, other than in exceptional circumstances.—*[Interruption.]*

Instead of barracking, members on the Conservative benches should listen to the answer, having asked for one.

That reflects the public interest in the provision of free and frank legal advice and maintains the right to confidentiality of communications between legal advisers and clients.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you. There is a supplementary from Kenneth Gibson.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that Tory MSPs should be more concerned about the abysmal record of their own party and UK party leader? In the past three years alone, that has included illegally proroguing the Westminster Parliament, breaking procurement regulations—

**Jamie Halcro Johnston:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. As much as I enjoy Kenny Gibson's interventions on these sorts of things, surely they should be relevant to the question that was asked.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Gibson was in the middle of his question. I am sure that he will tie it back in to the substance of the relevant question. Mr Gibson, you may continue.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Do you wish me to start the question again?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I wish you to tie it in to the question to which this is a supplementary, Mr Gibson.

**Kenneth Gibson:** —breaking procurement regulations by handing out PPE manufacturing contracts to unsuitable companies at inflated

prices and breaking Covid regulations, all without any transparency.

**Angus Robertson:** Yes, I agree.

What with the shifting sands of explaining parties in Downing Street, the unknown costs of their union unit—or, as it is now called, the Union Strategy Committee—which are buried within a headline figure of £81 million, and the courts finding their Covid contracts going to party supporters “unlawful”, the lack of interest of Conservative members appears to follow that old adage of, “Do as we say, not as we do.” As is so often the case, the double standards of the Tories help to make the case for independence.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Questions 5 and 6 are grouped.

### Ukraine (Support and Aid)

5. **Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it has made on identifying support and aid that it can provide for people in Ukraine and Ukrainians leaving their country and seeking refuge. (S6O-00842)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Neil Gray):** We have provided £4 million in humanitarian aid as part of global humanitarian efforts: £1 million has been allocated to the British Red Cross and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund; £2 million has been allocated via the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal that has been launched in Scotland; and £1 million has been allocated to UNICEF to focus on protecting children.

Our first donation of medical supplies arrived in Poland on Thursday. The second donation, which left Scotland on Friday, included more than 130,000 items of medical supplies. I was fortunate enough to be able to see that shipment leave Eurocentral. I thank everyone who helped to turn that around so quickly.

We continue to press the United Kingdom Government to waive visa requirements for Ukrainian nationals and to offer immediate refuge and sanctuary for those who may be displaced. Today’s Home Office announcement does not go far enough. Scotland is ready to offer a warm welcome to people who are fleeing Ukraine.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I thank the minister for that update. Today’s Home Office announcement of a streamlined virtual visa application process for Ukrainians is positive, but does the minister agree that what we really need is a fundamental shift by the UK Government to change the rules, not just the processes? Ukrainians still have to apply for visas.

We have many seasonal workers in Scotland, who cannot even bring direct family here. A massive humanitarian crisis is faced by millions of Europeans, and the Home Office’s response has been poor and pitiful. Does the minister agree that the people of Scotland expect to help and that the Ukrainians who seek shelter deserve so much better?

**Neil Gray:** Yes, I do. I support the passionate way in which Fiona Hyslop made her case. The UK Government’s response has been an international embarrassment. The UK’s offer to Ukrainians is not a refugee route, but a bureaucratic family immigration route that is leaving thousands out in the cold—literally—queueing outside visa application centres.

Progress is being made, but waiving visa requirements and introducing a comprehensive settlement programme would resolve the issues, if only there were the political will to do so. There seems to be no one, apart from the Home Secretary, who does not see the need for more urgent action.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 6 comes from Mark Griffin, who joins us remotely.

### Ukrainian Refugees (Accommodation)

6. **Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what work it has undertaken with its partners, and funding it has identified, to accommodate refugees from Ukraine. (S6O-00843)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Neil Gray):** Scotland has a proud history of welcoming refugees and people seeking sanctuary from war and violence. The Scottish Government and Scotland’s local authorities have made it clear to the United Kingdom Government that we stand ready to offer refuge and sanctuary, where necessary, for those who may be displaced. We are therefore working with the Home Office, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security that they need to rebuild their lives.

The UK Government’s current proposals to support Ukrainian refugees via community sponsorship routes are insufficient, and we are still waiting for full details of how that will work. We continue to urge the UK Government to develop a comprehensive resettlement programme to ensure that Ukrainian citizens can be provided with the safety and security that they need to rebuild their lives.

**Mark Griffin:** The glacial response of the UK Government has been absolutely appalling. Yesterday, the Scottish Government’s Cabinet

Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government said:

“we are working at pace to ensure that we stand ready to receive people”.—[*Official Report*, 9 March 2022; c 25.]

Given that the Home Office has finally said that it will ease entry requirements—although it is clear that it is not easing them far enough—can the minister confirm that accommodation and homes are being booked, capacity in schools has been identified and funding is ready so that we can welcome Ukrainians into communities here, as it is clear that we cannot wait for the UK Government to develop a resettlement programme?

**Neil Gray:** Mark Griffin is absolutely right: the glacial pace at which things have been moving is desperate; it is an international embarrassment. I can confirm that we are working on all the aspects that he raises as potential routes to ensuring that we can provide safe, secure, long-term and sustainable sanctuary to people who are fleeing Putin’s war in Ukraine.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There are two brief supplementary questions on the topic.

**Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members’ interests: I am a serving councillor in East Ayrshire.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has added the voice of Scotland’s local authorities to that of the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament in calling on the Home Secretary to step up the United Kingdom’s resettlement programme for Ukrainian refugees, citing the expertise of Scotland’s strategic migration partnership in supporting refugees and migrants and integrating them into our communities.

Notwithstanding today’s announcement about digital visas, will the minister comment on the Home Secretary’s claim that the UK is “doing everything possible” to speed up the remarkably slow roll-out of the visa scheme to Ukrainian refugees, especially in light of the full willingness of COSLA and our councils to play their part in Europe-wide efforts?

**Neil Gray:** For “doing everything possible”, read “doing the least that they feel they can get away with”. We continue to call on the UK Government to urgently develop a proper resettlement programme. One reason why the Syrian resettlement programme was successful was that it was a comprehensive one in which partnerships worked to support people in need. I am proud that all 32 Scottish local authorities participated in the programme, welcoming more than 3,300 refugees into their communities. People in families were able to settle and make Scotland their home.

I want to see that again. Therefore, it is vital that rapid, safe and legal routes be established immediately and that the millions fleeing war are given sanctuary through such programmes. Scotland stands ready to offer a warm welcome and a refuge to those who need a home.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I commend to the minister the discussion that the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee had this morning. Some excellent suggestions were made, particularly about gearing up not only our councils but the voluntary sector to support people who come to Scotland for a raft of reasons.

Will the minister commit to working with our business community and public sector partners to support fundraising for the Disasters Emergency Committee, to enable donations to be made? Will he also commit to developing work visas so that Ukrainian people who have skills and talents can come to work in Scotland?

**Neil Gray:** I agree with Sarah Boyack. She has given me the opportunity to, once again, thank the people of Scotland for their incredibly generous support to the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal. More than £10 million has been raised in Scotland. That ensures that we are quickly and effectively getting financial aid to where it is needed.

Regarding how we can support people who arrive in Scotland, as I said to Mark Griffin, we are working across all areas of society to ensure that we have a co-ordinated response that will give people a safe and secure place to call home when they arrive in Scotland.

## Peace Institute

**7. Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making towards the establishment of a peace institute by the end of 2022, as set out in its 2021-22 programme for government. (S6O-00844)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** Following an open tender process in January, we have contracted a consortium of expert researchers to help inform our thinking on Scotland’s future peace offer, which will report back to us in the summer. There has never been a more pertinent time to discuss Scotland’s approach to peace and reconciliation.

**Mercedes Villalba:** The Scottish Government has committed to establishing a peace institute, with a focus on human rights, by the end of this year. Amnesty International recently published a report into Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians. It includes a

“call on states to immediately suspend the direct and indirect supply, sale or transfer”

of arms to Israel. Given the human rights abuses that Palestinians face, will the Scottish Government’s peace institute have the scope to review the almost £10 million given by Scottish Enterprise in grants to arms companies that sell weapons to Israel?

**Angus Robertson:** I welcome the input of members from all parties on particular issues or causes, or about areas in which Scotland’s peace institute could play a meaningful role. I commend the member—and anyone else who is involved—for becoming involved in that process as we consider the form that a peace institute might take. I encourage the member to get in touch about any issues that she, or colleagues, feel should be considered as we make preparations to stand up the planned peace institute.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the example set by our northern European neighbours, such as Norway, illustrates the positive diplomatic influence that nations of Scotland’s size and character can have in promoting peace on the world stage?

**Angus Robertson:** Norway is home to the Peace Research Institute Oslo, which explores peaceful relations between states, groups and peoples. Our research will consider the Norwegian approach and those of other nations to help us to determine Scotland’s distinct peace offer.

Like other nations of its size, Scotland has a wealth of soft power resources—in other words, assets that make us an attractive and trustworthy partner. The Scottish Government recognises that a good international reputation is produced by the country as a whole, and we will continue to collaborate with others to promote Scotland and our values on the international stage.

### **Scene Stirling (United Kingdom City of Culture 2025)**

**8. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it provided to Scene Stirling and other organisations as they prepared Stirling’s bid to be UK city of culture in 2025. (S6O-00845)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development (Neil Gray):** I congratulate Stirling on reaching the current stage in the competition. We expect the shortlist to be announced around the end of the month. Officials met the Stirling bid team to offer support and help to make connections with relevant partners. Additionally, officials worked closely with VisitScotland and Creative Scotland, which sit on the bid working and steering groups and provided

input to the bid proposal. Scene Stirling, which is Stirling’s place partnership programme, is jointly funded by Creative Scotland and Stirling Council. It recently received a further £50,000 from Creative Scotland to build on its successful partnership work.

**Dean Lockhart:** I thank the minister for his response and for his comments about Stirling. Achieving the status of UK city of culture 2025 would be a fitting accolade for the whole Stirling region, for surrounding communities and, indeed, for Scotland. The bid reflects the unique historic, cultural and architectural heritage of Stirling, and it is evidence of great collaborative work across the public, private and third sectors. Does the minister agree that achieving the status of UK city of culture 2025 would see great benefits for all of Stirling and its constituents?

**Neil Gray:** Yes, I do. My alma mater is the University of Stirling, so I have an affinity there. I can see the obvious benefits that the status would bring to Stirling and the local area, and I wish the bid team every success in the shortlisting process. We stand ready to continue to support it as best we can, depending on the outcome.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** A couple of members have supplementary questions. I hope that they are on Stirling’s bid.

**Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** As Scotland emerges from the darkest days of the pandemic, many are once again making the most of the rich cultural offerings that are all around us. Will the minister outline the ways in which the Scottish Government is supporting our culture, heritage and creative industries to flourish in the Covid recovery?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That question is not really related to the Stirling bid. Will you address it very briefly, minister?

**Neil Gray:** Yes. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have announced £256 million of support for cultural sectors, allowing libraries to reopen, supporting organisations and freelancers to keep working, bolstering the creative industries and ensuring the continuation of children’s creative learning. However, the work does not stop there. To give just a few more examples, I note that Creative Scotland has launched a recovery fund to support organisations to rebuild, musicians and artists can apply to a Scotland on tour fund to make new work across Scotland, and Screen Scotland has launched a fund to support cinemas to address the changes in the marketplace, including, I am sure, the MacRobert Arts Centre in Stirling.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You mentioned that right at the end. Well done, minister.

**Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** I wish every success to Stirling's bid to be UK city of culture, but it is becoming clear that many cultural events, outlets and institutions across Scotland are struggling to keep their doors open in the wake of the pandemic. What more can the Scottish Government do to ensure that cultural organisations are supported so that events such as UK city of culture have a fighting chance of returning to Scotland in the future?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please take the same approach, minister.

**Neil Gray:** I thank Foyso Choudhury for recognising the challenges that exist for the cultural scene across Scotland, including in Stirling. We continue to do what we can to ensure that the sector is supported. Since January 2022, we have committed £81 million to the culture, heritage and events sectors to mitigate the impact of physical distancing and caps on attendances. I am very alive to the issues in the sector and I regularly meet stakeholders to ensure that the Government continues to do what we can to support them in the recovery.

## Carmont Passenger Train Derailment

### The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a statement by Jenny Gilruth on the Rail Accident Investigation Branch report into the Carmont passenger train derailment. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:55

### The Minister for Transport (Jenny Gilruth):

On Wednesday 12 August 2020, the 06:38 high-speed train 1T08 from Aberdeen to Glasgow derailed as it struck debris on the track close to Carmont in Aberdeenshire. Today, the Rail Accident Investigation Branch has published its final report into the events leading up to and during that tragic and shocking crash.

Before I outline the report's findings, I ask the Parliament to remember the three people who tragically lost their lives that day: the train driver, Brett McCullough; the conductor, Donald Dinnie; and a passenger, Christopher Stuchbury.

Brett McCullough was only 45 and had moved from Kent to make his life in Aberdeenshire. He had been a train driver for six years and was very popular at the Aberdeen depot.

Donald Dinnie was 58. His branch of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers in Aberdeen paid tribute to him as someone who lit up the room with funny stories and wit.

Christopher Stuchbury was 62. He came from Aberdeen and was an integral member of the Targe Towing team, as well as a volunteer at a specialist palliative care unit.

All three were beloved family men who are sadly missed by their friends, relatives and colleagues. On behalf of everyone in the Scottish Government—and of everyone in the chamber, I am sure—I share with those men's families and friends my profound condolences for their loss. I have offered to meet all those families at any time, now or in the future, although I appreciate that nothing that I can say as minister can possibly erase their grief.

The derailment also resulted in injuries—some of them serious—to six passengers and staff. I convey my sympathies to everyone who was affected and hurt, including the wider local community and the railway family.

All three men came from the local area. Brett McCullough lived just 15 minutes away. The shock

of the impact of the accident was widely and keenly felt and continues to be so.

The publication of today's report is yet another painful reminder of the heart-rending events of that dreadful day. However, I hope that it will also help to provide at least some explanation of exactly what happened.

On the morning of 12 August 2020, there were thunderstorms with associated extremely heavy rain in southern Aberdeenshire. Weather records indicate that, between 05:00 and 09:00, around 52mm of rain fell in the Carmont area, which is about 90 per cent of the average total rainfall for the whole of August at that location.

The 06:38 high-speed train from Aberdeen to Glasgow had been stopped just south of Carmont because of a line blockage near Laurencekirk. The train was in the process of returning to Stonehaven when it derailed.

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch is the independent body that is appointed by the United Kingdom Government to investigate railway accidents. I thank the staff of the RAIB who undertook that work for their careful and thorough approach to the investigation, and for the clarity of their findings and recommendations.

The report's main finding is that the train derailed because it struck debris that had been washed on to the track from a drainage trench during the recent extreme rainfall. The report states that the drainage system and associated earthworks, which had been installed between 2011 and 2012, had not been constructed in accordance with the original design. That meant that the drainage system was not able to safely accommodate the flow of water that morning.

The investigation concluded that, had the drainage system been installed in accordance with the design, it would have been capable of safely accommodating the flow of surface water. However, as installed, the drainage system was unable to do so. It is clear that the drainage system and associated earthworks and how they were constructed were the cause of the accident, the train derailment being the tragic consequence.

One of the RAIB's most important findings is that nothing in the way that Brett McCullough was driving the train caused the accident. He was driving within the rules and the instruction that had been given to him.

The refurbished high-speed train that derailed at Carmont was fully compliant with the legal operational requirements. However, since it was designed and constructed, railway standards have continued to change and improve, reflecting lessons learned from just this sort of investigation.

The report states that a train that had been built to the most recent crashworthiness standards would have had a number of design features that are intended to improve the safety of passengers. Although we cannot be certain about what would have happened in the hypothetical situation of the same accident but with different rolling stock, the report states that

"the bodysHELLS of the coaches generally performed well in the accident".

However, the RAIB

"considers it more likely than not that the outcome would have been better if the train had been compliant with modern crashworthiness standards."

In respect of the driving cab, the RAIB says that

"the speed of impact was significantly beyond the collision speeds for which even modern cabs are designed to provide protection for occupants."

Some of the RAIB's key findings relate to the approach taken by the operations team. The investigation found evidence that the Scotland route control team, which is operated by Network Rail employees, was under severe workload pressure that morning because of the volume of concurrent weather-related events in Scotland. Despite the severe disruption to Scotland's railway infrastructure that morning, no additional resources had been obtained for the control room. A senior management gold command structure to give oversight and direction had not been established to relieve the pressure on the controllers. Controllers had not been given information, procedures or training that would have enabled them to effectively manage a complex weather event such as that experienced on 12 August 2020. No instruction was given by route control or the signaller that train 1T08 should be run at a lower speed on its journey between Carmont and Stonehaven.

Rail is still a complex mix of devolved and reserved responsibilities. The Scottish Government is responsible for specifying and funding the operation of ScotRail and Caledonian sleeper trains, and for specifying and funding the outputs required of Network Rail in Scotland. However, rail safety is overseen by the statutory railway safety regulator, the Office of Rail and Road. It will now discharge its statutory duty of ensuring that those who are responsible for implementing the RAIB's recommendations take appropriate responsive action.

Although the Scottish Government funds Network Rail in Scotland, its accountability continues to rest with the UK Government. I have therefore written to the UK Government Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, seeking an urgent meeting to discuss the report's findings in full detail, and what that means for both

Governments. I know that Network Rail and ScotRail will wish to engage constructively on the report's findings, but there must also be a role for ministers in ensuring that never again will we see a repeat of that dreadful day at Carmont.

Three people dying because of the Carmont derailment was three people too many. Although rail remains the safest form of transport, we must seek to learn the lessons from the incident, to improve further the safety of all who work and travel on the railways in Scotland. To ensure that we take appropriate steps, and quickly, I am announcing that Transport Scotland will convene a steering group to implement the recommendations about safety performance in accidents involving older rolling stock, including HST rolling stock, on ScotRail. Because of their crucial role in driving and maintaining those trains, I give my undertaking to Scotland's rail employees and unions that we will involve them in that important activity, alongside rail industry representatives and the safety bodies.

The RAIB's report establishes the factual circumstances of the accident, but it does not apportion blame. Along with Police Scotland and the British Transport Police, the Office of Rail and Road is undertaking a parallel joint investigation, which will report to the procurator fiscal later this year. That will give prosecutors the opportunity to consider questions of criminal prosecutions and a fatal accident inquiry. Those are, of course, matters for the Lord Advocate, acting independently.

I conclude by giving the following undertaking. We will continue to work with industry partners, trade unions and the UK Government to deliver improvements that make our railways safer and more resilient in facing the challenges of adverse weather events. I give a solemn assurance that the Scottish Government will do everything in our power to urge everyone who is responsible for safety on our transport networks to endeavour to make them more resilient and safer for all passengers and employees. We cannot and must not allow a repeat of the terrible Carmont tragedy.

**The Presiding Officer:** The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business.

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I thank the minister for advance sight of her statement and welcome the announcement of a steering group. I hope that the minister will keep us informed about the group's work.

The report into the Carmont rail tragedy makes for sobering reading. We should remember that, although this is about failures of systems and

lessons that can be learned, it is fundamentally about the loss of three lives: the conductor, Donald Dinnie; the train driver, Brett McCullough; and a passenger, Christopher Stuchbury. There were six other people on the train on 12 August 2020 and they were injured when the train hit debris—mainly gravel—and derailed.

The source of the debris was a drain that had been put in by Carillion, but not in accordance with the design. Had Carillion stuck to the original design, the tragedy may not have happened. Can the minister confirm whether Network Rail Scotland has checked all other Carillion-constructed drainage systems to ensure that there are no potential issues elsewhere on the network?

The RAIB said that, despite knowing about the threat, Network Rail had not sufficiently recognised that its existing measures did not fully address the risk from extreme rainfall events, which meant that areas of significant weakness had not been dealt with. What has the minister done about that?

Finally, the driver did not have a seat belt. That is extraordinary. It seems to me that seat belts should be standard. Does the minister agree?

**Jenny Gilruth:** Graham Simpson covered a number of areas. First, I will keep members informed about the steering group. I wrote to Opposition spokespeople this afternoon, ahead of my statement.

Mr Simpson talked about the people who were injured in the crash and alluded to the drain being the cause of the crash. I have confirmed with Network Rail that it has checked all drains that were installed by Carillion and any maintenance work that was carried out by Carillion. That was done at the time of the crash.

However, even before the accident at Carmont, Network Rail's project teams had apparently started to review historical projects—those that are up to 10 years old—to ascertain whether a health and safety file, if required, had been accepted by the national records group and stored appropriately. At the time, the drain would have been more than 10 years old. Network Rail has undertaken that work, and I received another assurance from Alex Hynes regarding that matter this morning.

Mr Simpson's second point was about the weaknesses in the existing fleet; I think that he mentioned challenges relating to Network Rail's responsibilities. I cannot instruct Network Rail, because it is accountable to the UK Government. However, Scotland's Railway has established a permanently staffed weather desk position, which came into operation shortly after the event. Network Rail has informed the RAIB that suitably qualified people will have been recruited to cover

that position. I am told that it is a better example of both organisations—ScotRail and Network Rail—working together.

In the light of the likelihood that climate change will exacerbate some of the risks further, Network Rail decided to commission two task forces to advise on the ways in which it could improve its understanding of earthworks; one was chaired by Lord Robert Mair and the other by Dame Julia Slingo. Network Rail has also considered how it can improve the management of its earthworks portfolio to better understand the risk posed by rainfall. I raised that issue with Alex Hynes earlier and was given an assurance that Network Rail is now using technology to look at hillsides across the country to try to predict when such events might happen in the future. Additionally, I am told that Network Rail is walking the lines of Scotland's railways to try to ascertain where risks might appear in the future.

On the steering group that I have undertaken to establish, I acknowledge that devolved and reserved competences cross one another here, but I am interested in getting a resolution to ensure that such an event never happens again. I look forward to working constructively with the UK Government on the issue and acknowledge the horrific nature of what we are discussing today.

Finally, Mr Simpson raised a point about seat belts. I am told that research undertaken by the Rail Safety and Standards Board, "Optimising driving cab design for driver protection in a collision", found that, while no technical or operational problems are foreseen that prevent the fitting of driver protection, there may be a challenge regarding ensuring maintenance and driver acceptance of a viability assessment. I am not ruling it out in the future, but at the moment there are no requirements, on any modern trains, for seat belts to be fitted. However, the RAIB has recommended that the RSSB review its previous research on fitting secondary impact protection devices for train drivers in light of the circumstances at Carmont.

I give Graham Simpson an undertaking that we will take the necessary steps from 1 April if the recommendations of that research conclude that seat belts are an appropriate response. As I said, that requires wider discussion with the trade unions and employees.

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** All our thoughts are with the loved ones of those who died in this tragedy. The report is a sobering read for Carillion, Network Rail and the entire rail industry. Investigators found that warnings were ignored and that systemic failures caused the derailment. There is a word for that: negligence. The drainage system did not work—Carillion did not construct it to design standards—Network Rail

processes were not followed, ScotRail staff were insufficiently trained, and there were no suitable arrangements to restrict the speed of the train despite the conditions. In light of that, does the minister still have confidence in the managing director of Scotland's Railway and the leadership of the ScotRail Alliance? The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen—ASLEF—which is the train drivers union, does not.

ASLEF is also calling for ageing high-speed trains to be phased out by August 2023. Can the minister tell us when those trains will be withdrawn from service?

It is for the Lord Advocate to consider prosecutions and a fatal accident inquiry, but it is for ministers here and at UK level to decide whether there should be a full public inquiry. Does the minister believe that there is a case for a full public inquiry to ensure that lessons are learned and that such a tragedy never happens again?

**Jenny Gilruth:** Mr Bibby raises three points. He used a word that I will not repeat because, as he will understand, legal proceedings may follow from the next report, which is yet to be published. I would not want to comment on the outcome of that.

On the first question he raises about the position of senior officials, I know why ASLEF feels very strongly about that. I met Kevin Lindsay only yesterday and we discussed some of the issues that Mr Bibby has raised. I do not think that this is the right moment to be calling for resignations. However, I understand why ASLEF feels very strongly about that.

As I mentioned, the Office of Rail and Road's parallel and joint investigation with Police Scotland and the British Transport Police will report to the procurator fiscal. That will allow prosecutors to consider the questions of criminal prosecutions and whether there should be a fatal accident inquiry. As I mentioned in my statement, those are matters for the Lord Advocate.

Mr Bibby asked me to commit to a public inquiry. I do not wish to prejudge the outcome of the investigation at this stage. A public inquiry might flow from that and it is not for me as the minister to pre-empt the outcome of that process.

Mr Bibby asked about the HSTs. I am aware that that issue was also raised at First Minister's questions. It is important to remember that the trains in question were safe to be running. They are undoubtedly older trains. They met the standard at the time they were built. We need to consider that stock to ensure that such a disaster never happens again. The first step is to work with the trade unions. I spoke to Mr Lindsay about that yesterday.

We will come to a date in the future when we will be able to remove some of those trains from service. However, I need to convene the steering group and look at what that would mean for the current fleet of trains and the viability of rail travel in Scotland just now, recognising that we are quite reliant on the HSTs that are currently in operation.

I undertake that the steering group will look at that issue, working with the trade unions, the UK Government, Network Rail and ScotRail to ensure that we deliver on the safety improvements that are needed, that our rolling stock is up to scratch and that it provides the proper level of protection and security for staff and passengers.

**Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** I extend my condolences to the families of Brett McCullough, Donald Dinnie and Christopher Stuchbury.

Some of the findings in the investigation report are challenging, and some of the things that the RAIB found seem so straightforward and obvious that it is hard to believe that they were not in place. The minister mentioned some of the changes that have been brought in since 2020. Can she provide more detail on those and how they might be helping to make Scotland's railways safer now?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I understand why members found some of the report's findings challenging to read. I found it very challenging, a fortnight ago, to sit through a presentation from the RAIB on the draft findings.

I want to provide some level of reassurance. I know that, since the accident took place, Network Rail has put in a range of changes. For example, it has installed a new drainage system at Carmont to seek to prevent another washout in the same location. It has also installed guardrails to help keep derailed trains in line on the approach to the bridge.

Network Rail has improved its rules and standards relating to the control of train movements during extreme weather events, and introduced a new process for how it manages its response to safety recommendations and a programme of audits to check the correct implementation of risk controls. However, I want to work further with Network Rail on some of those changes and what they mean for rail safety in Scotland, recognising, of course, that rail safety is ultimately a matter that is reserved to the UK Government.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I echo the condolences and sentiments of colleagues across the chamber. The Carmont tragedy and its needless loss of life must never happen again.

The report identifies that the age of the train and its design features contributed to the severity of the crash. Neil Bibby asked a very good question but, with respect, I am not sure that we heard an answer. Is there a break clause in the contract between the rolling stock company and ScotRail for the HSTs? Regardless of that, when does the newly nationalised ScotRail intend to replace all class 43 sets on its network with new trains to modern standards?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I note Mr Kerr's condolences to the families affected.

On the specific question about a break clause that Mr Kerr asked, I am not sighted on that, but I can certainly find that information for him.

With regard to the high-speed trains, it is important to reflect again that, although those trains were older, the refurbished high-speed train that derailed at Carmont was fully compliant with legal requirements to operate. However, since that train was designed and constructed, railway standards have, of course, moved on. The train operator—in this case, ScotRail—has the statutory duty to ensure that the trains that it operates are safe, and it is the statutory duty of the Office of Rail and Road, as the regulator, to oversee that duty, with enforcement if necessary. I know that the Office of Rail and Road will monitor the work that is undertaken to address the Rail Accident Investigation Branch's recommendations. That duty will, of course, pass to the new publicly owned and controlled ScotRail on 1 April—Mr Kerr alluded to that.

We, in the Scottish Government, have been absolutely clear that I will work with the industry, unions, employees and rail safety bodies to take forward the implementation of all recommendations that are relevant to our obligations and responsibilities. I am sorry that I cannot give Mr Kerr a date right now, but I have committed to convening a steering group.

I agree whole-heartedly with Mr Kerr that we absolutely need to see action on the issue.

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** I add my condolences and thoughts for everyone who is affected.

It is clear that many of the recommendations relate to matters for reserved bodies and reserved powers on rail safety. Does the minister know how the UK Government has responded to the RAIB's report? What role and power does she have to ensure that Network Rail urgently implements all the findings and recommendations that arise from the report?

**Jenny Gilruth:** It is for the UK Government to explain how it will respond. As far as I am aware, the UK Government has not yet made a public

statement on the report, although I may be wrong about that.

I have said that the responsibilities in reserved and devolved areas are complex, but I am keen to ensure that we take a collaborative approach to deliver the changes that the RAIB has recommended, and I am keen to engage with the Secretary of State for Transport to agree how we can do that. That is why I wrote to Grant Shapps this morning to encourage him to work with me on taking forward the recommendations.

Network Rail's response to the RAIB report shows that it, too, is taking its responsibilities seriously. However, Network Rail is not accountable to me, and it is very important that we have cross-Government working on the matter.

The recommendations will, of course, now be urgently reviewed by the ORR to determine how best they will be progressed. As I have mentioned, the ORR is the statutory authority on rail safety and all recommendations that are agreed for implementation. Those will be monitored by the ORR for all operators.

As I have mentioned, I am keen to work collaboratively with the UK Government on the matter, recognising and understanding the different roles and responsibilities that both Governments have. It is essential that we guard against such a thing happening ever again. For that to work, we will have to work collaboratively.

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** The tragedy has highlighted the need for a safe and resilient railway, but there are plans to cut thousands of safety-critical jobs at Network Rail. Earlier today, the First Minister failed to give a commitment that there will be no compulsory redundancies when ScotRail enters public ownership. Will the minister take action to ensure that those Network Rail cuts are scrapped and give a guarantee that there will be no compulsory redundancies at ScotRail?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I am happy to give Mercedes Villalba the undertaking that I will meet Network Rail. I do not seek job cuts in Scotland of any nature, but Network Rail is not accountable to me, so I am limited in what I can do in that regard. I would like to raise the matter directly with the UK Government, as any cuts to jobs in Scotland are not acceptable.

Mercedes Villalba also raised the issue of no compulsory redundancies. As she will know, as a Government, we have not yet ruled that out. I have been meeting the trade unions as a group over the past four weeks and, in the past two weeks, I have been meeting them individually to better understand their negotiating positions on any future pay settlements. That has not yet been taken off the table because we have not yet

arrived at a deal. I am hopeful that we will do so in the future, but I do not want to prejudge that.

This is part of a negotiation process with the rail unions. The conversations that I have had with them, particularly in the light of the announcement of a national conversation on Scotland's Railway's future, have been very positive, and they have been keen to work with the Government. I welcome that dialogue, because it is essential as we move forward that the Government works with the rail unions to deliver a railway for the people of Scotland that works.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** The minister has indicated that certain work and investigations will be carried out by different bodies and individuals. Will she spell out exactly what will happen next and, if possible, provide a timescale?

**Jenny Gilruth:** Network Rail and operators will review the report's recommendations and enter into discussions with the ORR on their delivery, including on timescales. Some of the recommendations require a great deal of technical input, such as design developments for rolling stock, modifications and costings. Some can and will be implemented immediately, while others will need a bit more time.

I set out in my statement the next steps for the roles of the Office of Rail and Road, the Crown Office and the Lord Advocate. I am aware of the call from ASLEF for a public inquiry, which has been mentioned by members. At an appropriate time, that will, of course, be considered.

**The Presiding Officer:** I am keen that we get all members in, so I would be grateful if we could pick up the pace.

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I, too, wish to associate myself and the Scottish Liberal Democrats with the comments from the minister and other members and the offer of condolences to the family and friends of those who lost their lives on 12 August 2020, as well as sympathies to those who were injured.

We welcome the creation of the steering group that the minister has announced, which will look at high-speed trains and consider the other recommendations that are under its remit. We welcome information on a timetable for its work being made available as soon as possible.

In the knowledge that more frequent and extreme storms are likely to occur, will the Scottish Government work with Network Rail to ensure that extra provision is made to inspect the network, providing reassurance to passengers and staff on the safety of trains?

**Jenny Gilruth:** On Beatrice Wishart's question on the steering group and timescales, I am not

able to give her timescales right now. I would like to speak to the trade unions first, and to get partners—the UK Government, Network Rail and ScotRail—involved and round the table before I give her that information. I know that Graham Simpson asked for further information on that, too. I will be more than happy to share that with her once the group has been convened and actions have been agreed.

Beatrice Wishart mentioned some of the challenges around future adverse weather events. As we know, climate change will continue to have an impact on our transport network. In my statement, I touched on the fact that there was a significant amount of rainfall on the morning of 12 August 2020—the amount of rain that fell that day was an unusual circumstance—and the Met Office analysis indicates an exceptionally high level of rain falling between 10 to 6 in the morning and 9 o'clock, which was when the train derailed. Early action has already been taken by Network Rail to better understand and react to extreme weather events and to improve the risk management of earthworks. I spoke to that in my response to an earlier question.

Beatrice Wishart asked a question about greater provision, which I will be more than happy to raise with Network Rail. Again, I do not want to prejudge the outcome of the steering group. There are a lot of intersecting factors in regard to climate change, adaptation and how we look at our rolling stock and future proof it for greater safety improvements. I hope that that gives her assurance that the matter will be looked at by the steering group in due course. I will be more than happy to update her with further detail as and when it is agreed.

**Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP):** My thoughts, too, are with everybody who has been impacted by this tragedy.

Rail incidents in Scotland are rare, but we should not underestimate the impact that any derailment or incident has on the wellbeing of drivers, other staff who are on board and passengers. Some of the findings of the report, which is harrowing to read, relate to the crashworthiness of the train and, especially, the glass in the windows. Can the minister say what more can be done to ensure that the trains that people work and travel in are as safe as they can be?

**Jenny Gilruth:** As I think I mentioned, a bit more research is needed to explore how best we implement some of the recommendations. Already, research has been undertaken into driver seat belts, as I mentioned to Graham Simpson. The ORR will consider how best to achieve a good outcome for them, along with input from train

operators. Some interim modifications to rules might be implemented until some recommendations are fully implemented, but that will be for the industry to guide or for the ORR to decide.

As Elena Whitham indicated, some of the findings are very hard to read because they are harrowing, particularly the ones that relate to the windows and the effect of the shattered glass. That is an example of a finding in respect of which there are no easy or obvious solutions. One conclusion might be that we should strengthen the glass configuration in trains, but we know that the glass must be able to be broken in some circumstances, too.

However, we cannot shy away from the task. I am clear that the Scottish Government, which takes responsibility for rolling stock after 1 April, will play its full part in determining what changes need to take place and will do so quickly.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** I, too, extend my deepest sympathies to the loved ones of the people whose lives were cut short by the tragedy.

The minister mentioned climate adaptation. Will she expand on how capital investment will help such adaptation? Will she also expand on the training and support for rail workers to operate modern forecasting systems to enable us to better track and understand how extreme weather events unfold in real time?

**Jenny Gilruth:** We fund Network Rail to carry out its operations in Scotland. Climate adaptation is built into our high-level agreement. However, the events at Carmont are a really sharp reminder of the need to adapt our transport network to the effects of severe weather. We also know that climate change will only increase. The report notes that climate change has made heavier rainfall more likely to occur, so a storm of a particular duration and intensity now has a shorter return period.

Notwithstanding the progress that is being made in decarbonising the transport network, there needs to be adaptation of existing infrastructure. Network Rail has implemented changes in its infrastructure operations and weather management to enhance and improve transport resilience during severe weather and will continue to implement changes to make the railways safe for all users.

Transport Scotland is also taking action. It identified the need for climate change mitigation and adaptation as a central plank in the recently published national transport strategy, which sets out the vision for the next decades.

I hope that Mr Ruskell has an understanding of how seriously the Scottish Government takes the matter. I am sure that the steering group will address it in further detail in due course.

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** The Stonehaven derailment is a tragedy that must never be repeated. The north-east has been badly affected by severe weather events in recent months. The minister touched briefly on this, but what assessment has been made of the rail infrastructure following those events and what measures, including improved disaster recovery, has the Scottish Government implemented to mitigate the effects of flooding and landslides in future?

**Jenny Gilruth:** Tess White raised a number of issues regarding the changes that have been implemented. As she will recognise, some of them relate to Network Rail responsibilities. I will come on to those in a moment.

I recognise the challenges in the area of Scotland that she represents. I also recognise that the damaging periods of poor weather that we have had in recent weeks and months have impacted on people's lives.

Network Rail has installed a new drainage system with improved capacity and with features that are intended to stop another wash-out from happening. That was installed in 2020 to replace the 2011-12 system prior to the railway reopening after the derailment. It also installed guard rails on the up and down lines on the approach to bridge 325 when the track was re-laid after the accident. That protection includes gathering rails and, on the down line, extends beyond the site of the wash-out.

Tess White asked about Scottish Government actions. Scotland's Railway has established a permanently staffed weather desk position to monitor weather conditions and advise controllers on the necessary precautionary actions. I mentioned that in my response to Graham Simpson. It is leading to better team working between Network Rail and ScotRail staff, and that service will pass to the Scottish Government from 1 April.

Blanket speed restrictions in areas with earthworks that were not on the at-risk list were introduced in September 2020. As we know, the driver was given no instruction to slow down on the day of the accident, so consideration of whether to introduce more regular speed restrictions has been a major part of the action that Network Rail has taken.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** The minister has answered quite a lot of questions on the environmental impacts around the rail network, so I will not go into that again and ask her

to rehash those answers. What actions is she asking Network Rail to undertake to ensure that something like the derailment never occurs again?

**Jenny Gilruth:** I am keen to meet Network Rail soon to further discuss the matter. In my response to Graham Simpson, I mentioned that I had a short call with Alex Hynes earlier today to discuss some of the report's findings. I am keen to meet Network Rail to establish a better and more detailed understanding of where it sees its priorities going forward as a result of the report.

The report is a substantial piece of work of 300 pages, and the RAIB undertook that work over a number of months. I do not want to jump to conclusions at this stage by making recommendations for Network Rail. Of course, Network Rail has no responsibility to report to me and the Scottish Parliament, as it reports to UK Government ministers. Recognising some of the challenges with reserved and devolved competencies, I would not like to sketch out any actions that Network Rail needs to take forward.

As the regulator, the Office of Rail and Road needs to enforce any recommendations, and I would expect it to be working with Network Rail. I would also expect that, along with ScotRail and UK Government representation, Network Rail would want to engage with the steering group. It would be very welcome to do that. It is vital that all partners, including the trade unions, are at the table, to ensure that we get it right and that we put the recommendations from the report in place so that we can ensure that a disaster like the one that happened in Carmont never happens again.

## Climate Emergency

### The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee debate on “The Road to COP27 and Beyond: Tackling the Climate Emergency in the Aftermath of COP26”. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons.

15:31

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

This is not a typical committee debate with a report to read and comment on. Instead, the committee decided to use its time to reflect on the significant progress that was made at the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—in Glasgow and, perhaps more importantly, to assess what progress is being made against climate change targets in Scotland.

My comments largely reflect the evidence that the committee has heard in the past six months on the role of local government in delivering net zero targets. We decided to conduct the inquiry because local authorities are one of the most important front-line delivery partners in this area. I thank the committee clerks and the Scottish Parliament information centre for their first-class support and for arranging a number of excellent witness sessions.

At the conclusion of COP26, Senator John Kerry said:

“As we leave Glasgow, the fundamental issue is going to be implementation, delivery and follow-through on policy commitments.”

With that in mind, I will highlight three of the biggest delivery challenges that we face in Scotland. In doing so, I remind the chamber that the most important role that committees have in the Parliament is to critically scrutinise Government policy, highlight where it might not be delivering and, ideally, provide suggested answers.

First, I will address the decarbonisation of heat, which will be one of the most difficult policies to deliver. The challenge to retrofit and install new heating systems in 1 million domestic dwellings and up to 50,000 business premises by 2030, with an estimated cost of £33 billion, is enormous. The vast majority of that funding is to come from the private sector, and all of that has to be delivered in the next eight years.

Taking a closer look at that eight-year timeframe, the reality is that the sheer scale of the physical work that is required means that the work will need to start by 2025 at the latest. In other words, it will take at least five years, if not longer,

to retrofit and decarbonise 1 million homes, which equates to 200,000 conversions a year. By way of context, the current rate of installation of heat pumps in Scotland is 2,500 a year, according to SPICe. Obviously, there is quite a bit to go.

Before the physical work can begin, the required financing will have to be in place, as projects cannot start until guaranteed financing is in place. In effect, that means that the Scottish Government has only two or three years before 2025 to co-ordinate and arrange the bulk of the necessary financing. We are looking at somewhere between £10 billion and £15 billion, which is only half of the overall estimated costs.

That will clearly be a massive challenge because, if we are asking the private sector to invest between £10 billion and £15 billion, a huge amount of preparation needs to start now. First, investors will need comprehensive data on the housing stock that is being financed, on its valuation and physical condition, on historical rental income and on historical rates of rental delinquency. It is also likely that a rating from one of the rating agencies will be needed.

However, it appears that not a lot of work is being done in that area. For example, Patrick Harvie, the minister who is in charge of the heat in buildings policy, replied to my parliamentary question by saying:

“The breakdown of numbers of dwellings that will require upgrades in different periods and across different tenures”—[*Written Answers*, 1 March 2022; S6W-06421.]

is not currently available. In its evidence to the committee, the Phoenix Group, one of the largest potential sources of private investment funds in the area, told us that

“there is a lack of comparable data, which is a big challenge.”—[*Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee*, 25 January 2022; c 43.]

There is also the challenge of scale. Local authorities will need to combine their housing stock assets in order to meet the scale of investment that is required from private investors. Susan Aitken, the head of Glasgow City Council, told the committee:

“In terms of financing, we need to be able to engage with the private sector at a level and scale that has never been done before in local government.”—[*Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee*, 11 January 2022; c 10.]

She said that local authorities in Scotland are not able to offer that “on their own”. Again, it is not clear to me how much groundwork is being done to look at how we can scale up such projects, and we need the data to be in place before we can do that.

Even when all that groundwork has been done, it will take time for a market for the financial

investments to develop. It is not realistic to expect to be able to raise between £10 billion to £15 billion in a few months.

If the 2030 targets are to be feasible, the urgent question is: what is being done to progress that essential work, and who will take it forward? We know that it cannot be local authorities, because they have told the committee that they do not have the capacity, the requisite skills or the expertise to deliver the targets, and we know that it will not be the Scottish National Investment Bank. The reality is that the work can be led and progressed only by the Scottish Government.

In the committee, I had a constructive exchange with the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport on that question. I believe that his position is that most of the work will be undertaken by the new national energy agency, but I continue to have concerns that what has been set out will not nearly be enough to address the challenges that I have outlined. The new body will be a virtual agency with no additional resource, budget or staff, and it will become operational only by 2025, the year when the physical work will have to start.

Given all the challenges that have been highlighted to the committee, it is hard to see, as things stand, how the 2030 targets to decarbonise heat in buildings will be met. I look forward to the cabinet secretary addressing in his remarks some of the concerns that I have raised.

I will briefly highlight two other challenges relating to delivery on which the committee has taken evidence. In the transport sector, the roll-out of public electric vehicle charging points will be vital in reducing emissions. However, we are also falling behind our targets in that area. The United Kingdom Climate Change Committee has said that we need 30,000 public charging points by 2030. We currently have only about 2,100, which means that we need to install about 4,000 a year between now and 2030, and we are not anywhere close to that rate. Although local authorities are the delivery agents, they need much more help from the Scottish Government to reach the target, achieve economies of scale and ensure that technology is used consistently throughout Scotland.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I am interested in the points that Dean Lockhart has made. In relation to the charging network, does he agree that it is not just a numbers game but about getting the right chargers in the right places and ensuring that there is on-going maintenance of the charging points in order to secure the public confidence that is needed for the transition to happen?

**Dean Lockhart:** Yes, I absolutely agree. It is about consistency of technology and ensuring that

the charging points use the same technology across all 32 local authority areas. It is also about economies of scale. There is no point in individual local authorities procuring different charging points at higher costs when, I hope, the work can be done on a national basis to save costs. Perhaps that is being done; I will leave it to the cabinet secretary to inform us on whether that is the case.

I will wrap up on the third and final challenge that we need to address, which is the significant skills and expertise gap that we face across the public and private sectors. I do not have time to present the detailed evidence that was given to the committee on the matter, but that issue was raised throughout the sessions.

One of the Scottish Government's key policies to address the skills gap is the green jobs workforce academy, but the committee heard evidence that, in effect, that is just a website that aggregates existing information and, frankly, is not in any sense a skills academy as one would expect that to be.

Policies such as those have caused the United Kingdom Climate Change Committee to call into question "the credibility" of the Scottish climate change framework—those are its words, not mine.

In conclusion, we need much more robust measures to be taken across the areas of challenge that I have highlighted. I look forward to the cabinet secretary's response.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Finlay Carson to speak on behalf of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee.

15:40

**Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important debate, and I thank my committee clerks and SPICe for their support in the work that we undertook on the topic.

To coincide with COP26, the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee held a series of evidence sessions on the climate and nature emergencies, and I will use my time today to highlight some of the points from that evidence.

In particular, I will explore the idea of a just transition and a full-systems approach to finding policy solutions to those challenges. The solutions must emphasise the importance of understanding the structure and relationships between different parts of the environment.

In Scotland, our wealth of natural assets often masks the underlying biodiversity loss that is happening under our noses. Scotland's marine environment, which is rich in animal and plant life, is one of our greatest assets. However, witnesses

to the committee outlined the impact that climate change is having on fishing stocks, notably the increasing temperatures that are encouraging species to move further north or into deeper waters.

Although witnesses emphasised that fisheries management over the past 20 years has resulted in recovery in many native species—cod being the notable exception—those changes in temperature have impacted growth rates in juvenile fish stocks. That reduces yields, so people have to catch more of those smaller fish in order to make up their quota, which takes more fish out of the ecosystem. That tells us that we need proper data to drive decision making when it comes to fisheries and environmental management, to ensure that we align policy to meet the challenges of a changing marine environment.

Aquaculture is a significant contributor to our rural economy because it provides jobs in some of Scotland's most remote communities, but we also need to balance environmental interests. Everyone will be aware of the independent review of how fish farms are regulated, and the committee will consider the review's findings in due course.

It is clear that we need to support those industries to transition responsibly, and that sentiment is echoed by many of the farmers whom we spoke to. As custodians of the land, many farmers understand far better than most of us the need to transition to more sustainable farming practices, and many have been doing so for some time.

In evidence, the Nature Friendly Farming Network welcomed policies that support wildlife and climate-friendly farming and nature-based solutions, but also emphasised the need for a full-systems approach, which includes more constructive engagement with the private sector. That perspective is shared by many stakeholders who have engaged with the committee's inquiry into the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill. They emphasise the interconnected nature of the food system.

That all points to a worrying picture, but committee members have been heartened by the range of work that is already being carried out in Scotland to reverse some of those trends. The seawilding project, which is based in Craignish, is one example. The community-led project is working to reverse trends in biodiversity loss by reintroducing or bolstering key species such as oysters and seagrass. Importantly, the project uses a range of low-cost methods that it believes could be easily replicated in other communities. I would like more to be done to help those kinds of initiatives, so that they can be copied across Scotland. The seawilding project exemplifies the

need for us all to be better custodians of the natural environment.

That is reflected in the evidence that we heard from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, which emphasised the need to move away from a mass transaction approach, whereby regulators simply encourage polluters to improve their environmental performance, and towards that full-systems approach. SEPA gave an example of the regulation of the whisky sector and barley growers. Rather than dealing with individual businesses, SEPA looked at the wider challenges that face rural communities with respect to climate change, one of which is water scarcity. SEPA adopted a more holistic approach by sitting down with the whisky industry and barley growers to ask how the agency could help them to reduce water use in their supply chain. That full-systems approach aids regulators, producers and communities in tackling multiple challenges simultaneously while making domestic production more resilient.

That again speaks to the need for a more integrated and holistic approach to policy making that adequately values natural assets in a sustainable way—something that is well defined through the notion of natural capital. The committee had the pleasure of speaking to Professor Dieter Helm from the University of Oxford, who is an expert in that area. He described why natural capital is a helpful way of thinking about the great environmental challenges that we face, because it forces us to see the environment as a key input into the economy, ending the tension between economic growth and protecting and enhancing the environment.

Scotland is not immune from the impact of climate change, but some good work is already being done to mitigate the effects. Scotland has its part to play in addressing the global challenges. Key industries need to be supported to make a just transition and policy makers need to take a full-systems approach to finding policy solutions to the challenges.

That strongly links to the remit of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee and the significant developments, post-European Union exit, for fisheries and agriculture policy. Last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands told the committee about the fisheries and marine strategies that are under development, and agricultural reform is due in 2023. Together, those offer us an unprecedented opportunity to reconsider our relationship with the natural environment and how we can use and benefit from new policies. The committee looks forward to scrutinising the policies in the course of this session of Parliament.

I thank the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee for holding this important debate and for giving me, as convener of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee, the opportunity to set out our priorities in this important area.

15:46

**The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson):** I thank the NZET Committee for bringing to the chamber this important debate on the road to COP27, following on from COP26, which took place in Glasgow last year.

Tackling the climate crisis is the most urgent issue of our time. COP26 was not only one of the largest events ever to be held in Scotland, but was one of the most important. We can be proud of the contribution that Scotland made to its successful outcome.

The summit concluded with the adoption of the Glasgow climate pact, under which countries committed to increased ambition and action. The pact means that the need to cap temperature increases at 1.5°C is no longer questioned; that it has been agreed that action on adaptation and finance is critical; and that, for the first time, there will be discussions on helping developing countries to pay for loss and damage.

The pact represents progress on many important issues and provides a basis for further action, but we know that it did not deliver all the asks of every country. To keep the 1.5°C target alive, the commitments that were made at COP26 must be delivered and COP27 must see that progress has been made on those aims. Issues of fairness and equity were at the forefront of discussions during COP26, and it was recognised that it is required that more be done to adapt to an already changing climate, and to make progress on the loss and damage agenda.

We can be proud of the significant progress that Scotland has made in decarbonising the economy while strengthening it. Our 2019 data shows that we have reduced our emissions by 51.5 per cent from the 1990 baseline figures. Since 2008, we have decarbonised faster than any country in the G20. For example, the quantity of renewable energy that was produced in Scotland in 2020 was equivalent to almost 99 per cent of our gross electricity consumption. As recently as 2010, the figure stood at only 50 per cent.

I am proud of our progress and of the level of ambition that we have set out, but it is clear that we must go further if we are to meet our highly ambitious targets. I have no doubt that challenges lie ahead. It took 30 years to halve our emissions;

we need to do the same again over just the next nine years.

Last year, we finalised the updated climate change plan, which included commitments to invest at least £1.8 billion over this session of Parliament in decarbonising heat, and a £250 million package to restore 250,000 hectares of degraded peatland by 2030.

We continue to raise our ambitions. During COP26, we published our “Draft Hydrogen Action Plan”, which is backed by more than £100 million of funding, and we announced a new £55 million multiyear commitment to the nature restoration fund to transform, protect and drive forward nature’s recovery.

Since COP26, we have published a route map for our commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030 and, from 31 January this year, all under-22s who are resident in Scotland have had access to free bus travel.

I noted with interest the results of the recent survey by Renewables UK, which showed that Scots “overwhelmingly support” political parties that support renewable power generation. That aligns with our research that indicates that public backing for wind energy is at a record high.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Michael Matheson:** I need to make progress, but I will take a brief intervention.

**Liam Kerr:** I will be brief. The public also appear to support nuclear generation in Scotland. Does the minister concede that?

**Michael Matheson:** I recognise that there are some people in Scotland who support nuclear generation, but we are committed to making sure that we deliver on renewables, which offer a much cheaper form of electricity that helps, unlike nuclear power, to reduce bills.

Furthermore, in response to Russia’s horrifying and appalling invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission has outlined plans to enable independence from Russian gas. It proposes to

“speed up the renewable roll-out, improve energy efficiency and replace gas in heating and power”,

with the aim of reducing demand for Russian gas by two thirds before the end of the year.

The executive vice-president of the European green deal, Frans Timmermans, highlighted that renewables are a

“cheap, clean, and potentially endless source of energy and instead of funding the fossil fuel industry elsewhere, they create jobs here.”

The commission’s views on fossil fuels chime with ours, in that we reject unlimited extraction.

Scotland's energy sector can be a key part of a solution that seeks to ensure energy security amid the on-going economic and geopolitical turbulence. Our focus is on achieving the fastest possible just transition for the oil and gas sector. We are currently updating our energy strategy and our just transition plan, and setting out how the economic and social impacts of the energy transition can be managed.

Our commitments do not stop at our borders. Scotland led by example at COP26 by becoming the first developed country in the world to support, through the world's first climate justice fund, countries that are experiencing loss and damage. We intend to build on that in the years to come.

As we move towards COP27, we are establishing a COP27 programme that will build on our achievements at COP26, and will ensure that we play our part in delivering the Glasgow climate pact and attracting investment and jobs, as part of the transition here, in Scotland.

15:53

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** I am very pleased to speak in this committee debate about the road from COP26 to COP27. For all that its members have different views and different routes to possible solutions, the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee is a very effective committee. It adopts an informed and in-depth approach, and its members are prepared to listen to one another's points of view. Such evidence-based collaborative working will be very important on the road to COP27. I will return to that theme shortly.

As the cabinet secretary said, COP26 did, indeed, set us on that road. It kept alive the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C, it sounded the death knell for coal power and a pledge was made to cut methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030. More than 100 countries signed a pledge to reverse deforestation.

The United Kingdom—the second-highest performing country in the climate change performance index—sets the example. Between 1990 and 2019, while the UK's emissions decreased by 44 per cent, which was the fastest decrease in the G7, we grew the economy by 78 per cent. That shows that it can be done.

The UK is the world's biggest producer of offshore wind energy. We have doubled our international climate finance to help developing nations.

The cabinet secretary was right to say that we must do more. That means that we need substance, not soundbites. When Mark Ruskell writes, as he did in Saturday's *The Herald*, that

renewables can replace oil and gas, he must back that up with a firm evidence-based answer to the question when that will happen.

Just two days ago, I asked the cabinet secretary to project in what year his ramped-up renewables would ensure that we had no further need for oil and gas. He did not even attempt to answer. Instead, he resorted to weasel words, as he did just now, saying that

"the equivalent of Scotland's domestic electricity supply—some 98 per cent of it—now comes from renewable sources."—[*Official Report*, 8 March 2022; c 7.]

The reality is that, in 2020, 56 per cent of the electricity that was consumed in Scotland came from renewable sources. My point is that, if we are to have any chance, we must deal in reality, not in spin.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Does Liam Kerr recognise that there is a commitment from the Scottish Government to consider what our energy needs are, how quickly we can make the transition away from oil and gas and how quickly we can deploy renewables as a replacement? Those are not easy questions to answer, but that is being done—the Government is doing that work.

**Liam Kerr:** I recognise the commitment, but my point is that a Government that hides behind selective data and pats itself on the back for mediocrity gives false confidence that the problem is being addressed.

We cannot have ministers telling people to install micro energy generation when only 22 per cent of Government buildings have solar panels, or telling people to cut their energy use while spending more than £4 million of public money on energy-guzzling electronic billboards, or telling us all to drive electric vehicles when less than a fifth of the vehicles that are owned by public bodies are zero-emissions vehicles.

Doing more means moving away from silo thinking. The Government should not implement a car park tax to force us on to public transport while cutting 250 rail services and presiding over a £640 million black hole in the funding for decarbonising buses. Patrick Harvie should examine his having a blanket opposition to road building while he wilfully ignores a report that shows that lorries on single carriageway trunk roads emit almost 2 tonnes more CO<sub>2</sub> every day than they would on a dual carriageway. He tells us that his solution to cutting emissions and saving the planet is to ban drive-throughs. He tells the people of Aberdeen that the way to decarbonise their granite houses is to put in solid wall insulation, but he does that without bothering to find out how much that costs or how long the disruption would last.

My second point was illustrated by both Mark Ruskell and the cabinet secretary in their contributions to *The Herald*. Rather than acknowledge the role of the UK Government's contracts for difference scheme in Scotland or the fact that, thanks to its being part of the UK, Scotland will get two free ports, backed by up to £52 million of UK funding, or the UK Government's £110 million investment in offshore wind manufacturing in Ross-shire, alongside huge investment in Scotland's tidal power, both writers pivoted to denigrating the UK.

That is extraordinary when we consider that this Government has, for example, failed to hit its own legal emissions target and its renewable heat target, and has pushed back its flagship commitment to banning biodegradable landfill waste. That desperation for deflection risks potholes on the road to COP27.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Will the member accept an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is about to conclude.

**Liam Kerr:** That is a facile and simplistic approach to policy-making that owes more to fomenting grievance and division than it does to confronting seriously the very real climate emergency.

If we truly want to proceed on the road to COP27, we must travel together. The Scottish Government must look to our committee and observe how people with fundamentally different views work productively together. Let us have less spin, fewer soundbites, more substance and much more collaborative and collegiate working between Scotland's two Governments

15:59

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** It is more than 100 days since Scotland welcomed the world to COP26. The generation-defining decisions that were made there barely keep alive the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C that was agreed in Paris a decade ago.

The task for the Glasgow summit was to set out credible plans to deliver a 50 per cent cut in global emissions by 2030. Although it made modest progress, it was largely a missed opportunity, with climate delay when we really needed climate delivery.

Even if the 2030 commitments from Glasgow are implemented, they represent less than 25 per cent of the required ambition. Rather than a destructive but manageable 1.5°C increase, they put us on track for a devastating 2.4°C increase. That is why, according to the secretary general of the United Nations, the 1.5°C goal is on "life

support." The job of all Governments, including our two, is to deliver intensive care, and that starts with being honest about what happened in Glasgow. There were some positives, but COP26 was spin over substance. There was too much praise of inadequate net zero plans, with the Prime Minister describing minor commitments as transformational. That emboldened the big emitters, who clubbed together to gut the main deal's wording on coal.

There is still no sign of the overdue \$100 billion of climate finance being delivered, with developing countries still having to argue for it at COP26, 10 years after it was agreed. That has damaged trust and broken the coalition between the most vulnerable developing countries and developed countries that was the foundation of the landmark Paris agreement in 2015 and maximised pressure on the world's big emitters. It is tragic that we did not see a repeat of that in Glasgow.

The question now is what will be different in the next year, in the run-up to COP27. As president of COP26, the UK Government needs to lead on urgently rebuilding the Paris climate coalition and, with it, the trust of the developing world. We need to call out the big hitters far more, and at home we need to stop just talking about a just transition and start delivering one.

Transport is still the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland, being responsible for more than a third of the total, yet the Scottish Government has just hiked up rail fares by record levels and it is pressing ahead with cutting ticket offices and axing 90,000 train services a year. We are still waiting for the Government to give councils the powers to run their own local bus services, a provision that I secured in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 more than two years ago, never mind the smart ticketing that was promised more than a decade ago.

Delegates who went to COP26 in Glasgow benefited from smart integrated ticketing, but commuters going to their work do not benefit from that. It is not good enough to deliver smart ticketing for international visitors when the people of Scotland cannot have it. Nicola Sturgeon promised Scotland the saltire card in 2012. Ten years on, all that the Government has delivered is a consultation on setting up a committee.

Scotland needs Oyster card-style ticketing more than ever to make it cheaper, quicker and easier for commuters to travel on buses, trains, trams, the subway and ferries, but the Government is stuck in the slow lane when it comes to smart ticketing. When the minister sums up, I hope that she will name the date when Scotland's commuters will stop being left behind the rest of the world and actually get a single national smart card. The Scottish Government has had 10 years

to think about it, but I do not know whether I am going to get my bus pass or my smart card first. I fear that it will be the former.

However, it is not just on public transport that the Government is allowing Scotland to fall behind. It is doing the same thing with green jobs. We all remember Alex Salmond promising that Scotland would be the Saudi Arabia of renewables but, a decade on from the SNP pledging 130,000 green jobs by 2020, it has delivered less than a sixth of that, and the number is falling. That is why Scotland's oil and gas workers simply do not trust the Government on jobs.

Just weeks after a Green minister sank plans for a publicly owned Scottish energy firm, the SNP-Green coalition leased Scotland's sea beds on the cheap entirely to overseas-owned multinationals with questionable human rights—

**Liam Kerr:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Colin Smyth:** I will if I have time.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** It will have to be very brief, because we do not have any time in hand.

**Liam Kerr:** The member mentioned spin. On the point about oil and gas, does he agree that it is not sufficient for the Scottish Government to announce a just transition fund with a great fanfare without putting any substance underneath that? It is letting the oil and gas workers down.

**Colin Smyth:** I agree with that point. One of my concerns is that, in offshoring Scotland's wind energy, the Scottish Government is offshoring the profits, but there is also a fear that it is offshoring the jobs. Scotland will get none of the billions in profits. We will get a pitiful level of rent. I ask the Government to make sure that the money that we receive—the £700 million or possibly slightly more—is invested in a Scottish renewables fund to create the jobs that we need and to invest in Scottish ports, skills and factories. It is bad enough that the profits are being offshored, but we must not let the Government also offshore the jobs. We all recognise the need for a transition to net zero, but it has to be a jobs-led and just transition.

I could say a lot more about the journey to net zero, but I appreciate that we are running out of time. In the months and years ahead, Labour will be guided by our priority to call for a just transition—a green industrial revolution—that leaves behind no worker, no family and no community. We need climate justice, but we must also have economic justice. Only by delivering both will we have a genuine just transition to net zero that is led by good, secure and unionised jobs for our people.

16:05

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I thank Dean Lockhart and his committee colleagues for enabling the debate.

The circus has long since left town, but it is right that we have a cold, hard look at what was achieved at COP26, and at where we go from here. As other members have suggested, progress was made on mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, albeit not enough. There was also a welcome, if long overdue, recognition of the role that nature and biodiversity must play in helping us to keep global warming below 1.5°C, and I hope that that will be reflected in the Government's forthcoming biodiversity strategy and natural environment bill.

However, there is no avoiding the fact that COP26 fell short. Targets for coal were down but not out, vital climate finance was delayed again, and Climate Action Tracker has referred to a

“clear ... credibility, action and commitment gap”.

That description fits Scotland's current situation uncomfortably well. For all the talk of world-leading legislation, the Scottish Government has repeatedly missed its emissions reduction targets. Those for 2020 might be met, but only thanks to the pandemic.

On transport, which accounts for a third of all emissions, progress remains stalled. We need an expansion of the Government's loan scheme to help people to move to electric vehicles, and an extension of the repayment periods. We need a massive expansion of the charging network, which was referred to by Dean Lockhart, including in residential areas, along with accelerated progress in the transition to other vehicle types. We also urgently need a ferry replacement programme that can reduce emissions and protect lifeline services.

On heat, we have gone into reverse. There is much to welcome in the recently published heat in buildings strategy, but the price tag that it has placed on households and businesses was unrealistic even before the current cost of living crisis hit. We need the Government to scale up its ambition and its contribution to the national retrofit programme. We need a fabric-first approach and a presumption that all new builds are installed with zero or low carbon heating systems. For those looking to install such systems, there should be up-front vouchers rather than cashback or loans.

On renewable energy, the news is better, but that is not to say that there are no challenges there. The ScotWind announcement leaves questions about how it will be delivered and about the impact on Scottish supply chains. That point was picked up by Colin Smyth. Before the making of final decisions on contracts, I urge the cabinet

secretary to speak directly to representatives of the relevant supply chains, including those in Orkney, whom I met last week. Given that wind farm jackets are being built at Methil by workers who are not from Scotland but from elsewhere in Europe, the scale of the challenge is obvious.

The appalling situation that is unfolding in Ukraine, and the steps that are rightly being taken to reduce reliance on Russian gas and oil, will also need to be factored into decisions. We do not expect immediate answers but, inevitably, those things will have an impact on the speed of transition and on the shape of our energy mix in the years ahead.

Our efforts to achieve our interim target and net zero by 2045 continue to enjoy strong cross-party support. However, after years of falling behind, Scottish ministers must spell out in much greater detail how they intend to get back on track. As the UK Climate Change Committee stated:

“Most of the key policy levers are now in the hands of the Scottish Government, but promises have not ... turned into action.”

Looking ahead to COP27, Scottish Liberal Democrats believe that the mismatch between promises and action by ministers must be urgently addressed.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** We move to the open debate. I advise members that there is no time in hand. Members have up to four minutes to make their speeches, and any interventions that they choose to take must be absorbed within those.

I call Natalie Don, who joins us remotely.

16:09

**Natalie Don (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP):** COP26 was a significant point with regard to our planet's future. However, although much positive progress was made, we still have a long way to go. As we have heard today, COP26 succeeded in the ambition of keeping 1.5 alive and in sight, and its importance is no longer questioned, but it will be delivered only through immediate global efforts.

Here in Scotland, we have some of the most ambitious climate targets anywhere in the world. One of the large-scale messages at COP26 was that countries in general must halve their emissions by 2030, against 1990 levels. That is why Scotland's legally binding 2030 emissions target, of a 75 per cent reduction, is world leading in its ambition.

The Scottish budget for this year reaffirms our commitment to those targets. It provides the first £20 million of our 10-year £500 million just transition fund, £336 million for energy efficiency,

low carbon and renewable heat, and £60 million for large-scale heat decarbonisation projects. Those are just some of the actions that the Scottish Government is taking to meet our climate targets.

I am extremely proud of the role that Scotland played in COP26. We led the way by becoming the first developed nation to commit funding to loss and damage, and we recently committed to trebling the world-first climate justice fund to £36 million during the current parliamentary session. I want to expand on that role.

Scotland is committed to a climate justice approach through recognising that those who are least responsible for the global emergency are being affected most severely by it. Our children did not create the mountains of plastic that we see lying in villages in Indonesia, poison our oceans or cut down the rain forests. Likewise, it is not the countries that have been worst affected by climate change that are profiting the most from it, and now leaders of the rich developed countries must go further.

I want to highlight the role of our young people in the climate crisis. They were not wholly satisfied with the outcomes of COP26. Young people have been truly inspirational, showing absolute determination and passion, and they are arguably the most environmentally focused part of our society. If we fail them, it is young people who will bear the brunt of our inaction and incompetence. It is our generation's duty to ensure that our children have a planet to inherit.

Just a few weeks ago, the NZET Committee heard from members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Children's Parliament. It was so refreshing to speak to them and hear some of the things that they wanted to focus on, such as promoting active travel, sustainable green transport and the circular economy. However, we should not just listen to young people—they must be included and play a key part in the decision-making process. Our approach to climate change will require co-operation at all levels, and our young people are drastically under-represented in the community setting, local government and national government. We need to ensure that we are welcoming and encouraging our young people to get involved.

I am therefore delighted that the £500,000 for the social enterprise Fuel Change will accelerate the programme's expansion and enable more young people to contribute to developing low-carbon solutions to climate-related challenges.

There are many challenges ahead, some of which my colleagues have highlighted today, and the work of the NZET Committee will be crucial in working through them. The Scottish Government

has taken action and, given the policies that I have outlined, it is clear that it is committed to meeting the targets that have been set. However, given the reserved nature of many key policy levers on decarbonisation, a more ambitious UK-wide approach will be critical to us achieving our goals. Although the net zero strategy affirms UK Government priorities, it does not go far enough in many of the areas in which we have repeatedly called for action.

The world's leading nations cannot procrastinate any longer. COP26 was not job done. It did not deliver as much as global south countries, activists and campaigners rightly demanded. COP27 must see the world deliver on commitments with urgency and energy and it must ensure that the promises that were made are met and that climate action delivers for those who are on the front line of the crisis.

16:14

**Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con):** COP26 and the Glasgow climate pact, which was negotiated and signed by almost 200 countries, underscored that climate change is an international crisis that requires an international response. It was a historic agreement, a testament to the UK presidency and a huge step forward in keeping 1.5 alive.

Ahead of COP27, we are facing an international crisis of a different kind. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has provoked outrage the world over and has major geopolitical implications, not least for global energy supply, security and prices, which will have a bearing on short to mid-term climate targets.

The conflict will prevent co-operation on climate change from taking place with Russia, which is a huge emitter, along with China. All of that will need to be considered carefully by the international community as Egypt assumes the mantle of the COP presidency.

The reality is that we live in an interdependent world, and the world is in a very different place from where it was in November 2021, when international representatives gathered in Glasgow. Governments must accept that and respond accordingly. That is why Michael Matheson's response to legitimate questioning on energy supply and security by my colleague Liam Kerr earlier this week was so astonishing. It amounted to "nothing to see and nothing has changed." There is to be no review of the Scottish Government's position on oil and gas exploration in the North Sea, and no timeline for when Scotland will fully transition to renewables. There is scant detail on the just transition, and a flat-out refusal to consider nuclear energy options as part

of Scotland's energy mix. It is an elusive energy strategy.

I am reminded of the fable of the chicken who was so busy worrying about the sky falling in that he got eaten by the fox. The SNP-Green Government wants to turn off the taps in the North Sea, but we are years away from the transition to renewables. It will be at least 10 years before the Scottish offshore wind sector is fully up and running. Skills shortages are hampering progress—shortages that Audit Scotland has attributed directly to the Scottish Government's lack of leadership.

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

"Most of the key policy levers are now in the hands of the Scottish Government, but promises have not yet turned into action."

What is happening 2,000 miles away must be a wake-up call. It is simply not tenable to turn off domestic oil and gas production at this time of profound geopolitical uncertainty, when Scotland's energy mix cannot meet demand. To do so would be complete madness. It would mean becoming increasingly reliant on foreign imports, which would have implications for our carbon footprint and our energy security. It is madness, too, to deter investment in the North Sea with public pronouncements pandering to dogma and doctrine. At least Fergus Ewing has the gumption to disagree with the Greens. I urge Nicola Sturgeon to listen to her back benchers rather than her Extinction Rebellion colleagues.

Against the background of recent events, there is recognition by both the UK and Scottish Governments that we need to generate cheaper, cleaner power. The agreement on free ports, which will help to secure clean economic growth for Scotland, demonstrates what can be achieved when constitutional grievance is set to one side.

As we look to COP27, let us work together, as one United Kingdom, to protect the planet.

16:18

**Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP):** It was not long ago that Glasgow showed the world some Scottish hospitality as leaders gathered to address the climate crisis. As we have heard, COP26 provided an opportunity to make real, positive changes in global policies to keep the goal of 1.5 alive.

The Glasgow climate pact did not go as far as many countries had hoped it would, and it was disappointing that there was watering down in the last moments of the summit. I am sure that we can agree that some progress was made, but there is so much more to do. It is imperative that we continue to work at an international level to find

solutions with other countries around the globe to achieve a green transition from the pandemic.

That is not an easy task. We must all step up, rise to the challenge and do our bit, no matter how small. Every bit helps us on this journey. All elected members in the Parliament have a responsibility to decide which path Scotland will take in our role against climate change.

We already have so much to celebrate. Renewable energy makes up 97.4 per cent of our energy source. My constituency, Ayr, has played an integral part in meeting that demand. I recently visited the port of Ayr to see first hand the work that is done there and the plans for the future of the port as we move to net zero. Many of Scotland's wind-turbine blades currently come through the port before being assembled elsewhere in Scotland. A few weeks ago, just up the road in Troon, I was joined by the Minister for Environment and Land Reform on a visit to Glennon Brothers timber company—another business in my constituency that is thriving. It produces timber sustainably from Scottish spruce to make Scottish homes, and it uses the by-products of that process to generate all its own heat and energy. Furthermore, the timberlink service, which is supported by the Scottish Government, led to 52,500 tonnes of timber being shipped directly into Troon harbour in 2021, taking the equivalent of 2,100 lorry movements off the road. We need to use our ports, and the fantastic timberlink initiative, more, and remove more lorries from our roads.

It is clear that climate-friendly policies can be business-friendly policies—the two are not opposed to each other. While we should recognise the work that has already been done, we must not be complacent. There is still a long journey ahead and we need to be ambitious in order to preserve Scotland's beauty, and our planet, for future generations.

Members may have watched the recent BBC "Panorama" documentary that showed the extent of illegal waste dumping in Scotland. It was shocking, to say the least. Those illegal practices by criminals have a massive effect on our environment and communities, and on taxpayers. I am pleased to hear that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans is well aware of that and is ensuring that those criminals are held accountable for their actions.

However, we need to work on the recycling process in Scotland. Many everyday household items are put into recycling bins, in the well-intentioned belief that they are recyclable. However, most people are not aware that items such as crisp packets, medicine blister packs, contact-lens containers, bread bags, sweetie, biscuit and snack wrappings, toothpaste tubes and

milk-bottle tops, to name but a few things, cannot be recycled. That is because they are classed as too hard to recycle and are usually taken in only by specialist schemes that are run by committed volunteers. One of those volunteers is Betty McDonald from Prestwick, who set up the town's recycle Saturday initiative. Every month, Betty and a team of volunteers collect boxes that are full of those hard-to-recycle items, which are then sent to specialist recycling facilities. Betty is going above and beyond for her community.

However, expansion of those schemes is severely limited. If we want to properly fix that problem, we need much larger action at a higher level. We need to educate people on the items that can and cannot be recycled in order to stop our landfill sites from growing ever larger.

Each and every one of us has been blessed with a country, and a planet, of outstanding natural beauty. We would do ourselves, our children and our children's children a monumental disservice if we were not to protect and preserve those things. That goes far beyond party politics, so let us come together to work towards a just and fair transition to net zero for the benefit of Scotland and the world.

16:22

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** It is a privilege to serve as a member of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, and I invite colleagues and the public to tune in on a Tuesday morning and follow our debates.

I do not know what I was expecting from today's debate. I know that it is a challenge when there is so much that we can say and so many topics to cover. I feel that members have tried, but we have heard a few soundbites and a bit of spin. I will try hard to avoid that, because on the committee we are really collaborative. There is a lot of different experience among the committee members—we have a former cabinet secretary, and former and sitting councillors, and we try to leave our party politics at the door.

To be honest, in the crisis that we face around the world, with the climate and nature emergency, none of us can afford to be proud—we have to take good ideas wherever we find them. Just yesterday, we saw the youngest-ever petitioner to the Scottish Parliament, who is seven years old. He came here with a brilliant idea—I think that he met the First Minister as well—and he put a smile on people's faces.

We should be proud that we are, I think, an open and listening Parliament. Whether you are seven or 77, if you have a good idea, you can drop the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee clerks a line. I am sure that they will thank me for

saying that, but we genuinely want to hear good ideas.

We also want to work with Government, whether that is the Scottish Government, the UK Government or local government. The committee currently has a big inquiry that is looking at the role of local government in achieving net zero, particularly in relation to finance. I was going to intervene on my colleague Liam Kerr when he talked about the two Governments and say that we must not forget local government, which is really important to net zero. We need to hear more from our colleagues across Scotland's local authorities.

That is not what I had written down in my notes at all—those are just my reflections on what I have heard so far. When you are on the back benches, you get a bit looser in your style of speaking.

I do not think that any of us are under any illusion about the scale of the challenge that we face. It was a real privilege to play a very small part in COP26 and to attend it with colleagues. Some progress has been made, but we know that it is not enough. Colleagues who were involved in the final day of the COP26 deliberations said that COP27 has already started. That is what we try to do in the committees: we try to look to the future.

I go back to local government, because I want to talk about energy. When Liam Kerr was speaking earlier on, I was going to suggest that we need to look more closely at what is happening in local government. Just last week—I am checking my notes—I read some really encouraging news from North Ayrshire Council about its plans relating to solar farms and other renewable projects. It says that its solar and wind turbine projects could potentially generate 277 per cent of North Ayrshire's future energy demand. That would make North Ayrshire a net exporter of excess renewable energy to help to decarbonise electricity.

Some really good, innovative stuff is happening out there, but we have heard from local government in our inquiry so far that resources are an issue. We are therefore looking at what other means of finance exist for local government. We all need to be open minded on that.

I commend to members a really good report by Unison, about decarbonising our public services, which was published during COP26. We need to look at that, too.

When I spoke for Scottish Labour on the front bench just before COP26, I said in an amendment that we must

“take all necessary steps to secure a just transition to net zero in Scotland, ensuring that no individual, family or community is left behind.”

That is a good note to end on.

16:27

**Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):** I thank the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee for bringing this debate to the chamber. I am grateful, because I intend to give a speech that highlights the exciting opportunities that my East Lothian constituency has in relation to Scotland's net zero ambitions and our journey towards a just transition.

In November 2021, the long-awaited COP26 climate summit in Glasgow ended, having made important progress in a number of areas. The importance of capping temperature increases at 1.5°C is now no longer questioned and, as a nation, Scotland needs to deliver on our commitments.

Given how significant the emission rates from the built environment alone are, it is clear that Scotland will struggle to reach net zero by 2045 without accelerated change. East Lothian has already initiated a retrofitting East Lothian steering group, which has already met and is liaising with East Lothian Council, local businesses and Scottish Government agencies to look at opportunities. Partnership working that includes the Scottish Government, local government, local businesses and non-governmental organisations will help us to deliver solutions that are tailored to meet local circumstances. As MSPs, we need to lead, not just grumble.

Local authorities will be particularly important in ensuring a just transition to net zero. My East Lothian constituency has huge opportunities as we move towards our just transition. The former site of Cockenzie power station and the current Torness power station both have unique grid connection access points.

In December last year, Scottish Government ministers approved the marine licence application for the 36-turbine Seagreen 1A offshore wind proposal, which was brought forward by SSE Renewables and TotalEnergies. That decision followed unanimous support for the Seagreen 1A onshore proposals at Cockenzie among East Lothian councillors in August 2021. National and local government are working together to deliver the kind of change that we need to see happen if we are serious about reaching net zero by 2045.

**Monica Lennon:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Paul McLennan:** I am short of time. I am sorry.

The Seagreen project will be capable of generating around 5,000 gigawatt hours of renewable energy a year. To put that into context, that will be enough clean and sustainable

electricity to power more than 1.6 million homes and to save around 1.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually. The Cockenzie substation can create numerous opportunities not only in the construction but in the fabrication of the component parts. We are already engaging with the company in that regard. Local people and businesses will benefit from opportunities such as the provision of plant and materials and other services such as the provision of accommodation and food for the site operatives. Again, discussions on that are under way. Those are the opportunities for one project in East Lothian alone.

Next Friday, along with Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Engineering, local colleges and East Lothian Council, I will host an East Lothian energy meeting with the likes of Total, SSE, EDF, Scottish Power, Scottish Gas and Inchcape Offshore Ltd. All the companies that I have mentioned are engaging in projects in East Lothian. The focus of the meeting will be on developing and maximising opportunities for sustainable long-term employment, including local apprenticeship opportunities. We will explore supply chain development and manufacturing development.

As Torness moves towards being decommissioned, we must ensure that the transition to renewable sources of energy is managed and provides opportunities for many years to come for the highly skilled workforce. A just transition must be just that.

I am committed and dedicated to working with the renewables industry, national Governments and local government to ensure that East Lothian becomes a renewable energy hub in terms of grid connection, a highly skilled workforce and a strong supply chain and manufacturing base.

Innovative storage technology companies such as Sunamp in my constituency offer up new possibilities, and carbon capture and hydrogen opportunities offer exciting opportunities in East Lothian. Scotland is already a world leader in renewables. We must build on that.

East Lothian is incredibly well placed to play its part in the challenges that we face as we move towards COP27. There are significant opportunities for Scotland to lead the way globally in finding solutions. East Lothian will play its part.

16:31

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** There are eight months to go until COP27, and keeping 1.5 alive has never looked more fragile. With the cost of living crisis fuelled by soaring oil and gas prices and war, it has never been more important to deliver safe and stable energy supplies and a safe climate.

Over the past 100 days, we have instead seen a doubling down on maximum economic recovery from fossil fuels, with dependence building even further at a time when the just transition needs to accelerate. Despite investors walking away from Cambo, there has been a disastrous expansion of oil and gas licences in the North Sea. Remember that that is happening in the face of what the International Energy Agency said before COP26, which was that

“there can be no new investments in oil, gas and coal”.

It has not changed its position on that.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Liam Kerr:** Will Mark Ruskell give way?

**Mark Ruskell:** I am really short of time, but I will take Brian Whittle’s intervention.

**Brian Whittle:** I agree with Mark Ruskell that the IEA said that there can be no more oil and gas, but that was before Europe and the world decided that they no longer want to take oil and gas from Russia. As we transition to renewable energy, we will still require oil and gas, which has to come from somewhere. Why should it not come from Scotland?

**Mark Ruskell:** We already have more oil and gas in the North Sea than we can afford to burn. If we look at the response of Governments across Europe, we see that they are recognising that their dependence on oil and gas is a problem. They are not looking for other sources; they are looking to reduce their dependence on oil and gas for the sake of the climate and for energy security.

In recent months, there has been a rejection of a windfall tax in the United Kingdom, even though oil and gas companies in the North Sea are making £44,000 in profits a second. The very companies that have benefited from billions of tax subsidies in previous years are now looking to deepen our dependence on oil and gas while ordinary people shiver in fuel poverty.

Last week, we had the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, which was described as an “atlas of human suffering” by the secretary general of the UN. That is exactly where we are heading unless we can decisively turn the corner now.

To stop the Glasgow agreement withering away, we need more progress on finance from the UK presidency. So far, the \$100 billion fund for loss and damage that was first floated at Paris remains undelivered. That is a stain on all our consciences, and I hope that the first COP to be held in Africa will focus the agenda on how we repay our debt.

There is much in the Scottish Government’s climate programmes that has already put us on a

faster route to net zero, pushing beyond the UK Climate Change Committee's pathways, from an ambitious heat in buildings strategy to reducing vehicle mileage, a surge in tree planting and wind power targets. The challenge for the Scottish Government now is to flesh out the detail of programme delivery and financing, which is a point that Dean Lockhart made.

Let me make it clear—I agree with Monica Lennon on this—that there are no comfort zones for any Government to sit in. The UK CCC and Scotland's Climate Assembly have both highlighted areas for faster and more radical change, including in the areas of aviation, peatland restoration and diet change. The Climate Assembly in particular has given the Scottish Government a mandate to go further and ministers should grasp that. The introduction of carbon food labelling, an action plan for reducing air miles and stronger support for peatland restoration and blue carbon are all needed. However, it is clear that business as usual will lead us down a road of no return. It is the Parliament's job to challenge Governments to get on the best pathway to real zero and I look forward to working with the NZET Committee on that mission.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Stephanie Callaghan, who joins us remotely.

16:35

**Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** It is only nine months until COP27, when the goals set in Glasgow will be revisited and the baton will be handed to Egypt. The road to COP27 requires leadership, partnership and investment—I will touch on each of them.

Throughout COP26, Scotland led the way in amplifying the voices of our green generation. The Scottish Government was a bridge between the voiceless and decision makers. The powerful might have left Glasgow, but Scotland is still that bridge and we must use the respect that we garnered in Glasgow to ensure that commitments are delivered.

Scotland was praised for its leadership in dedicating £2 million to a loss and damage fund and committing to a world-first £36 million climate justice fund. There are still people who ask why we should send money to the other side of the world when we are dealing with a cost of living crisis at home, but let us not forget the unifying message that we heard in Glasgow: we are all in this together. From Bellshill to Bangladesh, from Uddingston to Uganda, none of us is safe until we are all safe. Climate justice means acknowledging that our fellow humans are just that—they are human like you and me, Presiding Officer—and

leadership means setting aside arbitrary borders and acting as one planet.

That brings me on to partnership. Covid has illustrated well the real power of partnership, with scientists around the globe harnessing their astonishing talents to create vaccines to a previously unimaginable timescale. That is the kind of dynamism and urgency that we need ahead of COP27.

Global partnership must be matched by local partnership. The building blocks to Scotland's climate response exist in our own communities. Local people need to understand the causes and impacts of climate change and how they can work individually and collectively to be part of the solution.

Local businesses also have much to offer. ACS Clothing Ltd is a real climate champion. It is reshaping the fashion industry, which is the second-biggest polluter on earth; it is bringing big brands into the circular economy through resale and reuse. ACS already operates a carbon-neutral business and aims to be net zero by 2025. Its innovation, initiative and ideas convince me that it will succeed at that. Such businesses show us a yellow-brick road to COP27 and we must learn from them, nurture them and widely share their innovation and success.

Partnership is also about listening. Now more than ever, every voice is valid and every innovation is transferable. As we seek to address the climate emergency together, it is critical to include our young people—those who will need to live longest with any decisions that we make. I look forward to joining high school students from my Uddingston and Bellshill constituency next week for our first sustainability forum. I will listen to their views, concerns and ideas, which will shape my actions in the chamber and local government.

On investment, we must learn from history as we transform our economy to protect our planet. Thatcherism devastated coal mining communities such as those in Lanarkshire in the 1980s and 1990s. The underemployment and health inequalities still linger. However, the Scottish Government is not repeating those mistakes and I applaud it for working in concert with businesses and unions to invest in skilled, green jobs.

The task ahead can feel overwhelming, especially with the pandemic, the horrors of war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis at home. Those are all pressing and urgent matters for Government, but they cannot steer us off the path to COP27. The science is clear: 2020 was Europe's hottest year on record and Australia has recorded its warmest day ever. Only if we accelerate climate action can COP26 be judged a

success. We need leadership, partnership and investment.

16:39

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** In truth, it will be some time before we are in a position to fully appreciate the implications of COP26 for Scotland and for the transition towards a greener globe. However, the signs are promising. Despite the ever-growing challenges of Covid and the inevitable geopolitical tensions—especially in Europe—which always seem to play a role in such events, countries around the world agreed deals on methane, coal and deforestation to name but a few.

In the few minutes that I have, I will focus on a couple of issues. First, I will talk about education and skills. We, on the Conservative benches, are keen to see Scotland develop a position in the renewables sector that is as substantial as what we have for oil and gas, if not more so. That means leading not only in technological innovation but in the scaling up and manufacturing of those technologies. As Dean Lockhart highlighted, we are yet to see the education system reflect that opportunity and need.

The SNP and the Greens are quick to talk about how many homes they want to move to heat pumps in the coming years, which would mean not only making the pumps more affordable but dramatically increasing the number of engineers who are qualified to install and maintain them. As Dean Lockhart said, let us not forget that 200,000 pumps a year are required in order to hit the target. That is an attainment gap that the Scottish Government is just not closing.

Secondly, I will highlight food production, processing, consumption and waste. I have spoken many times about the high quality of food that our farmers produce, which should be making a short journey to plates in schools, hospitals, prisons and every council canteen. It can be done: East Ayrshire is an exemplar. There are no excuses. Instead, we import far too many products that are often inferior, and we send our produce out of the country to be processed, which contributes to the distances that are travelled, with a significant carbon footprint.

What is more, the food that we waste globally contributes four times as much greenhouse gas as the entire global aviation industry. If that were a country, it would be the third-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after China and the USA.

**Mark Ruskell:** I thank the member for giving way. I recognise that he is passionate about reducing food waste, but would he also reflect on the UK Climate Change Committee's recommendations that we need a 20 per cent

reduction in meat and dairy consumption in order to have any chance of meeting our climate targets? That seems to be a real elephant in the room.

**Brian Whittle:** I have to be honest with the member. We blame our farmers for pollution, but that pales into insignificance when we require a land mass the size of China to produce the amount of food that we waste. We could definitely do something about that right now, instead of listening to a noisy minority.

This must be a Parliament that starts to deliver if we are to have any hope of reaching the targets for 2030 and 2045. We must give the public confidence that the changes that they face are not only necessary but have been thought through and are practical. However, Government minister Patrick Harvie has given us a pronouncement on the need to ban drive-through fast-food outlets to reduce emissions. Aside from the fact that the carbon reduction resulting from that is astonishingly marginal, I fail to see how making it harder to buy a McFlurry will encourage the public to buy into the Government's plans to tackle climate change.

Amid all the target setting and grand pledges on climate change, we should remember that no amount of rhetoric will reduce our emissions. If making self-congratulatory statements about world-leading targets were a carbon-negative activity, Patrick Harvie and Michael Matheson would have already single-handedly decarbonised most of the developed world. We can have all the targets that we want, but the only ones that matter are the ones that have a route map to achieving them. That is what is lacking in all the Scottish Government's crowing.

16:43

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** The debate has rightly focused on the further action that is needed to tackle the climate emergency following COP26 as we look ahead to COP27 later this year. My colleague Colin Smyth pointed out that we need to reduce emissions in sectors of the economy, such as domestic transport, where they remain stubbornly high.

Tess White spoke about concerns about the pace of the transition away from fossil fuels. We, in the Labour Party, believe that we need investment in both the production and the distribution of renewable energy through the creation of an asset-owning, publicly owned energy company.

We have heard from Paul McLennan that we need members of the Scottish Parliament who take action and do not just grumble. We also need ministers who act and who will not crumble under

pressure from industry lobbying. That means working with trade unions that represent workers in carbon-intensive sectors to create well-paid, secure, green jobs.

I represent offshore oil and gas workers in the north-east, so I understand the importance of delivering those well-paid and secure green jobs as part of a worker-led transition. Those workers are left in a position that sees their transferable skills go unrecognised. At great personal expense, they are often asked to duplicate skills and qualifications that they already have.

The sector's major training bodies have failed to agree common standards, which has led to the development of rival standards, training modules and qualifications. That market failure cannot continue to go unchallenged by the Government at the expense of workers, which is why I have been working with Friends of the Earth Scotland and the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers—the RMT—to push the Scottish Government to commit to supporting an offshore training passport, at least in principle.

The First Minister welcomed the idea of an offshore training passport as a constructive proposal when I first raised it with her back in September, yet, despite repeated questioning and correspondence, ministers have refused to commit to supporting an offshore training passport, even in principle. They have continued to avoid responsibility to address the issue of skills transferability in the offshore energy sector, suggesting that it is an issue to be resolved by industry.

However, that position completely ignores the current market failure, which is preventing oil and gas workers from transitioning into greener jobs. When I asked the Scottish Government whether it had engaged with the UK Government and other international parties on the issue of skills transferability at COP26, I was told that no specific conversations on the issue had taken place. I cannot think of a better time than COP26 to have tried to make progress on an issue so vital to delivering a just transition.

In the wake of COP26, SNP MPs at Westminster were given the opportunity to vote in favour of action on skills transferability for oil and gas workers, but they abstained. The Scottish Government's warm words on the need for a just transition are not matched by any practical actions.

I was due to meet the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity last week to discuss that issue. It was not an easy meeting to secure, yet it was postponed with just a day's notice. The postponement was apparently due to the minister's awaiting a significant update and

wanting to share substantial progress. The minister is here today. Would she like to share any of that progress with us?

**The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater):** I am happy to—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Excuse me—hang on a second. The member is about to conclude; she has two seconds left.

**Mercedes Villalba:** Okay. I will be happy to hear from the minister at another time.

I would also like, finally, to get a commitment to support for an offshore training passport, at least in principle, because in the wake of COP26 and as we head towards COP27, we have an opportunity to demonstrate Scotland's climate justice, underpinned by social and economic justice—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms Villalba. You are over your time.

**Mercedes Villalba:** The time for a green industrial revolution is now.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms Villalba—please take your seat. Thank you.

I call Graham Simpson to wind up on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives for up to five minutes, please.

16:48

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I hear what you are saying, Presiding Officer.

It has been an odd debate in some ways. There is no motion and no committee report on which to base the debate—even its title changed at one point—but we know that it is about climate change. We have had some really good contributions from across the chamber, and I will try to cover as many as possible.

I will start with Brian Whittle, who mentioned the need to upskill the workforce and said, quite rightly, that we do not have enough engineers to install some of the new technologies. He also spoke about something that he is really passionate about: food and food waste, and his belief that local is best. He is absolutely right about that.

Speaking of waste, Siobhian Brown mentioned fly-tipping and recycling, which are really good topics to mention. I say to her that she might want to get behind calls to have a moratorium on incinerators, which is something that I know Monica Lennon is passionate about.

COP26 should be remembered for what was actually achieved. There were some major steps forward on the basket of key climate issues. More than 100 countries signed a pledge to halt and

reverse deforestation and at least 40 countries agreed to stop using coal, while leaders signed a pledge to cut methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030.

That all sounds good, and, as Colin Smyth said, that is all very well, but we need to see delivery and substance over spin, and I agree with him. Although the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C is alive, it is only just alive and it will depend not just on us but on what countries around the world do.

Some members mentioned the transport sector, which is the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. I think that the SNP-Green Government's approach to the sector is disappointing, because it is more stick than carrot. The Government seems to have declared war on drivers and does not seem to want to deliver what is actually needed, which is better public transport. I see the minister, Lorna Slater, shaking her head. If she disagrees with that, perhaps she could bring forward the provisions in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, which Colin Smyth mentioned and which would allow councils to run municipal bus services in their own patch. I think that that would deliver a step change in public transport and get people out of cars, which I assume that Lorna Slater wants. However, for some reason, the Government is dithering on that point.

In his excellent, wide-ranging speech, Liam Kerr spoke about the oil and gas sector. He said that, if we want to end our reliance on oil and gas, we need to say how and when we will achieve that. So far, the SNP and its partners in the Government have not answered that point.

Tess White made exactly the same point; she spoke of the folly of turning our backs on the North Sea. Given her background, we would expect her to say that. Mr Kerr, rightly, also mentioned some of the contradictions in Government policy.

In another excellent contribution as the committee convener, Finlay Carson spoke about agriculture and aquaculture. We probably do not speak about those matters often enough in the chamber.

I will rattle through some of the other contributions. Monica Lennon wants us all to work together, which would be great. She spoke about the need to resource local government properly. Like me, she knows, as a former councillor, that it is not properly resourced. We need more resources for local government.

Paul McLennan spoke about work in his area and rightly so, because it sounds like some good stuff is happening there.

Unfortunately, my good friend Mark Ruskell is in denial with regard to the oil and gas sector.

Stephanie Callaghan, who was speaking remotely, spoke about the fashion industry and the need to reuse materials. She is quite right. I have been buying second-hand clothes all my life, but we now have apps such as Depop, which a lot of young people are using, and I recommend it to members.

All in all, it has been a good debate, but we need to do a lot of work to deliver on the actions that were agreed at COP26.

16:53

**The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater):** I am pleased and honoured to close the debate on behalf of the Scottish Government, and I thank all colleagues for their contributions.

I think that we can all agree with the members, including Colin Smyth, Liam McArthur and Monica Lennon, who said that the outcome of COP26 was not what the world needed. I remember that Alok Sharma delivered his closing speech in tears, and island nation leaders were devastated by the future that will see their nations submerged. Colin Smyth was quite right to challenge the world to achieve the dream of keeping 1.5 alive.

Liam McArthur was right to hold the Scottish Government to account on our missed targets, as was Liam Kerr. We are concerned about that and as recently as last October we put together a plan for exactly how we will catch up on those targets.

Liam Kerr asked a very sensible question about how much energy we need, from where and from what sources it will come, and how much demand can be reduced through insulation and other efficiency savings. The answer will come from our updated energy strategy, which is a comprehensive review that will answer those questions in further detail for all of us.

Natalie Don was quite right to emphasise that the people who suffer most from climate change are those who have done the least to cause it. She is also right to highlight that young people have been leading the way on such matters. I take this moment to thank the climate strikers, the stop Cambo protesters and all the young people who have powerfully made their voices heard. Keep it up—the world needs you.

Tess White will be interested in a study that came out today and that shows that insulation and heat pumps can deliver UK energy security more quickly than domestic gas fields. I encourage her to read that study.

**Liam Kerr:** I ask the minister the same question that I put to her colleague Mark Ruskell and to the cabinet secretary: when does she envisage that

renewables will cover demand so that we do not need oil and gas, whether imported or domestic?

**Lorna Slater:** As I said just a minute ago, Mr Kerr asks a very sensible question. That question will be answered by our updated energy strategy. We need to assess the matter. The work is under way, and I look forward to seeing it as much as he does.

As I said, Tess White will be interested in the study that I mentioned, but I am slightly concerned that she is in favour of the extinction of the human race. I remind her of the context—*[Interruption.]* Well, if you are against Extinction Rebellion—*[Interruption.]*

The context of global heating is that, at 6°C of warming, it is estimated that 95 per cent of life on earth will be extinct. Only a transition away from fossil fuels and urgent action to remove carbon that is already in the atmosphere will save us from that fate.

**Finlay Carson:** Will the minister tell the chamber why Greenpeace does not get Scotland?

**Lorna Slater:** I am not familiar with the incident to which the member refers.

Mark Ruskell is correct that there can be no more oil and gas exploration. There are European colleagues who are reacting to the situation in Ukraine and the dangers to our energy security posed by Russian gas by accelerating the decarbonisation of their energy systems.

I agree with Siobhian Brown that climate friendly is business friendly. There are exciting opportunities in the circular economy to reduce business costs through reducing waste and recognising the value of materials that we currently throw away.

**Liam Kerr:** I am genuinely grateful to the minister for taking another intervention. Last month, it was announced that the Treasury would review the Solvency II regime in relation to low-carbon infrastructure investments following Brexit. Does the minister welcome that review?

**Lorna Slater:** I do not have an answer to that question right now. I am not familiar with that review.

I will press on. Both Siobhian Brown and Stephanie Callaghan will be excited to hear about my work in the Scottish Government on the extended producer responsibility scheme. I have been corresponding with the UK Government on that this week, working towards a scheme that would incentivise producers to use more easily recyclable materials in their packaging and get them to contribute financially to the reduction of waste. That is a significant initiative that we will see coming through in the next few years.

I say to Monica Lennon and Paul McLennan that I am very keen to support local government, particularly in implementing circular economy measures. I was excited to hear from both of them about local energy generation and storage projects in their areas.

I am concerned about running out of time, so I will jump ahead to Ms Villalba's point. I thank her for it and agree with her on that important issue. I am very sorry that I delayed our meeting. I did so because work is being done in that area by OPITO, which I have met—although not during COP26, when I was very busy and also had Covid.

I delayed our meeting because this month I am expecting a report from OPITO on significant progress towards an offshore passport. Although that is not OPITO's language, it is progress towards a communication of standards to allow the transferability of workers. As soon as I have that report, I will share it with Ms Villalba so that we can discuss it and she can see whether she is satisfied with the progress.

**Mercedes Villalba:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Lorna Slater:** I think I am out of time—I am very sorry.

I will jump ahead to my final remarks. The Scottish Government will continue our focus on the delivery of our ambitious climate policies. From implementing our recently published hydrogen action plan to updating our energy strategy, all our policies will carry the theme of a fair and just transition while also looking ahead to the next full climate change plan. We have committed to bringing forward a draft of that plan in the first half of this session of Parliament.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Fiona Hyslop to wind up the debate on behalf of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

16:59

**Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** It has been a bit of a mixed debate, which has gone from the global to the very local. We have heard about the fact that imperfect progress was made at COP26, as Colin Smyth set out, but although success was not a foregone conclusion, positive steps were taken. Science was firmly placed on the agenda, and many countries agreed plurilateral initiatives to accelerate action on coal, methane reduction, stopping fossil fuel finance, stopping deforestation and phasing out vehicles that have internal combustion engines.

For the first time, as Liam McArthur pointed out, the final text at a conference of the parties recognised nature's critical role in tackling the

climate emergency and the joint crisis of climate and biodiversity.

Although that is all welcome, focus must now be placed on delivery and implementation. As Malini Mehra stated in the committee's post-COP26 evidence session on 16 November:

"The two weeks saw a barrage of pledges and pacts being made to address the nature and climate emergencies. They are welcome, but they will remain paper tigers unless Parliaments such as the Scottish Parliament enact laws to bring them into the purview of national legislation."—[*Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee*, 16 November 2021; c 4.]

To paraphrase what Professor Jim Skea said in evidence to the committee, this Parliament has agreed on world-beating targets, so we now need world-beating action to deliver them. The focus now must be on implementation and delivery.

Opposition members including Liam Kerr are right to challenge, but they must do so constructively. The Opposition, as well as the Government, must stretch itself out of its comfort zone when it comes to the climate emergency.

Monica Lennon was right to stress the public's expectation that we in Parliament will co-operate—including with local government—in order to deliver. Paul McLennan spoke about the need for all MSPs to lead.

Scotland can and must lead by example, by sharing our knowledge and expertise, and our successes and failures. No Government in the world has done enough, and time is not on our side. The climate emergency has begun: the world is already burning and flooding, and humanity is on red alert.

During COP26, I met Marinel Ubbo, who is a youth climate justice advocate from the Philippines. In November, in a debate in the chamber on the conclusions of the Glasgow climate dialogues communiqué, I spoke about Marinel's harrowing experience of supertyphoon Haiyan in 2013, when she sadly lost relatives and friends and was left without food or water. Only weeks after COP26, another devastating supertyphoon, typhoon Rai, hit the Philippines. In an email to me, Marinel said:

"From the communities to the national level, we are crying for funding for loss and damage, and this typhoon just showed how urgent it is already for our global leaders to already put loss and damage on the priority agenda."

Therefore, climate change is here—it is happening now.

Natalie Don mentioned Scotland's commitment to treble its world-first climate justice fund to £36 million, with £2 million being set aside for loss and damage. At COP26, UN secretary general António Guterres said:

"Scotland is one of the first international actors that has determined money for loss and damage. That is a very important point for developing countries, so I would like to start by saying how much I appreciate the Scottish effort in this regard."

Loss and damage is expected to be a COP27 focus; it must be, as the cabinet secretary said.

There needs to be improvement when it comes to climate change funding. A target of \$100 billion was set 10 years ago but, as Mark Ruskell said, that funding has not been delivered to the global south. The majority of funding that is coming through is in the form of loans.

At COP26, there was a last-minute watering down of the language of the coal pledge, when India backed China to change the pledge from "phasing out" of unabated coal to "phasing down". India was widely blamed for that, but, as Malini Mehra made evident to the committee in our post-COP session, many people failed to see the inequality of a situation in which intense pressure is placed on countries such as India that have not had the benefits of oil and gas to reduce their reliance on coal. That is not fair, equal or just. It was made clear by almost all the expert witnesses who gave evidence to the committee that India is trying to achieve equity by adopting a more nuanced approach through that language change. It was a way of trying to encourage support from developed countries, which are largely responsible for the climate emergency.

On private finance, at COP26, Mark Carney, who chairs the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, which gathers together 450 organisations that control 40 per cent of global assets, announced the mobilisation of £95 trillion.

There can be no place for false offsets and double accounting. We do not want just the assurance that there will be a reduction in emissions; we must see and know that it is actually taking place. Global reporting standards are key.

Tackling the climate emergency will hurt. It will be uncomfortable. We must have a whole-system, whole-world, whole-sector response. Finlay Carson, in what I thought was an exemplary speech from a committee convener, focused on the full-system approach that is needed. The dial of the world's systems must shift permanently, or there will be no clear prospect of a permanent future for humanity in many parts of the world. The impatience and passion of the climate change activists on the streets of Glasgow reflected that.

The frustrations that have been caused by COP26 bring a heightened focus and urgency to COP27 in Egypt later this year. As the UN's secretary general said in his closing speech in Glasgow, "COP27 starts now."

John Kerry launched the US-Egypt climate working group when he visited Egypt in February, ahead of COP27. It is pertinent that the committee convener and I both quote John Kerry, rather than the current COP president Alok Sharma. In February, John Kerry asked:

“Will we live up to our most basic responsibility: to leave behind a world better than we found it?”

The jury is still out on that. We have yet to provide concrete evidence that we will, but we must look to COP27 with hope and determination.

The Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee will ensure that the Scottish Parliament keeps the climate emergency firmly at the top of the agenda.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate on “The Road to COP27 and Beyond: Tackling the Climate Emergency in the Aftermath of COP26”.

## **UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill**

17:07

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The next item of business is consideration of motion S6M-03390, in the name of Angus Robertson, on withdrawal of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill be withdrawn.—[*Angus Robertson*]

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

### **Decision Time**

17:07

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** There is one question to be put as a result of today’s business.

The question is, that motion S6M-03390, in the name of Angus Robertson, on withdrawal of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill be withdrawn.

*Meeting closed at 17:07.*



This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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

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