



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Tuesday 6 December 2022**

**Session 6**



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# Scottish Parliament

*Tuesday 6 December 2022*

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

## Time for Reflection

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Gareth Edwards of Perth Gospel Hall.

**Gareth Edwards (Perth Gospel Hall):** Thank you, Presiding Officer, and good afternoon, everyone.

December has arrived and the usual chaotic countdown to Christmas has well and truly begun. Next weekend, I will have the privilege of speaking at three Christmas carol services at different locations around Perthshire. Those are always extremely joyful occasions that bring communities together at this special time of the year.

However, the thing that excites me most about the events is the opportunity to share the Christmas message from the Bible. That message, which the angels described to the shepherds as one of good news and of great joy for all people, was:

“unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.”

I do not know whether any of you have started your Christmas shopping just yet—maybe, like me, you feel like it is still a couple of weeks too early for that. Finding the right gift for the people whom we love and working out what they really need the most is not always that easy, is it?

If you could give one gift to the people of Scotland this Christmas, what it would be? What is the greatest need of our nation? The Christmas story reminds us of mankind’s greatest need and of God’s perfect gift to meet that need. God knew exactly what we required. That was not simply another preacher or philosopher or even a politician, but a saviour to rescue us from ourselves and to save us from our sins. That is why the Bible says:

“The Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of the world.”

He sent a Saviour who would bring forgiveness, recovery, peace, love, joy, purpose and hope to all who would receive him. Are not those the very things that the people of Scotland really need today?

More than that, the Bible says:

“the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Jesus came to purchase that gift for us through his death on the cross to pay the penalty for mankind’s sin. God’s gift to us today is wrapped up in the person of Jesus Christ, who not only died but rose again on the third day. Today, through him, eternal life is offered to everyone who wants it—that is, life linked to God, life lived to the full and life leading to heaven.

My Christmas prayer is that the people of Scotland—including yourselves—will not be like the innkeeper at Bethlehem who had no room for Jesus, but will instead realise that Jesus is God’s perfect gift to meet our greatest need, and that many will receive him into their hearts by faith this Christmas.

Thank you very much for your time, and God bless you all.

## Topical Question Time

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The next item of business is topical questions. Any member seeking to request a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question or indicate that by entering “RTS” in the chat function. As always, I make a plea for succinct questions and answers to match.

### Group A Streptococcus

**1. Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on Strep A cases in Scotland, including what it is doing to mitigate any risks. (S6T-01020)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf):** A number of children in England and Wales have, sadly, died from invasive group A strep—GAS—infections since September. My deepest condolences go out to their families during this unimaginably difficult time.

Reports of GAS have increased across Scotland, but there have been no reported deaths in Scotland related to that or, indeed, to invasive GAS infections. I understand that the reporting of GAS infections will be concerning. I can offer some reassurance. The vast majority of GAS infections present as mild illness that is easily treated by penicillin or other antibiotics, and invasive infections are, thankfully, very rare. Peaks in the numbers of GAS infections are expected during winter and spring, and there are typically spikes every three or four years. Current numbers do not significantly exceed previous spikes.

Nonetheless, we are not complacent. Health services across Scotland are on alert and will act swiftly to identify and treat GAS infections. Guidance has been prepared for nurseries and schools, particularly in relation to maintaining good hygiene and managing outbreaks, and everyone affected should self-isolate until they have completed 24 hours on antibiotics.

I will provide a further update if needed, but I stress again that the vast majority of cases are, thankfully, mild and easily treatable.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** Strep A symptoms include a sandpaper-like rash, flu symptoms—such as a temperature over 38°C, a sore throat and swollen glands—and a strawberry red-looking tongue. I urge people who have such symptoms and, in particular, those with children under 10 with symptoms to speak to their general practitioner, because antibiotics can very much help in such cases.

In the House of Lords yesterday, the option of using antibiotics as a preventative measure in schools in which there are cases was raised. Is the Scottish Government actively considering prophylaxis?

**Humza Yousaf:** I have asked Public Health Scotland and my clinical colleagues to give advice to that effect. As I said, the GAS infections that we are seeing are, thankfully, not invasive; they are mild. Current levels have not exceeded the peak levels that we have seen in previous years, and there have, thankfully, been no deaths in Scotland so far, but we are not complacent. We expect case numbers to rise over the coming weeks, which is why I have asked clinicians to give advice on the very issue that Sandesh Gulhane has raised.

**Sandesh Gulhane:** I have spoken to multiple patients in my GP surgery who are concerned about Strep A and their children’s health. Parents’ concerns are only exacerbated when they know that, if their child gets sick, they will struggle to get an appointment with their GP, will spend hours waiting during calls to NHS 24—many people hang up in frustration—or will spend even longer in an accident and emergency waiting room.

Today, the worst-ever A and E waiting times have been published, with one in 20 people waiting more than 12 hours. Can the cabinet secretary promise patients that they will not spend 12 hours-plus in an A and E waiting room this Christmas?

**Humza Yousaf:** Public Health Scotland has issued an alert to healthcare services in Scotland, including clinicians in primary care, so that they are aware of the increase in the number of group A Strep infections and of the potential severity and complications of such cases. That includes the recommendation that primary care clinicians use a low threshold when prescribing antibiotics, as penicillin is the first-line therapy for children who present with features of GAS infection.

I saw some media reports about potential shortages of amoxicillin in other parts of the United Kingdom. I have checked with my clinicians and the chief pharmaceutical officer, and she advises that there are no shortages of penicillin. Therefore, I am confident that, if people—particularly parents—raise cases with their GP, they will be seen and given the appropriate treatment.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** A couple of weeks ago, Glasgow’s Royal hospital for children warned parents about attendance at A and E. As we have already heard, this morning’s statistics reveal that our emergency departments are under incredible pressure. Will the cabinet secretary explain what additional capacity and guidance have been provided to health boards to ensure

that children who take unwell can be seen without any delay?

**Humza Yousaf:** Jackie Baillie asks a very important question. First and foremost, as well as Strep A, other respiratory viruses in children are resulting in the increase in attendance at children's hospitals. That is borne out in the statistics that have been released today, which Jackie Baillie is right to mention.

As I said in my answer to Sandesh Gulhane, we are supporting all our healthcare services. NHS 24, for example, told me that, over the weekend, there was a significant increase in the number of calls about children under the age of 14, so all our healthcare services, right across the board, are being given appropriate advice about the advice that they can give to parents and others who call in with concerns about Strep A. That applies not only to NHS 24 but to services right across the board, including our accident and emergency services.

If people have concerns and need more information about the signs and symptoms of Strep A, that information is available online. First and foremost, people should go to their primary care clinician—their GP—who should be able to treat the condition with antibiotics.

### Local Government Budget

**2. Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that local government directors of finance have written to the finance secretary regarding an unprecedented £1 billion budget gap, and of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities stating that the current spending plans will lead to job losses. (S6T-01023)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney):** The autumn statement did not do enough to support devolved budgets to address the 41-year-high inflationary pressures that are impacting Scotland's families, businesses and public services. I have already taken the unprecedented step of making an emergency budget statement to Parliament to reprioritise more than £1.2 billion of expenditure. Although most portfolios were required to make savings in that exercise, ministers took a conscious decision to protect local government, and the funding available to councils actually increased. Despite that, Parliament should be under no illusion that we are facing the most challenging budget circumstances since devolution. I will set out the financial support for local government in the Scottish Government's budget next Thursday.

**Mark Griffin:** Right now, across local government, 6,000 jobs are at risk amid a cost of

living crisis. Earlier today in my region, Falkirk Council's executive was asked to agree to sell off 131 public buildings, including swimming pools, Grangemouth stadium, sports halls, gyms, village and community halls and park buildings—they are all to be sold to fill the council's deficit and, with that, keep 200 jobs. Given the scale of the crisis engulfing local government, does the cabinet secretary acknowledge the seriousness of COSLA's calls, and will he commit to looking again at the current spending plans for local government?

**John Swinney:** I recognise the gravity of the financial challenge. I am faced by that every day in wrestling with the Scottish Government's budget just now. I am dealing with the profound implications of inflation, public sector pay and energy costs, and those implications will be felt by public bodies the length and breadth of the country. Last week—I think that it was on Friday—I met COSLA leaders to hear their views on the Scottish Government's budget, and my officials followed up that discussion on Friday with supplementary discussions. As I said in my earlier answer, I will set out the financial support for local government in the Scottish Government budget next week.

**Mark Griffin:** I look forward to seeing that.

It is not politicians who are flagging up this financial black hole; it is directors of finance who are saying that they are £1 billion short. It is the Scottish National Party COSLA president who has told us that the Scottish Government spending plans as they stand will see council services

“either significantly reduced, cut, or stopped altogether”.

It is the SNP COSLA resources spokesperson who has talked about councils stopping preventative spending, saying that that will end up costing the NHS “significantly more money”.

The directors of finance have asked for the shackles of ring fencing to be removed. Will the cabinet secretary agree to that and ensure that local government has the fullest flexibility to cope with the cost of living crisis?

**John Swinney:** As Mr Griffin will know, when I set out my first budget to Parliament in 2007, I took decisive action to reduce ring fencing. I acknowledge that ring fencing has come back into a number of areas, but that is largely to assure the Government and, indeed, the Parliament that expenditure that is decided on in Parliament is deployed by local authorities on particular policy priorities. That applies particularly to the challenges that we face in relation to social care, where the Government is allocating substantial additional revenue. However, delayed discharges are at their highest level in our hospitals today, and that is a result of issues in the social care

system. Therefore, there are tough issues to be wrestled with here.

Mr Griffin cited the letter from the directors of finance and the point on ring fencing. Another point that the directors of finance made to me, and which is part of the dilemma that we all face, is that they asked for the Barnett consequentials from the United Kingdom Government to be targeted to support the vital services that local government provides.

If I followed that, no extra money would be given to the health service, and I do not for a minute believe that that is what Mr Griffin wants. I have to take a balanced position. I cannot do everything that is asked of me in the letter, because it would be impractical to do so and would starve the health service of resources, and I do not think that anyone in Parliament wants that to be the case.

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** The local government core settlement has seen a real-terms reduction of 15.2 per cent since 2013-14, with COSLA noting in March that increasingly directed funding and pressure on core budgets mean that councils have limited flexibility. Council leaders are saying that there is nothing else to cut and we also know now that the national care service will destabilise the planning and delivery of services within local government. Is the cabinet secretary looking at pausing the national care service, given all the pressures that local government is facing and the disruption that it will bring?

**John Swinney:** For all the reasons that I set out in my last supplementary answer to Mr Griffin, the national care service is an important reform to ensure that we can make progress in addressing the challenges, which I think that all parties are agreed on, in the delivery of social care in Scotland. Therefore, the Government will take forward those proposals. They are the subject of consultation and dialogue. We are listening very carefully to what parliamentary committees say in relation to the national care service and we will take forward the steps that the Government has already announced.

**Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):** I understand that the directors of finance in local government have written to ministers calling for financial sustainability for local authorities. Would the Deputy First Minister agree that financial sustainability would be helpful for our councils and the essential services that they provide to people and communities?

**John Swinney:** I agree with that point. The Government has increased local authority funding to the tune of 23 per cent since 2013-14. We have treated local authorities fairly. There is a real-terms increase in local authority funding of 6 per cent in the budgets from last year into this. We do

all that we can within the resources available to us to ensure that local government is properly funded.

### **Scottish Government Budget 2021-22 (Underspend)**

**3. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** To ask Scottish Government what its response is to comments from the Auditor General that it underspent its budget by £2 billion in the financial year 2021-22. (S6T-01018)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney):** The Scottish Government annual accounts provide explanations of all significant variances in the portfolio outturn statements and make it clear that the underspend that was reported does not represent a loss of spending power. The underspend includes more than £900 million of non-cash and ring-fenced budgets, is before allowing late funding adjustments of more than £500 million and makes use of the limited carry forward in the Scotland reserve. The Scottish Government has reported transparently on the carry forward position at the provisional outturn and will confirm the final outturn position to Parliament shortly. All funding is fully utilised in supporting the 2022-23 budget.

**Murdo Fraser:** This Scottish Government is always telling us that it does not have enough money to spend, despite the fact that we know that in the current financial year it has the highest budget ever in the history of devolution. Now we know from the Auditor General that it underspent last year's budget by £2 billion, so what is the carry forward to this year's budget from that underspend and how much of the money that was not spent last year represents funds that came from the United Kingdom Government for Covid support, which was not spent on Covid support but siphoned off elsewhere?

**John Swinney:** First, I make it clear to Mr Fraser—I thought that my original answer had done so, but I will say it again just to make sure that I can make an impact on his presentation of all of this—that £900 million of the underspend reported by the Auditor General relates to non-cash and ring-fenced budgets that the Government cannot spend on other items. It is in relation to annually managed expenditure, which is in the control of the UK Government, and student loan support, which can only be used for student loan support on a demand basis and we cannot redirect it to anywhere else. Those are basic points—really, really basic points—about the public finances, which I would have thought that Mr Fraser might have understood, given the length of time that he has been in this institution.

We assumed, when the budget was passed in the spring, that £450 million would be carried forward into this financial year. That had risen to £550 million by March. I assure Mr Fraser that the underspend that was reported does not represent a loss of spending power in any respect by the Scottish Government.

**Murdo Fraser:** I notice that the Deputy First Minister did not address the question of Covid support funds being siphoned off elsewhere.

Last week, the Auditor General also called for greater financial transparency from the Scottish Government and for it to fulfil its commitment to produce a consolidated account for the whole public sector in Scotland. Will the Scottish Government fulfil that commitment and, if so, when?

**John Swinney:** In relation to Covid spending, the Government has spent in excess of the Covid consequential that have been allocated to us. There was another comment of the Auditor General that Mr Fraser did not cite. He said:

“My independent audit opinion is unqualified. This means in my opinion, I am content the Scottish Government Consolidated Accounts show a true and fair view, following accounting standards, and that the income and expenditure for the year is lawful.”

I would have thought that that would be quite reassuring for Mr Fraser, as a law-abiding citizen, and would provide confidence that, not for the first time, the Government's accounts have attracted an unqualified opinion. We have had unqualified opinions for our accounts for every single year that the Scottish National Party Government has been in office. That should be a source of great reassurance to Mr Fraser.

On the point about transparency, the Auditor General said:

“The Scottish Government has continued to strengthen aspects of its governance arrangements during 2021/22.”

We will of course consider all the recommendations of the Auditor General as we take forward our accounting practices.

**Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab):** The two richest families in Scotland have more wealth than the poorest 20 per cent of the country. The Scottish Government often says that it has a fixed budget, but has the cabinet secretary had the opportunity to consider the Scottish Trades Union Congress report that was published this week, “Options for increasing taxes in Scotland to fund investment in public services”, which outlines short-term measures that could be taken to raise more than £1 billion for public services, and longer-term measures that could be taken to raise many more billions of pounds?

**John Swinney:** I am familiar with that report, and I am considering it as I come to take the final decisions in relation to the tax choices that the Government will make and set out to the Parliament next Thursday.

I should make it clear to Katy Clark that, in this financial year, the Government's budget is fixed; once we have set our tax rates, they cannot be revisited during a financial year. Unless there are consequential decisions taken by the UK Government during a financial year, our budget is locked in. That is the difficulty that I am wrestling with in relation to finding adequate resources to fund the pay claims that we are facing during this financial year.

There is a hard limit on the money that is available this year. Katy Clark raises a completely legitimate set of issues about future tax choices, but, for this financial year, the budget is fixed.

**Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** This has been a turbulent year, thanks not least to the economic mismanagement of Murdo Fraser's chums in Westminster. It is therefore welcome that the Scottish Government has delivered on the requirement for a balanced budget. Can the Deputy First Minister advise the Parliament whether additional fiscal flexibilities would have enabled the Scottish Government to respond even better to the pressures that households and businesses across Scotland are facing as a result of rising costs?

**John Swinney:** Mr Kidd raises a topical point in relation to the mismanagement of the public services. At the Finance and Public Administration Committee this morning, the chair of the Office for Budget Responsibility revealed that there would be an extra £40 billion-worth of debt due to the fiscal mismanagement of the Conservative Government during the course of the past few weeks. That is £40 billion-worth of debt with which we will all be saddled by 2027-28. There is no escaping the financial implications of that for us and our citizens, and the Government's budget will be constructed to try to address those issues.

However, Mr Kidd can be assured that the Government is giving every attention to the challenges that he raises in his question. We will do all that we can to address the cost of living challenges that are faced by members of the public the length and breadth of our country.

## COP27 Outcomes

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-07093, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on outcomes from the 27th United Nations climate change conference of the parties. Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request-to-speak button. I call the cabinet secretary, Michael Matheson, to speak to and move the motion.

14:25

**The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson):** Today's debate addresses one of the most important challenges facing not only Scotland but the international community. The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change painted a stark picture of the damage that human beings are causing to the planet. The report said that climate change is already causing widespread disruption in every region of the world and that 1.1°C of warming is resulting in droughts, extreme heat and record floods.

There are estimates that, in the next decade, climate change will drive between 32 million and 132 million more people into extreme poverty. Global warming will jeopardise food security as well as increasing heat-related mortality and other serious issues. We are on a journey where the risks will escalate quickly, with higher temperatures and climate change having often irreversible impacts. Inequity, conflict and development challenges heighten vulnerability to climate risk while climate change also increases the risk of conflict and exacerbates existing inequality. Although we are all vulnerable, it is clear that those who have contributed the least to climate change are suffering the worst of its impacts.

In Scotland, we have taken urgent action. Our target, which was set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 and voted for overwhelmingly in this chamber, is to reach net zero by 2045. We have known from the start that achieving that level of ambition will not be easy and that meeting the target will require a whole-society effort, but we also know that the cost of inaction greatly outweighs the cost of acting. We must do all we can now, for the sake of generations to come.

There are no easy options left. To avoid catastrophic impacts, we must now take the difficult decisions that are needed for Scotland to do its part in protecting the Scottish people and acting in solidarity with those across the world who face loss and damage caused by climate change.

The transition to net zero is not only an environmental imperative but an economic opportunity, in which Scotland can become world leading and can secure first-mover advantage in key areas. ScotWind, for example, represents the world's largest commercial round for floating offshore wind. We are embracing the opportunities that are presented by net zero technologies such as renewable energy and the hydrogen economy, prioritising our world-renowned natural capital and building a sustainable and inclusive economy that is resilient to future shocks.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** When I speak to businesses, they say that the public support from Governments—both Scotland's Governments—is difficult to access. What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that the available investment reaches the companies that can push that new technology forward?

**Michael Matheson:** That depends on the type of technology and the area in which those companies are working. For example, support with inward investment opportunities could come through Scottish Development International or from Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise or South of Scotland Enterprise. The answer depends on whether we are talking about an inward investment opportunity or an expansion opportunity. There are relevant bodies that can provide companies with support to expand their work in those areas. If the member has specific examples that he would like to share with me, I am more than happy to take that information away and to ensure that he gets a more detailed response.

However, we cannot meet the climate crisis alone. It is a global challenge that requires us to work together as a global community with a shared sense of urgency. The two annual United Nations conferences of the parties—COP27, on climate, which was held last month in Egypt, and COP15, the 15th conference of the parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, which will start tomorrow in Montreal—are key moments for the international community to come together to build consensus, commit to taking action and, importantly, hold one another to account.

Over 100 heads of state and Governments and 35,000 participants attended COP27 and negotiations finished two days later than planned, making the international gathering in Sharm el-Sheikh one of the longest and largest COPs that has been held. The agenda was packed with opportunities to strengthen and deepen relationships in order to tackle climate change and for the wider benefit of Scotland.

During COP27, the First Minister and the Minister for Environment and Land Reform held

bilateral meetings with a significant number of different parties including ministers from across the world and other key stakeholders. Additionally, building on our work at COP26 in Glasgow, we committed to providing a platform for the voices of those who are traditionally underrepresented at COP events. In order to take that further forward, the minister and the First Minister met a range of representatives from youth organisations and civil organisations, particularly from the global south.

There was huge interest in Scotland's transition to renewables, particularly in relation to offshore wind and green hydrogen—spaces in which Scotland is seen as a world leader. We shared our pioneering model for a just transition. We also used COP to urge our partners to prioritise as far as possible an approach to energy security that focuses on sustainability, with measures to promote energy efficiency and to accelerate the development of renewable and low-carbon energy.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Michael Matheson:** I ask the member to allow me to make a little more progress first.

What did COP27 achieve? It has seen the clearest acknowledgement to date that the people who are least responsible for global warming are often the ones who are suffering its worst consequences. It is fundamentally a matter of human rights. That recognition led to a watershed agreement at COP27 to establish a global fund for loss and damage to provide financial assistance to developing countries that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Questions about who will pay into the fund and who will be able to draw from it still have to be answered, and it is clear that much remains to be resolved. Despite that, however, the agreement alone is a hugely important achievement after 30 years of lobbying by leaders from the countries and communities that are worst impacted by climate change. It is those leaders' tenacity and resolve that lie behind the breakthrough. Particular recognition must go to Pakistan's Minister for Climate Change, Sherry Rehman, whom the First Minister met at COP, for her ability to bring parties together on the issue and for putting forward a meaningful proposal on behalf of the G77 and China negotiating group.

Last year, the Scottish Government became the first global north Government to announce funding to address loss and damage, and we have now increased our commitment to £7 million. As one of the first movers, our action has helped to catalyse a total of over \$300 million in international pledges, which demonstrates the progress that has been made in just one year.

We also helped to keep the focus on the practicalities of funding for loss and damage, for which we set the scene at our October loss and damage conference, which focused on practical action. The report from that conference was referenced throughout COP and used to inform the negotiations. How to fund loss and damage in a way that meets the needs of the most vulnerable communities will be debated over the next year and beyond as negotiators seek to put the COP27 loss and damage agreement into practice.

However, alongside that success, it is deeply disappointing that the recognition of loss and damage has not been matched by greater action in preventing a worsening of the climate crisis. Keeping 1.5 alive and delivering the fastest possible transition away from fossil fuels are key to preventing greater loss and damage in the future. It is simply not good enough that countries have failed to make progress on that agenda and that there has been such a strong pushback on the action that we all know is needed if 1.5° is to remain truly within our reach.

I give way to Monica Lennon.

**Monica Lennon:** I am grateful to the cabinet secretary, because he is making some very important points.

I want to bring the debate back to the topic of the just transition, because that is an important issue. In the closing preliminary session of COP27, there was considerable support from the United Kingdom, the US and the European Union for the phasing out of fossil fuels. However, here in Scotland, the cabinet secretary will be aware that Stop Climate Chaos Scotland has asked for further clarity from the Scottish Government about its policy on fossil fuels, including a target date for phase-out and measures to ensure a just transition in its forthcoming energy strategy. Is the minister meeting the coalition to discuss those points and to make such commitments?

**Michael Matheson:** Monica Lennon has raised an important point. We have set out clearly our position that the continued and unabated extraction of fossil fuels is not compatible with achieving the principles of the Paris agreement. It is important that we take forward measures that retain those key principles.

I assure Monica Lennon that when, in the coming weeks, we publish our energy strategy and just transition plan, we will set out very clearly how we intend to take that forward here in Scotland. However, she will also recognise that the key powers to make decisions on such matters remain reserved to the Government in London, which is why, in order to make further progress on those matters, we need to have those powers here in the Scottish Parliament.

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**Michael Matheson:** I will give way to Liam Kerr, although I am keen to finish within the timescale.

**Liam Kerr:** I am genuinely grateful to the cabinet secretary. At the weekend, I read that the possible future Scottish National Party leader in Westminster, Stephen Flynn, had described Nicola Sturgeon's opposition to new North Sea oil and gas fields as "crazy". Does the cabinet secretary agree with Stephen Flynn or with Nicola Sturgeon?

**Michael Matheson:** I have not seen such a quote from Stephen Flynn. If he said that, he is entitled to his view. However, I am sure that Liam Kerr is wise enough to recognise that he should not necessarily believe everything that he reads in the newspapers.

It is vital that countries recommit themselves to doing everything that they can to keep 1.5 alive and, ahead of COP28, to build a coalition that protects and drives progress against any further pushback.

The COP27 cover decision included mention for the first time of nature-based solutions, but there was little other recognition of the need to tackle together the twin crises of climate and nature. We need nature to mitigate the effects of climate change, and nature needs us to manage climate change in order to avoid its collapse. That has to be reflected in the outcomes of both the climate and the biodiversity COPs. COP15 begins tomorrow in Montreal, and it is vital that nations reach an ambitious global agreement on the protection and restoration of nature.

I have highlighted the fact that, although we have made progress, there is still much more to do. We need to work collectively to meet the international climate change challenge. The Scottish Government will now turn its attention to making good on the opportunities that COP27 has provided—as will the global community.

Although much remains to be decided about the how and the who of the funding of the loss and damage fund, its establishment was a genuine success and a rare positive news story. Nevertheless, COP27 came to a close with too many of the big decisions being deferred to a later date.

The goal of limiting change to 1.5° remains worryingly distant. We know that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis. That is why Scotland has committed further funding to strengthening women's participation in climate change policy and decision making. However, given that the negotiations on gender closed without any resolution, we are still no closer

to addressing one of the fundamental inequalities of the climate crisis.

COP27 should energise our ambition at home and abroad. I look forward to hearing the contributions from across the chamber. I move the motion in Màiri McAllan's name. I move,

That the Parliament notes the outcome of COP27; recognises the ground-breaking global agreement to give formal recognition to the fact of loss and damage as a result of the climate crisis and to establish a fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), alongside other financial mechanisms, to provide support to those countries suffering loss and damage; commends the commitment of the Global South and campaigners over 30 years in arguing for such a fund; notes that the agreement at COP27 follows the commitment by the Scottish Government at COP26 of £2 million for loss and damage, making Scotland the first developed nation to recognise its obligations in this area; is disappointed that COP27 was unable to build on the progress made in Glasgow towards keeping 1.5 degrees alive, and failed to extend the language of the Glasgow pact on a phasedown of unabated coal-use to include other fossil fuels, despite support from the EU, USA, UK and others for doing so, and calls for a coalition of action to be built ahead of COP28 to secure greater progress in global efforts to tackle the climate crisis; welcomes the focus on human rights during COP27 and urges the Egyptian government to take firm action to ensure that human rights in Egypt are fully respected, protected and fulfilled; notes that COP15, the biodiversity COP, begins on 7 December 2022 in Montreal and that it is vitally important that nations reach an ambitious global agreement on the protection and restoration of nature, including reaching agreement on protecting 30% of land and seas by 2030, and welcomes the conclusion of the Edinburgh Process, which collated views from over 400 subnational governments, cities and local authorities, and resulted in nearly 300 signatories to the Edinburgh Declaration committed to take action for biodiversity.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I invite Liam Kerr to speak to and move amendment S6M-07093.2.

14:40

**Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** To pick up from where the cabinet secretary left off, there is no doubt that COP27 did not have the groundbreaking commitments of COP26, but that is not to say that it was not a success, because it closed with what was described as a "breakthrough agreement"—the Sharm el-Sheik implementation plan, in which nations reaffirmed their commitment to keep 1.5 alive and strengthened their resolve to cut emissions and boost support for finance, technology and capacity building in developing countries.

The UK showed further leadership at COP27: it announced more than £100 million to support developing countries that are dealing with climate change impacts; it tripled funding for adaptation projects to £1.5 billion by 2025; and it committed

£11.6 billion in international climate change funding.

COP27 was never going to match COP26. Indeed, Professor Peter Thorne, one of the lead authors of the UN report that warned of a code red for humanity, said that COP27 was always going to be more of a “technical” summit, as

“These COPs have a natural rhythm, and it is only every four to six years ... where major progress is expected ... Intervening COPs achieve much less tangible progress.”

However, what is crucial at any COP is that agreements and announcements are credible and deliverable. The motion rightly lauds the agreement between the parties to establish a loss and damage fund. As the cabinet secretary flagged, the First Minister tried to pre-empt that by suggesting that Scotland would put £5 million into its own loss and damage fund, yet when I asked Minister McAllan a few weeks ago what the eligibility criteria, the application process and the defined outcomes were, she replied that the Government was still designing the fund. Later, in responding to my written question, she confirmed that decisions on how the £5 million of loss and damage funding will be allocated are yet to be taken. In addition, it turns out that the £2 million scheme that the Scottish Government announced at COP26, which is mentioned in the motion, has not even been fully allocated yet. It is almost as though it is easier to produce soundbites than it is to produce hard data and action.

On which note, although it is absolutely right for the cabinet secretary to mention COP15, some might feel that it is brave for the Government to demand action on the protection of the seas in its motion when, last month, the Government told me that it would not respond to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee’s report on regional marine planning—a report that was published in December 2020—until early in 2023. We should not forget, as the cabinet secretary flagged, that we are talking about a Government that, in 2018, put more than 200 policies and proposals into a climate change plan to achieve net zero by 2045, which it updated in 2020, but the cabinet secretary forgot to mention that, when I asked earlier this year how much it would cost to achieve, he told me that the Government did not yet know.

What the COPs show us is that we must strive towards accurate data. We cannot allow differing political visions or dogma to misinform the public, as that risks eroding trust. When Mark Ruskell, as an MSP in a party of Government, criticises the COP27 agreement for lacking any phase-out or even a phase-down of all fossil fuels, or Màiri McAllan says that the Scottish Government does not agree with the UK Government issuing new oil and gas licences, they must go on to address the

fact that Britain’s electricity mix over the past four weeks—we should remember that that is the power that keeps us heated, keeps our lights on, charges our electric vehicles and keeps our cookers working—was: gas, 44.8 per cent; wind, 23.7 per cent; nuclear, 14.1 per cent; and solar, hydro and biomass, 10.2 per cent.

We already know that the Scottish Government will not allow any new nuclear plants to be built in Scotland and we also know, from the quotations that I have given and the text of the motion, that the SNP and the Greens want to stop North Sea gas production. However, it is blindingly obvious that there is no way that renewables can replace those energy sources any time soon, in which case, the Government is basically proposing to satisfy our gas needs by importing from places such as Qatar, which has two to three times the carbon emissions of the gas that is pulled up from the North Sea, even before the innovation and targeted oil and gas—INTOG—leasing round happens.

**Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** On the member’s point about the production of renewable energy, by the same token, it would be very difficult and would take us considerable time to increase North Sea oil and gas production, because that does not happen overnight. I am not sure that it is totally accurate to say that we want to stop production. My understanding is that we are seeking a gradual decline.

**Liam Kerr:** The member’s intervention rather contradicts the quotes that I gave earlier. However, the point is that we all went to see a just transition, because the cost to the up to 100,000 workers in or connected with the oil and gas industry, around 70,000 of whom are located in Scotland, would be considerable if we were to stop production right now. We all agree that there needs to be a just transition, as is mentioned in the Labour amendment, but that requires us to work with our North Sea industries and not against them.

Without the following—BP putting around £12 billion by 2030 into offshore wind, hydrogen, EV charge points and carbon capture; TotalEnergies ploughing more than half its research and development budget into pioneering new energies and reducing environmental footprint; Shell investing between £15 billion and £20 billion into low and zero-carbon products and services; and Neptune Energy achieving gold status under the UN environmental programme for its plans to reduce methane emissions—that transition simply will not happen.

**Monica Lennon:** I know that Liam Kerr takes the climate emergency very seriously, but we must make real the aspiration for a just transition. If the

Rosebank oilfield goes ahead, how will that help a just transition?

**Liam Kerr:** The member is right—I do take the climate emergency very seriously indeed, as I know does she, which is why she will be interested to know that we must set Rosebank in the context of the bigger picture and the transition that she rightly talks about.

I go back to the point about where we get our supply from, and about the need to keep it domestic. Rosebank is projected to be worth more than £8 billion to the domestic UK economy over its lifetime, and there are wider economic benefits that will be worth more than £24 billion. At its peak, it will create 1,600 UK-based jobs. I know that the member is concerned about Rosebank, but we should not forget that Rosebank's production emissions will be significantly lower than those arising from imports of liquefied natural gas from across the world, from places such as Qatar, which I mentioned earlier.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Liam Kerr:** Will I have time at the end, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You will have a wee bit of time.

**Liam Kerr:** In that case, I will take the intervention if the member is very quick.

**Gillian Martin:** One of the issues that I have with the debate about oil and gas is that we talk about how we can lower the emissions that are involved in producing and extracting it, but there is a fundamental difference between that and what oil and gas is used for. We need to stop burning oil and gas. The real elephant in the room is not the production of oil and gas but the burning of it.

**Liam Kerr:** That is a fair and well-made point, and it relates to how we present data and put information into the public realm, which is key. The First Minister needs to not blithely say, when speaking about this area, that, under the SNP Government, our net energy consumption is already provided by renewable energy sources. Anyone who knows—or has bothered to inform themselves—about the UK's energy mix can say that that is demonstrably and evidentially false. Claims should not be made that Scotland has 25 per cent of Europe's offshore wind potential, when ministers have known for years that that was not, and never had been, accurate. That is particularly egregious, given that ministers Sturgeon, Swinney, Todd, Macpherson, Robertson, Slater and Matheson have all put that out knowingly. Even SNP members of Parliament, such as Cowan, Hendry, Blackford and Oswald, have trotted it out. That includes an MP who has thrown

out that unevidenced, underresearched, misleading data not once, not twice, but five times in a public forum, including the Houses of Parliament: putative new leader Stephen Flynn MP.

There is so much more to say on COP27, but time is short. My colleagues will seek to address other aspects of the motion and the amendments.

Perhaps COP27 was not as monumental as the UK-led COP26 but, as we have heard from the UN itself, that was to be expected. As with all COPs, what it shows is that the climate emergency does not recognise borders. It is a global issue that will be addressed only by global action in which we all work together. Indeed, the UN said that COP27 would be held with an

“appreciation of the value of multilateral, collective and concerted action as the only means to address this truly global threat.”

In a rare moment of accuracy, on Saturday, Patrick Harvie was quoted as saying:

“The whole world is behind the curve on climate.”

Unusually, he is right. The solution must therefore be to recognise what has been achieved, to ensure that Governments strive to use accurate, evidenced data, to avoid putting up borders, which only divide our collective efforts, and to work together to keep 1.5 alive.

I move amendment S6M-07093.2, to leave out from “, and failed” to “Egypt” and insert:

“; recognises that the Scottish Government has failed to meet a host of climate change targets and is on track to miss future targets; acknowledges that the ethos of COP27 was around working together and collaboratively across borders, and sees, therefore, that working with the UK Government as part of the UK is the best way to move Scotland towards net zero and meet future targets; calls for a coalition of action to be built ahead of COP28 to secure greater progress in global efforts to tackle the climate crisis; welcomes the focus on human rights during COP27 and urges all governments to take firm action to ensure that human rights across the world”.

14:50

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** Despite COP27 having taken some modest steps forward on loss and damage support for countries that are vulnerable to climate change, we did not see the transformative leap that we urgently needed. The UN tells us that the new pledges agreed in Egypt will take just 1 per cent off global emissions in 2030. Far from keeping 1.5 alive, we are heading for a catastrophic 2.8°. Our planet is hotter than it has been for 125,000 years, yet our leaders are fiddling while the world burns. Despite the admirable efforts of COP26 president Alok Sharma, there was little leadership from Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, whose most memorable act was to eventually decide to turn up.

Just as we needed leadership abroad at COP27, we need leadership here at home more than ever. Whether it is because of the devastating floods in Pakistan or Britain's first 40° days, the accelerating climate crisis affects every one of us, abroad and here at home. I have no doubt that the Scottish Government has chosen to have the debate before tomorrow, when the Climate Change Committee will publish its assessment of our progress towards net zero here in Scotland. That tells its own story about what the Government knows that that report card is likely to say—it is likely to be a combination of fails and “could do better”.

Let us take the three big emitters, starting with the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Transport is responsible for a third of our emissions, with levels barely below those of 1990. We met our emissions target in 2020 only because the pandemic prevented us all from travelling, yet as we face the post-pandemic rebound back to car use, the Scottish Government's response has been to axe 240 train services per day, which makes a total of 90,000 per year. It has also still not given councils the powers that I secured in the bill that became the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 and, more importantly, the resources that councils need to set up and run their own local bus services at a time when our bus service network is being dismantled route by route and bus fares are rising and rising. Bus passenger numbers have fallen by 25 per cent since 2007-08, which means 121 million fewer passenger journeys. Fares have risen by nearly 19 per cent in the past five years alone.

On electric vehicles, the Climate Change Committee estimates that we will need at least 30,000 public charging points in Scotland by 2030, yet the Scottish Government's own target is just over 4,000 in the next few years. Where is the leadership on transport at home?

**Brian Whittle:** Does Mr Smyth agree with me that the drag on producing electric vehicle charging points is preventing us from moving to the use of such vehicles?

**Colin Smyth:** I absolutely agree with that. Recently, the BBC's “Dispatches” programme showed that a quarter of our existing charging points do not work. There is no incentive there for many communities—particularly those in rural areas—to move towards using electric vehicles.

What about heating in buildings? How does the Scottish Government's decision to cut the energy efficiency budget by £133 million, instead of tackling why the poorly designed schemes are not being utilised, show leadership? We have a shameful level of fuel poverty in Scotland, but we know that properly insulating our homes not only

cuts fuel bills but cuts fuel use and therefore our emissions.

On the third big emitter, which is agriculture and land, it seems that progress still does not go far enough. It is six years since the EU referendum, and the clock is ticking on the end of the transition period when it comes to meeting our climate commitments. The only clock that seems to have stopped since 2016 has been the Government's clock with regard to laying out what post-Brexit agricultural support will look like. We have had dither and delay, but we have not had the detail, direction or support that our farmers and crofters need to properly plan and make the necessary changes. That is not climate leadership.

Even in those areas where we have made good progress on cutting emissions in energy production—I recognise the significant progress that has been made on renewable energy—we have failed to show the leadership that is needed to deliver the jobs-led just transition that we need. The Scottish Government's 2010 “Low Carbon Scotland” economic strategy promised 130,000 renewable jobs by 2020, and we were told that Scotland would be the “Saudi Arabia of renewables”. However, the Fraser of Allander Institute's recent report has estimated that the number of renewable jobs that have been created is 27,000—only one fifth of that figure.

When we consider which sectors can tackle Scotland's woeful economic growth and create a green, fairer country with good, secure jobs wherever in the country people live, we see that all roads lead to renewables. Net zero targets are not a barrier to economic growth, but the path towards it.

The long-term answer to the energy bills crisis and the climate crisis, and to delivering jobs growth, is not a dash for gas but a sprint for home-grown clean energy. However, we need not only to keep speeding up the race for renewables—for example, by properly resourcing Marine Scotland and our councils' planning departments so that the consent process recognises that urgency—but to spread the benefits. We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past, which have meant that none of the wind turbines that are carpeting much of our countryside are even manufactured in Scotland. We need a proper industrial strategy with clear targets: 100 per cent clean energy; 12GW of additional onshore wind by 2030; 11GW of offshore wind; and between 4GW and 6GW of solar capacity.

We need a clear route and timeline for a steady stream of work to give supply chain companies the confidence to invest, with the backing of Government investment, in Scottish ports, skills and factories so that those supply chain jobs come to Scottish firms. That is why Labour has

consistently called for every penny that is raised from the ScotWind leasing round to be ring fenced for a renewables fund to invest in making our supply chains ready to deliver.

The Scottish Government has offshored Scotland's wind on the cheap; we cannot afford to offshore the jobs as well, and we should not be offshoring the profits to largely overseas-owned multinationals. That is why Labour also supports the establishment of a publicly owned energy firm to invest in technology and jobs of the future. It is what Labour in Wales is doing; it is what the next UK Labour Government will do; and it is what the SNP and the Greens used to want to do but are no longer supporting.

The lack of world leadership at COP27 should make us all even more determined to show more leadership here at home. We have ambitious targets to cut emissions by three quarters by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2045, but those targets will be meaningless if they are missed. Labour will support the Government's motion, but my amendment urges Parliament to show leadership and to recognise that we do not yet have a plan, and that urgent action is needed to enable us to properly play our part in preventing the climate crisis from becoming a climate catastrophe.

I move amendment S6M-07093.1, to insert at end:

“; notes that the Scottish Government has repeatedly not met its own annual target for emissions; agrees that it is important for Scotland to lead by example through action and delivery, and calls on the Scottish Government to use all the powers available to it to realise Scotland's full potential in the renewable energy sector, including consideration of establishing a publicly-owned energy company, to improve public transport, including by providing adequate funding for councils to establish municipal bus companies, to implement a bold industrial strategy to grow domestic supply chains and create local green jobs in communities across Scotland, and to take all necessary steps to secure a just transition to net zero.”

14:58

**Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD):** I am pleased to speak for the Scottish Liberal Democrats in this important debate, and I thank Màiri McAllan and the Scottish Government for securing time for it in the chamber.

In referring to the environment, the late South African bishop and theologian Desmond Tutu once said:

“Twenty-five years ago people could be excused for not knowing much, or doing much, about climate change. Today we have no excuse.”

In 2022, the year in which he passed, those words ring very true. It should go without saying that the climate crisis is perhaps the most pressing issue of our time, so it is right that leaders from around

the world come together through COP to put the collective shoulder to the wheel.

To be sure, as other members have noted, there is much to be praised in the outcome of the latest conference. That includes plans to cut global methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030 and the establishment of a global loss and damage fund to support the countries that are set to be worst affected by climate change—we have heard much about that in the debate so far.

However, the promised actions still fall short of what is needed if we are to effectively combat the global climate challenge. As the Scottish Government's motion rightly notes, it is disappointing that agreement could not be reached on extending promises on the phasing down of coal use. That in itself was an unhappy compromise at the last COP of the ideal of the phasing out of coal and other fossil fuel types.

Calls for cutting back on fossil fuel use have of course been hindered by events in the world around us, and particularly by the conflict in Ukraine, although that only underlines the need to move away from our dependence on oil and gas—our energy security depends on that. It now seems increasingly likely that the dream of keeping 1.5 alive is, sadly, dead on arrival; estimates indicate that to achieve that, we would need to halve global emissions by 2030, which is well beyond the aspirations of the largest emitting nations, and beyond the practical reality of many others besides.

However, that does not mean that all hope is lost or that we should give up now. Every fraction of a degree of warming that we can avoid results in a better outcome for humanity and our planet. Before COP began, I said that Scotland needed new hope when it comes to tackling the climate emergency. We need decisive and tangible actions—not just promises, but radical credible policies that will drive down Scotland's emissions.

It must be said that there is much to welcome in the attitude of the Scottish Government and Parliament to climate policy, and the reach of their ambitions. We should be proud of the ambitious target to reduce emissions by 75 per cent by 2030 that was passed into law through the work in part of the Scottish Liberal Democrats. I welcome the attention that is already given to areas such as biodiversity, renewables, energy production and heating, but there remains a considerable value-action gap between the Scottish Government's rhetoric, the promises that have been made and its world-leading targets, and the reality of its actions.

Scotland met its emissions reductions for the first and, so far, only time in 2020, in the context of a national lockdown when everybody was at

home, leaving the distinct impression that Covid has done more to curb emissions than the Scottish Government has managed so far. *[Alex Cole-Hamilton has corrected this contribution. See end of report.]* Last year, the Climate Change Committee assessed that most of the key policy levers are now in the hands of the Scottish Government but that promises have not yet turned to action. The committee's latest Scottish progress report comes out tomorrow, and I fear that the review will not be much improved.

The Government's aims for retrofitting buildings are admirable and could, in theory, drive down emissions while improving ordinary people's quality of life, stimulate the economy and create new work opportunities, but there is still no answer to the question of how Scotland is to meet the £31 billion gap between the heat and buildings strategy's expected cost and the promised funding. It may be unsurprising, then, that the retrofitting roll-out has so far been woeful. Scottish Liberal Democrat research indicates that, at the current rate, insulating the homes of Scotland's fuel-poor households alone could take 300 years.

The ScotWind offshore leasing deals, as Colin Smyth rightly mentioned, were heralded by the Scottish Government as revolutionising Scotland's energy sector, but they have resulted in Scotland's natural resources being sold off on the cheap while underdelivering on supply chain promises. With no phasing, there will be insufficient capacity in the Scottish sector to deliver on those projects, and the Scottish Government should not have applied the cap, as we have previously discussed. Meanwhile, even though we know that it will add some 600,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> to Scotland's carbon footprint, the Scottish Government continues to doggedly support the Heathrow airport expansion deal.

All that leaves the inescapable feeling that the environmentalism of the SNP-Green Government is half-hearted, distracted and comes a distant second to its goal of driving forward with independence. More than ever, we need to urgently address Scotland's role in climate change. If we are to meaningfully achieve a just transition, this moment calls for focused attention and dramatic action, not promises and platitudes.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Can you clarify whether we are able to intervene on remote speakers and how we do so?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** Mr Mason, I was as intrigued as you were about why there did not appear to be anything flashing on Mr Cole-Hamilton's screen.

Members should be able to make interventions on remote speakers. I do not think that the system has functioned as it should have done in this instance, but we will have to investigate that further. I thank you for your point of order.

**Michael Matheson:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Further to your comments, is it being checked that, if anyone else is joining remotely, we can intervene if we seek to do so and that they will be aware that someone in the chamber is trying to intervene?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That is what we are checking. I am not aware of other colleagues intending to participate remotely. However, for this debate and future business, the Parliament will want to ensure that the system is working as it is intended to work.

15:05

**Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** It hardly seems to be a year since Glasgow played host to the COP26 climate conference and welcomed world leaders, environmentalists, young people and many others who were invested in protecting our climate and our planet. In April, the IPCC warned that is "now or never" to limit global warming.

The successes at COP26 included the signing of the Glasgow climate pact and the development of the Paris agreement rule book to provide guidance on how the Paris agreement is delivered.

Twelve months on, Egypt has just hosted COP27 in the resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. Against the difficult backdrop of an unprecedented cost of living and energy crisis and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, COP27 restated the global commitment to tackling climate change. The progress included a focus on food security for the first time, which highlighted the importance of safeguarding food supply. Only this morning, the National Farmers Union stated that the UK is walking into a food supply crisis under a perfect storm of low yields, supply challenges and soaring energy costs bearing down on farmers across the UK. There was a renewed focus on finance, and on mobilising private finance as a key aspect of global action. However, the most important breakthrough focused on climate impacts. It was recognised that climate change is already adversely affecting many countries and threatens increasing damage and destruction with every additional increment of warming.

Many have seen COP27 as the COP that will go down in history as the UN climate change conference in which the breakthrough loss and damage fund was agreed. As the First Minister outlined in her speech at a loss and damage panel:

“the nations that suffer the worst loss and damage ... continue to be ... those nations that have done least—in some cases, virtually nothing—to cause the problem of climate change in the first place.”

The loss and damage fund will assist climate-vulnerable countries to address impacts that cannot be or have not been adapted to. That important breakthrough demonstrates real progress, but it is only the beginning of a difficult process. Key agreements are still needed on which countries will contribute to the fund, how much each country will pay, and which countries will be able to benefit.

COP27 made it clear that discussions on support must run parallel with dialogue on how to mitigate the impact of, and protect against, climate change through adaptations. Therefore, there is much work to do.

The Climate Change Committee report entitled “COP27: Key outcomes and next steps for the UK” sets out the economic damage, such as destruction of property, and the non-economic damage, such as loss of cultural heritage, that are already affecting communities, ecosystems and businesses. There have been the devastating floods in Pakistan and Nigeria and the drought-induced famines in Somalia. Who could not avoid the intense heatwaves in Europe in the summer? Those are all testament to the impact that is already bearing down on all of us.

What can a small nation such as Scotland realistically achieve in the context of a global climate crisis? I am delighted that Scotland was the first nation to pledge financial support to address loss and damage, and I am aware that Scotland saw huge interest in our renewable sector at COP27.

**Liam Kerr:** The £5 million loss and damage fund is worth only a quarter of the £20 million that is earmarked for independence. Does the member understand why people might feel that the Scottish Government has the wrong priorities?

**Audrey Nicoll:** That is a discussion for a different day—I am concentrating on COP27.

At home, our ambitious net zero targets mean that we all face hard choices in relation to how we travel, heat our homes and source our food. It is right that our focus is now on renewable energy and emerging green technologies. Wind power is already the cheapest form of power in our energy mix. Our expertise in oil and gas is an opportunity to deliver our just transition, not just because that is an environmental imperative but because it offers a significant economic opportunity.

In my constituency, the just transition is everywhere—it is a pivotal part of our local economy, landscape and future prosperity. Frustratingly for the north-east, however, the UK

Government’s questionable decision making and woeful political instability is hugely detrimental to the north-east. Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce recently reported that half of the companies surveyed for its latest energy transition report said that

“the current political and regulatory environment is a barrier to diversification”.

The uncertainty over the Acorn carbon capture, usage and storage project and the lack of commitment shown to such a vital project by the UK Government is just one example of those barriers.

**Gillian Martin:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Audrey Nicoll:** Do I have time to take an intervention, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can give you the time back, Ms Nicoll.

**Gillian Martin:** I just wanted to flag up the fact that meeting our commitments under the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 is dependent on the implementation of CCUS. As a country, we will not reach our targets until the UK Government acts on Acorn and the Scottish cluster.

**Audrey Nicoll:** The member raises a hugely important point. I have read a little bit about CCUS because of its relevance to my constituency, so I know that the only body that is dragging its feet on the issue is the UK Government, which is essentially dimming the lights on our local energy industry.

Given the £400 billion or so of tax revenue that has flowed from Scotland to the UK Treasury over many decades, I urge the Scottish Government to press the UK Government to honour its commitment to Scotland’s just transition and to tackling global climate change.

I am immensely proud of Scotland’s ambition, leadership and commitment to COP27, the global south and tackling global climate change. I look forward to monitoring progress and to playing my part, in my constituency and beyond, to ensure that Scotland becomes greener, cleaner and net zero.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We are now pretty much out of time so any interventions will have to be within the allocation for members’ speeches.

15:13

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** I have taken part in debates on COP26 and COP27, looking back and looking forward. After COP26, it looked as though 1.5 might still be alive:

more than 100 countries signed a pledge to halt and reverse deforestation; at least 40 countries agreed to stop using coal; and leaders signed a pledge to cut methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030. I guess that there was some hope. We could look at the positives.

However, I have to be honest: these COP events look to me like junkets for world leaders and for people like Susan Aitken, and they do not appear to change anything. After COP27, I am not filled with hope.

**Gillian Martin:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Graham Simpson:** No.

As the Climate Change Committee notes, while the summit restated the global commitment to tackling climate change in the face of the current energy crisis, global emissions remain at record high levels and the world is on track to warming well in excess of 2°C. I cannot see that much has been achieved by Nicola Sturgeon attending either event, and even less was achieved by a delegation from Glasgow City Council flying to Egypt.

I will take the intervention.

**Gillian Martin:** Susan Aitken was invited to attend COP27 in Egypt to talk about COP26 and the participation of young people and those from deprived areas in it.

I also make the point that, if Nicola Sturgeon had not been there, we probably would not have had any outcomes from COP27, particularly on loss and damage. [*Interruption.*] The Scottish Government led on loss and damage.

**Graham Simpson:** I am sure that Ms Aitken had a wonderful time, but I do not see that she has achieved very much.

This debate should have been held tomorrow, because that is when we will hear from the Climate Change Committee on how Scotland is actually doing. We can be fairly certain that it will not be a glowing report.

Although there has been progress in decarbonising our electricity supply, there has been precious little progress in decarbonising industry, transport—which, as we have already heard, is the biggest emitter—and buildings.

I will talk about transport. The SNP Scottish Government has a rather lofty ambition to cut car mileage by 20 per cent by 2030, which is just over seven years away. That target was introduced in its climate change plan update of 2020.

After setting such a target, if there is to be any hope of reaching it, some pretty unpopular things will have to be done, such as hitting people hard in

the pocket. I presume that that is why the SNP has not come up with any policies to trigger a change from gas-guzzling private vehicles.

You will note, Presiding Officer, that the target is just for cars, not for vans and certainly not for lorries. Thankfully, we have the UK Government leading on efforts to decarbonise lorries, with Glasgow firm Hydrogen Vehicle Systems being awarded £30 million to develop technology that could lead to lorries running on hydrogen.

It is pretty obvious that, if we want people to ditch their cars, we will need to provide an alternative, unless we want a nation of hermits. That might appeal to the Greens, but, in the real world, that should mean creating a comprehensive, joined-up and cheap public transport system of the kind that we can only dream of.

The fair fares review is nowhere to be seen. When it appears, there will be thousands of words of Government waffle. However, I can tell whichever minister here wants to listen that that can be boiled down to just two: lower fares. Maybe another two words could be added: for all.

Lower fares for all might get people on to buses and trains, but it will take more than lower fares. Having routes that connect communities—rural and urban—is vital, but we have too many public transport deserts. We should be helping councils to use the powers that they now have to organise bus services; we should be looking at train routes, too, and dualling tracks such as the East Kilbride line; we should be using technology to have multimode smart cards; and we should be treating ferries as buses and offering free travel to under-22s who live on the islands.

I return to the 2030 car target. There is no point in banning the sale of diesel and petrol cars if the infrastructure to replace them is not there. We are a long way off having the number of electric vehicle chargers that are required to produce a sea change.

According to ChargePlace Scotland, there are 2,400 chargers in Scotland. However, the target is to have 30,000 by 2030, which means that we must install about 400 a month. Last month, we managed eight—not 800; eight. Of course, in addition to that, we know that many of those that have been installed do not work.

There is much more to do with buses, too, and our ageing ferries are gas guzzlers and there is no sign of decarbonising the fleet any time soon.

The Climate Change Committee's report, which will be published tomorrow, will make for interesting reading, as did its UK-wide report, which was published this month. That talks about how targets are still not matched by actions. We

should not be patting ourselves on the back, because the world is still not acting fast enough on climate change, and I am afraid that that includes Scotland.

15:19

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** We are in the middle of a global climate emergency—of that there is no doubt—and countries throughout the world understand and agree that there is a need for radical action to save the planet from further damage. However, we are playing catch-up after decades of neglect and denial on all fronts.

After the promises made and optimism shown by most countries at COP26 in Glasgow last year, there is a palpable sense of disappointment that COP27 in Egypt was unable to build on that progress and that the 1.5°C target was in danger of ebbing away until it was contested.

However, despite the disappointment and major concern about the lack of progress, unlike Graham Simpson, I am proud that Scotland has agreed to establish a fund for loss and damage to smaller countries that are bearing the brunt of the devastating effects of climate change. Scotland is the first developed country to make such a financial contribution and commitment.

**Liam Kerr:** Given the point that I made earlier about there being no details about outcomes or criteria for the loss and damage fund, when does the member expect her Government to provide that detail?

**Rona Mackay:** I am confident that those details will be provided soon. The fact that the commitment has been made is to be celebrated; it should not be talked down.

Scotland's commitment in that regard is truly groundbreaking and is testament to 30 years of hard campaigning by the global south and civil society, which had, until now, been ignored by northern countries. It also shows how our nation always punches above its weight when it comes to taking responsibility. Ironically, and cruelly, the countries that are bearing the brunt of the worst consequences of climate damage are those that are least responsible for global warming, and we recognise that.

In Scotland, we are making great progress in areas of devolved responsibility, but urgent action from the UK Government is critical if we are to meet our ambitious climate change targets in Scotland. The Scottish Government's motion calls for

“a coalition of action to be built ahead of COP28”.

I support that whole-heartedly. We cannot continue to wait year after year for pledges to be made and, often, broken.

Make no mistake: rich, developed countries have a moral obligation to support those experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis in the here and now. The total funding that Scotland has announced might seem like a small sum in relation to the overall scale of the loss and damage that developing countries face, but it sends an important message and shows just how important the actions of smaller Governments can be. There is, of course, a lot of detail to be worked out over the next year, but, from the inclusion of loss and damage on the agenda to the agreement to establish a fund, there has been a real breakthrough for vulnerable and developing countries.

The fact that COP27 was held in Egypt meant that there was a focus, rightly, on the human rights obligations of every country and that, in a similar vein to the world cup in Qatar right now, a light has been shone on the host country's less-than-perfect record, which can only be a good thing.

Gender inequalities are exacerbated by the effects of climate change, so I am pleased that a co-design approach with women who experience climate-related harms, coupled with the funding, will seek to tackle the disproportionate impacts of climate change that are felt by women and girls. A package of measures relating to climate action to strengthen the role of women from the global south was announced at COP27 by the Scottish Government. That will ensure that more women from the global south can attend and influence crucial climate negotiations, including next year's COP28 in Dubai, and it will give female human rights defenders from the global south the opportunity to spend several months in Scotland, where they can continue their work in a place of safety.

A few months ago, I watched a BBC documentary called “Big Oil v the World”. I highly recommend it to anyone who has not watched it and who cares about our planet—I think that it is still available on catch-up. However, I give a warning: it will make them angry. It made me very angry as I watched in disbelief as it showed how, for the past 50 years—half a century—oil company bosses ignored scientists and dismissed claims of the damage being done to the planet, all in the name of vested interests and greed. What legacy have we left our young people and future generations? During school visits, climate change is the number 1 topic, and I am ashamed that my generation has let young people down and caused them that concern.

As part of the Scottish Government's work to widen access to climate negotiations, young

people from countries that already face the worst impacts of climate change were given the opportunity to attend COP27 in Egypt. It is vital that countries recommit to doing everything that they can to keep 1.5 alive and to build a coalition ahead of COP28 that protects and drives progress against any further push-back.

Scotland believes that all levels of government, particularly in areas in which responsibilities are devolved, have a central part to play in delivering the transformative action that is needed to halt biodiversity loss in the coming decades. The Edinburgh declaration is Scotland's call to state parties to hear the voices of more than 280 signatories at COP15 in Montreal. We need them to take stronger actions and make bolder decisions in the next decade.

Scotland, as a country, is at the forefront of renewable energy and a just transition away from oil and gas. That transition is exemplified by Scotland's offshore wind industry, with ScotWind representing the world's largest commercial round for floating offshore wind.

We can and we must do so much more if we are to save our planet for future generations, and I am confident that Scotland will do that.

15:25

**Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on the cause of climate justice, the legacy of COP26 and the discussions that have recently taken place at COP27 in Egypt. At COP26 in Glasgow last year, I was glad to be able to meet with many representatives and delegations from around the world. I had a fruitful discussion with the Bangladeshi delegation about the challenges that Bangladesh faces and the way in which Scotland and countries in the global south can work together on climate change.

That includes using Scottish technology and expertise to assist with climate mitigation, which is increasingly important for countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, both of which have seen devastating floods this year. Weather events that, only 20 years ago, might have been considered to happen once in a generation or in 100 years are now being seen every year. The need for the accelerated timetable of the conferences is shown by the accelerated progress of climate disasters around the world.

I will return to the theme of mitigation shortly, but I want first to consider COP27. The parties have finally reached an agreement on a loss and damage fund. The work on that, which began in Glasgow last year, acknowledges internationally what has been an obvious truth to many participants for years—namely, that the countries

that contributed the least to climate change are the ones that are now being largely affected by climate change's devastating impact.

We should not underestimate the importance of that acknowledgement, as it is the necessary starting point for climate justice. Through that framework, loss and damage can be calculated and mitigation can be funded across the world. It is a big step, but it is not the only step that is needed for climate justice. I am sure that there are arguments yet to come about the amount that is in the pot and the time that it will take to release funding to countries in need.

Another truth that runs parallel to the one that I have just mentioned is that the global north has benefited greatly from the fossil fuels that have caused the damage, and, as a result, it is now in the best place for a green transition. Therefore, the other hand of climate justice must be to ensure that the countries of the global south are not locked out of the transition and have access to renewables.

Unfortunately, I fear that that part of climate justice is in danger of being lost. Despite all the progress on loss and damage at COP27, we saw no further progress on phasing out fossil fuels. I fear that, without that other side, we will never know true climate justice; instead, we will simply be asking the global north to subsidise the global south while it makes the same mistakes.

That is where the issue of climate mitigation comes into play. We must now take mitigation incredibly seriously because, in the absence of agreement on reducing fossil fuels, it will be more necessary than ever before.

When we see the scale of the damage caused by this year's floods, we get an idea of what we might be facing in the future. Climate refugees already exist, but their numbers might become greater than we dare to imagine if we do not take mitigation efforts seriously.

The cross-party group on Bangladesh recently heard that there could be as many as 18 million climate refugees from Bangladesh in the coming decades if the worst climate effects are realised. That is the equivalent of the population of the Netherlands becoming refugees. We are fooling ourselves if we think that such large flows of people from climate-hit regions will not have a significant impact on the rest of the world.

It is in all our interests that that does not happen. That means a relentless focus on climate mitigation, but it also means reducing the use of fossil fuels and allowing the global south to have its own part in the green revolution. I greatly hope that COP28 regains that focus on reducing fossil fuels, for all of us.

15:31

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** As a member of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, I am happy to speak in this debate on the varied outcomes of COP27. COP27 will go down in history as the UN climate change conference where the loss and damage fund was agreed. After decades of pushing, that is a momentous victory for the climate-vulnerable developing countries.

The shift in the conversation and in the position of developed countries since COP26 is remarkable. COP27 has finally seen an acknowledgement by developed countries that the people who are least responsible for global warming are the ones who are suffering its worst consequences. Crucially, it also recognised that rich developed nations have a moral obligation to support those who are experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis in the here and now.

There remains a lot of detail to be worked out over the next year, ahead of COP28, but from the inclusion of loss and damage on the agenda to the agreement to establish a fund, COP27 has delivered a real breakthrough for vulnerable and developing countries. Having worked with others over the past 12 months to build the momentum, Scotland should be proud of playing its part in the lead up to that decision. It is crucial that parties continue to build on the positive momentum that was created in Sharm as challenging discussions ensue on how the new loss and damage fund will work and who will contribute to it financially.

In being the first developed country ever to make a financial contribution, Scotland has been able to play a small part in the loss and damage journey. Last year, Scotland was the first developed nation to pledge finance to address loss and damage, with a commitment at COP26 of £2 million from the climate justice fund. Other countries such as Wallonia and Denmark have now followed suit and we should encourage all economically developed nations to do similarly.

An additional £5 million of funding was announced by the First Minister at the COP27 climate summit, taking the total funding that Scotland has announced to £7 million. Although that is a small sum in terms of the overall scale of the loss and damage that developing countries face, it sends out an important international message. It shows just how important the action of smaller Governments can be in making a huge difference internationally and encouraging others to do so. In virtually everything that we do on loss and damage, Scotland is trying to ensure that we listen to international perspectives, especially those of the global south.

Although the action of Scotland and our European neighbours is vitally important and, indeed, has been recognised as such by the likes of the United Nations, COP27 was a hectic and sometimes chaotic event. It advanced some matters, but on others it failed to drive ambitions towards the climate action that is required to keep alive the possibility of restricting climate change within the envelope of the Paris agreement to 1.5°C. Loss and damage progressed, but, especially in week 2, there was a risk of going backwards in COP27 relative to COP26 in Glasgow.

The final cover declaration managed to avoid the worst, but it also avoided the best. Notably disappointing was the fact that the recognition of loss and damage has not been matched by greater action to prevent a worsening of the climate crisis. Keeping 1.5 alive and delivering the fastest possible transition away from fossil fuels are key to preventing greater loss and damage in the future. It is crucial that countries recommit themselves to doing everything they can to keep 1.5 alive and to building a coalition ahead of COP28 that protects and drives progress against any further pushback.

While discussing COP27, it would be remiss of me not to mention the other COP: COP15, on biodiversity, which will begin in Montreal tomorrow. Climate change and nature loss are twin crises and must be tackled together. The Scottish Government recognises that and, through the Edinburgh declaration, has shown international leadership to highlight the crucial role that sub-nation and local government can play in protecting nature. Scotland has suffered from high historical levels of nature loss, and we face huge challenges today. Nearly 50 per cent of species have decreased in abundance since 1994, and one in nine species are at risk of national extinction.

It is expected that COP15 will result in a new global framework to tackle biodiversity loss, with a draft target to protect 30 per cent of land and sea for nature by the end of the decade. It is known as the 30 by 30 target, and the Scottish Government has already committed to implementing it in Scotland. Research that was conducted by Survation found that two thirds of Scots support the target.

A report that was published this week by the coalition group Scottish Environment LINK underlined how important 30 by 30 can be. The report said that protected areas

“are the frontline of defence for nature against growing pressures from human activity and climate change and are vital for supporting our species and habitats.”

We have a climate emergency. Scotland is doing what it can to tackle that emergency, but we need greater effort from the international

community, and I ask the Government to continue to press for such action.

15:37

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** After COP27, the odds are now, sadly, stacked against keeping the world to 1.5° of heating. The UN secretary general described the latest IPCC report as an “atlas of human suffering”. This is what we now face; it is completely inevitable.

However, the threat should galvanise us, because, even if 1.5° is now dead, we must redouble our efforts to keep hope and progress alive. It will not be enough to have short-term technical decarbonisation plans that allow business as usual to simply continue. We need a revolution in our thinking, and we must look forward to future generations with every action that we take, because the footprints that we leave today will last for generations to come.

It is time to join the dots and see the connections in what is already happening to our world. Europe is currently heating at twice the rate of the rest of the planet, while the Arctic is heating three times faster. Every fraction of a degree of Arctic temperature increase has resulted in a more erratic polar jet stream, bringing heat waves, droughts, forest fires and excess deaths across Europe.

A melting Arctic permafrost could mean game over for this planet. If the tipping point is reached, 25 to 40 per cent of global carbon budgets could be blown by permafrost emissions alone. We are one people living on one planet with a shared history and a shared future, and what happens in the Arctic writes the future of a community in Bangladesh.

That is why it was so important that COP27 finally took a critical step forward towards climate reparations for nations that are at the front line of the crisis, with a dedicated fund established for loss and damage. However, as the conference came to a close, we saw the progress that was made in Glasgow start to wither away without delivering the necessary commitments on a phase-out from all fossil fuels.

Despite Alok Sharma’s leadership at COP26 and his calls for a phasing out of all fossil fuels, the Westminster Government has largely continued with business as usual. Despite continuing calls from the International Energy Agency for there to be

“no new investments in oil, gas and coal”,

we have seen a disastrous expansion of oil and gas licences in the North Sea and may even see permission being granted this week for a new

mega coal mine in the north of England. We cannot drill our way out of either the energy cost crisis or the climate emergency; the answer to both of those is a rapid transition away from oil and gas that delivers for both workers and the planet.

COP26 showed us that, when they work together, small nations can lead the world on climate justice. That is exactly the message sent by the launch of the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance, when a flotilla of countries joined together to plan for a fair and fast phase-out of fossil fuels. Chile, Fiji, and Washington were among the newest members to join the alliance and commit to fossil fuel phase-out dates at COP27. I expect that this Government’s programme of work to understand our energy requirements in Scotland will lead to us joining that growing network of climate leaders.

It is also crucial that the Scottish Government continues dialogue with Westminster about joining international calls for collective withdrawal from the Energy Charter treaty, which is now beyond reform. Fossil fuel companies should not be allowed to sue Governments for hundreds of millions of pounds if they introduce policies that limit the use of coal, oil and gas in line with our climate ambitions.

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

**Mark Ruskell:** If I have time in hand.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You would have to accommodate it within your six minutes.

**Mark Ruskell:** Sorry, in that case, no.

The biodiversity COP starting this week underlines how the climate and nature crises are two sides of the same coin. In Scotland, rising temperatures have threatened some of our most iconic species. The very habitats, such as peatlands, that can help us to naturally capture and store carbon from the atmosphere are now under threat, causing them to release the carbon that they hold. I look forward to the forthcoming Scottish biodiversity strategy starting to address those twin crises head on.

Much in the Scottish Government’s programme for government has put us on a faster route to net zero. There is an ambitious heat in buildings strategy; free bus travel for the under-22s, which we learned today is now benefiting more than half a million young Scots; a surge in tree planting; and a new deal for wind power. However, no Government is yet going far enough and the UKCCC and Scotland’s Climate Assembly have both highlighted areas for faster and more radical change, especially in the areas of aviation, peatland restoration and diet change. Like other members, I am sure that there will be further

challenges when the UKCCC releases its Scotland update report tomorrow.

The challenging and necessary targets set by this Parliament mean that a far more ambitious climate plan must be developed early next year. The current plan is already way out of date and does not reflect the ambitions of the Bute House Agreement. No options should be off the table in developing the new climate plan. The leadership shown by the French Government, which this week banned domestic flights where there is a rail alternative, signals the kind of options that must be considered if we are truly to deliver. Whether we currently have the powers is a different question, but we must spell out what is necessary.

It is clear that an outdated business-as-usual model will lead us down a road of no return. I will continue working as a member of the NZET Committee and with Greens in the Government to ensure that Scotland delivers transformative action on climate and nature.

15:43

**Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP):**

After the anticipation and build-up before COP27, the biggest climate meeting of the year is now over. The crowds of delegates that thronged the Sharm el-Sheikh international convention centre for two long weeks have all headed home to recover, many fatigued after long hours and sleepless nights as negotiators tried to seal a deal that would move the world forward. The crucial question is whether COP27 was a success.

I turn first to the not-so-good news. Many people consider that COP27 did not achieve what the science is telling us we desperately need. With the window of opportunity closing fast on the world's goal of limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5° or less, there is agreement that COP27 did far too little on the all-important issue of mitigation and the urgent need to cut global emissions.

The case for urgent action keeps getting stronger. The latest reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change make for grim reading about what to expect if we let temperatures rise too much.

The head of the key negotiating group of developing countries was Pakistan, which has been dealing with the worst floods in its history. They have left 1,717 people dead and cost an estimated \$40 billion in damage. In 2022, there have been 15 climate-related disasters in the US that have each exceeded \$1 billion in costs. Meanwhile, in Africa, according to Carbon Brief's analysis of disaster records,

"extreme weather events have killed at least 4,000 people and affected a further 19 million since the start of 2022."

The pressure was therefore on for COP27 to respond to such disasters.

Attending COP27 were 112 world leaders and more than 300 Government ministers. Some 27,000 people from Governments or intergovernmental agencies, stakeholders and journalists also attended. The backdrop was the UN secretary general warning us that we need to "co-operate or perish" and to take urgent action to take us off

"a highway to climate hell".

That really serious warning from the UN is underpinned by global scientific evidence, and we need to listen to it.

However, in the face of our global climate emergency, progress on mitigation was modest at best. Although some delegations pushed hard for stronger commitments on cutting emissions, the appetite from some nations—mainly those with high emissions—did not seem to be present. I therefore ask the Scottish Government to do all that it can to redouble its efforts to lead by example in pressing for global action on climate mitigation and on reaching the 1.5° target.

There were, however, some significant advances at COP27. Perhaps the most significant is the agreement to create a loss and damage fund to help the most vulnerable countries. That has been a key issue for almost 30 years, particularly for small island developing countries. I am proud that it was Scotland that started things off at COP26 with a voluntary contribution of £2 million for loss and damage. The First Minister's additional announcement of an extra £5 million to help the nations that are most impacted by the implications of climate change is, of course, welcome.

More recently, Denmark, Austria, New Zealand and Belgium have also made financial commitments to loss and damage, and the contributions now amount to \$244.5 million. That makes the final outcome all the more welcome. The door is now open for the most vulnerable countries to receive more support. A goal has been set to fully operationalise the fund at COP28 in a year's time.

For Scotland's part, the funding for loss and damage will enable communities to take direct action to address climate impacts. However, we must ensure that the funding works as expected. There are five critical steps, and the first is quantification. That involves deciding how much countries will receive in loss and damage funding. The funds must assess accumulated damages and losses over a specific baseline.

The second step is assessment. How will loss and damage be assessed, both quantitatively and

non-quantitatively? The funding must take account of indigenous cultural heritage and loss of national and local ecosystems.

The third step is attribution. Countries must be supported to monitor and spell out attribution clearly. Disentangling unfolding impacts from past disaster events or other slow processes and natural factors such as salinisation and loss of biodiversity must be considered.

The fourth step is payment monitoring. A fund needs to be capitalised and managed. Once the mechanics of the fund have been determined, we will need an impact monitoring system.

The final step is evaluation and optimisation. Lessons should be learned from existing climate funds to channel private finance towards low-carbon investments.

I would welcome a commitment from the minister that our funding in Scotland will meet those important principles as set out by the UN.

The steps that the Scottish Government is taking are crucial. We are leading by example in the face of the global climate emergency, but the world must follow suit. I ask the Scottish Government to do all that it can in that regard.

15:49

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak on COP27, the climate and biodiversity crises, and the response of the Scottish Government to those crises.

At previous COPs, most of the focus has been on getting big emitters to commit to emissions reduction. Last year in Glasgow, the COP26 president said that the target of no more than 1.5° of global warming was still “alive” but that its “pulse” was “weak”.

A prominent talking point at COP27 was the viability of that 1.5° target. We should talk about targets: the ambitious targets that have been set by the Scottish Government and voted through by the Parliament. I will talk about biodiversity, which is often the poor relation to climate change but is every bit as important in our bid to tackle that climate change. I have used this figure in previous debates: Scotland ranks 212th out of 240 nations that have been assessed for the quality of their nature through biodiversity intactness.

We know that, when we manage biodiversity, increased carbon sequestration follows, because a healthy environment is a productive environment, especially when it comes to biodiversity and the economy.

The “State of Nature Report Scotland 2019” found that the overall abundance and distribution

of Scotland’s species had declined, including in the past 10 years, and that the pressures that drive biodiversity loss are collectively continuing to have a negative impact on nature. It says that

“There has been no let-up in the net loss of nature in Scotland”,

despite the Scottish Government’s target to halt nature loss by 2030. Targets are not enough: action is required.

The SNP-Green coalition has presided over a decline in species, including 531 habitats and 603 species in Scotland being in poor condition. I will use a marine example because we often forget that the marine environment is at least as important in tackling climate change and biodiversity decline. The Blue Marine Foundation suggests that the west of Scotland cod population has already declined by 92 per cent since 1991, and 12 breeding seabird species have declined in abundance by an average of 38 per cent between 1986 and 2016.

To reverse that trend, we need investment—including, certainly, private investment. A key role that the Government plays in the market is in signalling to investors. The Scottish Government can grandstand all that it likes about how we need to progress towards net zero, but if it is not delivering on its statutory targets, that does not signal positively to investors to stick their financing where we most need it. The Scottish Government has missed three annual emissions reduction targets in a row, and was successful in meeting the 2020 target due only to the temporary travel restrictions that related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

An analysis of COP27 by Institutional Shareholder Services echoed the confusion that many businesses are experiencing around investment in net zero and net zero policies. It stated:

“By demonstrating a lack of credible commitment to their pledges, governments are sending conflicting signals to investors, who may conclude that they should scale back their own ambitions and focus on adaptation instead.”

Liam Kerr raised the issue of the oil and gas sector, which is much debated in the Parliament. The International Panel on Climate Change sixth assessment report sets out that, for temperature rises to be kept within that 1.5°, the use of global oil must decrease by 60 per cent, and the use of gas by 45 per cent, by 2050. I note that the IPCC does not advocate for the end of fossil fuel use entirely, but a consistent reduction is needed by 2050 and, of course, the target should be to eliminate the use of fossil fuels entirely. However, that needs to be done in a gradual and sensible way that ensures that we protect jobs and deliver a real future for the energy sector and the north-east. To do that, we need to actively and

transparently engage with the fossil fuel sector and encourage it to move faster and invest more in the renewables sector, rather than meeting it with demands or constantly trying to shame it. That is not how to deliver tangible working relationships—a fact that is completely lost on the SNP-Green Government.

The International Panel on Climate Change AR6 report is also clear that, as we reduce our use of fossil fuels, we need to replace that with widespread electrification, improved energy efficiency and the use of alternative fuels such as hydrogen. The Scottish Government needs a comprehensive energy plan that includes smart and targeted investment—not scattered investment whose level does not have any real impact. It also needs to get rid of the red tape and to release funds to those companies that are at the forefront of emerging technology; otherwise, we risk losing the great opportunities that Scotland has of driving a global green economy. Those opportunities could be in hydrogen, solar or nuclear, and the Scottish Government has to review its blinkered and blanket objection to the potential of nuclear energy. Our current significant investment in wind energy leaves us vulnerable if the wind does not blow.

The Climate Change Committee suggests that action to address the rising cost of living should be aligned with net zero. There remains an urgent need for equivalent action to reduce demand for fossil fuels in order to reduce emissions and limit energy bills.

On net zero housing, as was reported in *The Herald* three days ago, the co-leader of the Scottish Greens and minister for housing told the newspaper that Scotland is “too late” in making the switch to heating buildings without relying on fossil fuels, which will cost £33 billion. He is right, but he is not the right person to lead on that, given that his party does not exactly embrace the private sector.

It is not enough to have ambition; there must be an action plan with measurable targets for which someone must be accountable to address the scale of the crisis that we are facing. The Scottish Government needs to stop lecturing the rest of the world and focus on our part in delivering the drive to keep 1.5 alive. Targets without outcomes are just hot air; if we miss the targets, 1.5° will be missed. The Scottish Government needs to allow Scotland to demonstrate what can be achieved rather than talk about what could be achieved.

15:56

**Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab):** We are in the midst of an emergency. It may well be too late now to keep 1.5 alive, but that means that, now

more than ever, we need unprecedented and coordinated action from Governments. Last year, the IPCC said that,

“Without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors”,

it would be impossible to contain average global temperature rises to 1.5° above pre-industrial levels. Unfortunately, there is no sign that those deep emissions reductions are taking place. Scotland has, of course, repeatedly failed to meet our own annual targets.

The commitment at COP27 to give formal recognition to the fact of loss and damage as a result of the climate emergency and to establish a fund under the UN framework convention on climate change is a positive step, if overdue. It is widely accepted that those most acutely affected by the impacts of the climate emergency have contributed the least to creating that emergency. I welcome the Scottish Government’s pledge of £2 million for loss and damage through the climate justice fund. However, I have absolutely no doubt that the ministers accept that the amount that has been committed is not a true reflection of the climate damage created by Scotland’s past—or indeed present—emissions and that the sum is mainly symbolic. I have no doubt that they also accept that this must be only the start of a sustained and focused long-term commitment to ensuring that Governments, including the UK and Scottish Governments, deliver for climate-vulnerable countries by ensuring that commitments on adaption and loss and damage are honoured.

Between 1988 and 2015, an estimated 100 companies producing fossil fuels—excluding agricultural methane—were responsible for 71 per cent of all global emissions. Those companies are overwhelmingly based in the so-called global north. Those injustices only compound the long history of colonisation and oppression that many climate-vulnerable countries have suffered. Foyso Choudhury spoke knowledgeably about that from his own experience and his involvement in the cross-party group on Bangladesh.

Although the Government is right to express disappointment in its motion in relation to lack of action, it is also appropriate, here in the Scottish Parliament, to talk about the Scottish Government’s own lack of action on the issue.

The Scottish Government’s own energy strategy noted that there are significant opportunities in the North Sea, with up to 20 billion barrels of oil equivalent remaining. I take on board that the issue is whether those barrels of oil are burned. However, in October, when I asked the cabinet secretary to take a clear public stance against the proposed Rosebank oilfield development, his

response was that the Scottish Government's opposition to Rosebank was conditional, and that Rosebank should be subjected to a rigorous climate compatibility checkpoint to ensure that it is consistent with emissions reductions targets. That simply is not good enough. We need to address fossil fuel production and deliver local renewables production, particularly municipal and community production. At a Scottish level, we also need to look at initiatives such as a publicly owned energy company, as proposed by Colin Smyth and noted in the Scottish Labour amendment.

**Michael Matheson:** The position that the Scottish Government has taken on new oil and gas production and a compatibility checkpoint is in line with the independent advice that we have received from the Climate Change Committee. The committee has said that there should be a rigorous, robust climate compatibility checkpoint before any production is taken forward. Does Scottish Labour support the position of the Climate Change Committee, or is its position that there should be absolutely no new oil and gas development—end of?

**Katy Clark:** I have got very limited time, so will not be able to give the cabinet secretary a full response. The cabinet secretary is very well aware of the scale of the challenge and that we cannot continue to extract oil and gas in the way that we have been doing.

The International Energy Agency has repeatedly stated that rejecting any new oil or gas developments is a bare minimum requirement if the world wants to reach net zero emissions by 2050. I hope that the Scottish Government accepts that we are going in the wrong direction. A Friends of the Earth report last year found that North Sea oil production has increased 15 per cent since the climate emergency was declared.

We need to take radical action. People and planet demand more urgent action. Unfortunately, I have not been able to respond fully to the cabinet secretary due to lack of time, and I am now over time. I hope that, in the debates that take place in the Scottish Parliament, we agree on more radical action for the future.

16:02

**Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):**  
Presiding Officer,

"Greenhouse gas emissions keep growing. Global temperatures keep rising. And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible. We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator."

Those are the words of António Guterres, secretary general of the United Nations.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine, has said:

"There can be no effective climate policy without peace ... There are still many for whom climate change is just rhetoric or marketing ... but not real action. ... They are the ones who start wars of aggression when the planet cannot afford a single gunshot, because it needs global joint actions."

That is the global context of COP27—the first UN climate summit in the global south for six years. It was billed as the implementation COP, at which rhetoric would be turned into action—in particular, in support for countries that are on the front line of the crisis. COP27 did not deliver on that expectation—to say nothing of what is needed to stop complete climate breakdown.

However, COP27 has secured some important wins—I mention in particular the loss and damage fund and the renewed emphasis on equity. We still need the world to agree on a new long-term goal for climate finance, and on whether so-called emissions removals and avoidance will be allowed to be traded in Paris agreement carbon markets.

The securing of a loss and damage fund to address the now unavoidable impacts of climate change was a huge win for the global south countries that had made it their priority issue at COP27, when there was finally acknowledgement by developed countries that the people who are least responsible for global warming are the ones who are suffering its worst consequences. There was considerable resistance from wealthy historical polluters to establishment of the fund, with those countries instead promoting technical assistance and deeply inadequate insurance schemes.

The Scottish Government played an important role in championing the loss and damage fund, and civil society campaigning was key to securing that vital win. Scotland should be proud to have played its part in the lead-up to that decision by working with others to build momentum over the past 12 months. 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. I would like to start by saying how much I appreciate the Scottish effort in this regard."

It is deeply disappointing that that recognition of loss and damage has not been matched by greater action to prevent worsening of the climate crisis. Despite 26 years of UN climate negotiations, emissions are still rising and, despite all the hype around keeping 1.5 alive at the Glasgow summit last year, the world is on course for a catastrophic temperature rise of 2.8°C, or more. In recognition of that, countries were asked to voluntarily update their pledges to cut emissions ahead of COP27. Updated pledges will reduce

emissions in 2030 by only 1 per cent and, despite leading that call as outgoing president of COP26, the UK Government has failed to increase its own commitments.

The next official round of nationally determined contributions—NDCs are climate action pledges under the Paris agreement—is not due until 2030. That is another eight years away, which will be far too late to prevent climate breakdown. Analysis of such pledges shows that rich historical polluters are not doing anywhere near their fair share in taking climate action, based on remaining carbon budgets and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility, while many global south countries are committed to taking their fair share—of more—of action.

Rich historical polluters are gambling with the highest stakes imaginable in running down the clock on 1.5°C. By failing to cut their own emissions in line with their obligations, and by failing to deliver their financial obligations, they are once more shifting responsibility on to the shoulders of countries that have done least to cause the problem, but which are on the front line in terms of impacts.

Around two weeks ago, I spoke in a debate on the Fraser of Allander Institute's report entitled "The Economic Impact of Scotland's Renewable Energy Sector". Scotland's renewable energy industry and its supply chain supported more than 27,000 full-time equivalent jobs and generated £5.6 billion of output in 2020. Onshore wind had the largest output—it generated nearly £2.5 billion—with offshore wind and hydro power each supporting more than £1.1 billion of output.

The Scottish Government will soon be unveiling its energy strategy and just transition strategy, which will be ambitious and will move us towards net zero. Scotland needs to continue to develop the existing renewables revolution that is under way. The supply chain needs to increase capacity to what is required to deliver the skills and manufacturing that will service all our renewable energy projects. With a short-term offshore wind pipeline of 6.9GW and potentially more than 10GW of onshore wind, the existing pipeline of renewable energy projects to be delivered in Scotland is extensive.

I will close with two more quotes from COP27. William Ruto, the President of Kenya, said:

"In the face of impending catastrophe, whose warning signs are already unbearably disastrous, weak action is unwise. No action is dangerous."

Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, said:

"The global fossil fuel crisis must be a game-changer. So let us not take the 'highway to hell' but let's earn the clean ticket to heaven."

Presiding Officer, the stakes could not be any higher.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** We move to closing speeches.

16:08

**Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to close the debate on COP27 outcomes for Labour, because climate change is an issue that I am passionate about tackling. As poverty is, climate change is an issue of inequality and injustice that hits working-class people hardest and is caused by political choices that have benefited the super-rich.

Closing the debate gives me the opportunity to summarise and reiterate Scottish Labour's position. However, before I do so I would like to spend some time commenting on the Scottish Government's motion and the amendment that was lodged by the Conservative Party. Although I have to say that I think that it is a stretch too far to claim—as Gillian Martin seemed to claim—that there would have been no outcomes from COP27 had Scotland's First Minister not been there, there is much in the Government motion that Labour will support.

It is fair to say that establishing the loss and damage fund is an important step forward in tackling climate change and challenging its injustices. My colleague Foyso Choudhury highlighted the global inequality that we see in how those whose economies have benefited most from fossil fuels have experienced relatively little impact in comparison with those whose resources have been exploited not just in the recent past but throughout the long history of colonialism. We see time and again—as my colleague Katy Clark highlighted—that those who are most acutely affected by the climate emergency have contributed the least to climate change, so it is right that we tackle that injustice and seek to address it through the loss and damage fund.

Labour supports the sentiment in the Government's motion on the need for

"a phasedown of unabated coal-use"

and

"other fossil fuels",

as well as on the need

"to ensure that human rights ... are fully respected"—

**Mark Ruskell:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Mercedes Villalba:** Can I get the time back, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** No, but—

**Mercedes Villalba:** I am afraid that I am unable to take the intervention. I am sorry.

Labour also supports the ambition that is highlighted in the motion of

“protecting 30% of land and seas by 2030”.

However, targets are not enough to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. As the Labour amendment highlights, we need to see “action and delivery”.

We will not support the Tory amendment, because it seeks to remove from the motion crucial lines on the transition away from fossil fuels. That is not to say, however, that we do not support the amendment’s sentiment—which is also in the Scottish Government’s motion—on protecting

“human rights across the world”.

I was pleased to see that in the Conservative Party’s amendment.

We heard from Liam Kerr that the Conservatives want a just transition, as we all do. However, whenever I hear Conservative members speak about a just transition, I have the same question: a just transition for whom? Will it be for ordinary workers and householders, through a green industrial strategy that invests in public services, or are they talking about a just transition for private corporations and oil multinationals that are seeking to protect their profits?

**Brian Whittle:** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Mercedes Villalba:** I am afraid that I do not have time in hand.

As I said, we support the element of the Conservative amendment that refers to protecting

“human rights across the world”,

and we also support elements of Tory members’ contributions to the debate. I am thinking, for example, of Graham Simpson’s comments on lower bus fares for all and on dualling of train tracks. I think that I also heard him propose—I am sure that he will correct me if I am wrong—provision of free ferry travel to under-22s who live on the islands. Labour supports those kinds of investments in our communities and public services and would like to see more of them. However, I would be interested to see whether Graham Simpson’s colleagues in Westminster support such proposals.

In my final minute, I turn to Labour’s amendment. We have decided to support the

Government’s motion and to add our amendment at the end. I hope that the Government will be able to support our amendment, because it is important that we have on the record an acknowledgement that we in Scotland are not currently meeting our own annual targets to cut emissions, despite the fact that we are well placed to do so.

If we had a socialist green new deal that used every lever to redistribute wealth through job creation in a suite of new public services, we could drastically reduce emissions in Scotland. A public energy company that would generate renewable energy would provide lower costs for consumers and sectoral collective bargaining for workers. Likewise, council-run bus companies would lower the cost to consumers and improve workers’ rights for the workers involved.

We have often heard from the Government that those kinds of policies are not possible because the budget is fixed, but we heard that argument crumble—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Miss Villalba, you have five seconds left.

**Mercedes Villalba:** It is not good enough for the Government to say that we do not have the power, the wealth or the skills. We have all those things. The only thing that we do not have is a Government that has the socialist ambition to redistribute wealth and power. That is why we need a workers’ economy, which only Labour in Government can deliver—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you, Ms Villalba. You are over your time.

16:14

**Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** This is a welcome opportunity for Parliament to discuss climate change, which in my opinion, it does not do nearly enough. I begin by highlighting some of the important contributions that we have heard this afternoon.

There is consensus about tackling climate change more quickly. The cabinet secretary highlighted that this is a global challenge that we need to work on with a shared sense of urgency as a global community, and described the COP27 agreement as “a watershed agreement”.

Liam Kerr pointed to a lot of domestic talk, and said that we all agree that we want a just transition, but that there had not been enough action.

Graham Simpson talked primarily about transport, and described how moving people from petrol and diesel cars requires infrastructure. He said, in relation to the target for moving to electric cars, that only eight out of the target of 4,000

chargers had been put in place, which is a considerable shortfall.

Colin Smyth described the possibility of a catastrophic 2.8°C rise, and flagged the major sectors in which we need to take action. I should say at this point that we will support the Labour amendment.

Alex Cole-Hamilton described the need for radical and credible policies, but unfortunately he was not able to take my intervention as I was going to ask him whether he thought that the Scottish Government's policies are in that category. He also mentioned that insulating the homes of Scotland's fuel-poor households could take up to 300 years.

Audrey Nicoll highlighted that COP27 was the beginning of a difficult process, and we had further contributions along those lines from Rona Mackay, Jackie Dunbar and Collette Stevenson. Finally, Mark Ruskell said that the odds are stacked against the world keeping to 1.5°C and that we need some revolutionary thinking.

The threat posed by climate change is more pressing than ever. According to the IPCC, approximately 40 per cent of the world's population is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. In Pakistan, catastrophic floods submerged a third of the country, killed over 1,700 people and damaged or destroyed two million homes. A similar point was made by Foysol Choudhury, who also referenced Bangladesh. The World Health Organization estimates that at least 15,000 deaths in Europe were caused by heatwaves this year. According to the World Weather Attribution group, those heatwaves would be

“virtually impossible without climate change”.

In Scotland, heat-related deaths could rise to more than 100 per year by 2050 according to the Climate Change Committee. It also says that we can expect homes and businesses to be damaged more frequently as a result of severe flooding. Failing to limit global warming to 1.5°C concerns everyone—to keep that goal viable, there must be a 43 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030 versus 2019 levels.

It was welcome to see COP27 reaffirm the commitment to the 1.5°C limit, but frustrating that global ambitions to reduce emissions made only “limited progress” according to the Climate Change Committee. Nevertheless, COP27 gave us a glimmer of hope, especially at the national level. More countries signed the global methane pledge, taking the total to 150. India formalised its COP26 pledges, Britain strengthened plans for delivering on its 2030 emissions targets, and Mexico, Turkey and Australia increased their 2030 targets. It is also worth noting that Australia

followed Britain's lead by setting its net zero target in law.

At COP27, Britain announced more than £100 million to support developing countries that are dealing with climate change impacts. That includes a more than £65 million investment in green tech and clean energy in Kenya and Egypt.

I will say a bit more about adaptation funding, since it was a key issue at COP27.

It has been estimated that climate change measures could cost developing countries anywhere up to £340 billion a year, so it is significant that there was an agreement to establish a loss and damage fund to address those impacts. There is still much to decide—who will pay for the fund, how much, and who will benefit have to be decided—but that should not distract from the significance of the agreement.

COP27 also saw an endorsement of nature-based solutions. Such measures can play an important role in both mitigation and adaptation efforts. For example, the Bahamas is allowing marine conservation projects to sell blue carbon credits. It is offering an adaptation mechanism, generating new revenue, and helping to protect local ecosystems.

Nature-based solutions are important in Scotland, too, but progress is poor. Let us consider peatland. The SNP-Green coalition has a target of restoring 20,000 hectares of degraded peatland each year. Peatland is an excellent carbon sink, so we all want that to succeed, but the SNP-Green coalition did not even manage to restore a quarter of that target last year.

Let us consider forestry. The Woodland Trust has estimated that around £500 million is needed to restore and expand Scotland's rainforest. The SNP and the Greens have stumped up less than 1 per cent of that and, of course, they have missed their own emissions targets three years running—in 2017, 2018 and 2019. If we add to that the failure to make legal clean air targets, international biodiversity targets, green jobs targets, recycling targets, and cycling targets that will not be met for 680 years, there is a catalogue of failures.

If Scotland is to meet its climate goals, the SNP and the Greens must start to deliver not just for them but for all of us, and they must work with the UK Government. The lesson from COP is that there must be consensus and co-operation.

16:21

**The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater):** I thank all members who have contributed to the debate.

I think that there is recognition across the chamber that COP27 was the first COP at which the impact of climate change on vulnerable nations finally received its long-overdue recognition. Although much remains to be decided about the how and the who, the establishment of the loss and damage fund was a genuine success and a rare positive news story.

There were undeniable disappointments—in particular, the failure to agree and deliver on the action that is needed. That is unavoidable if the goal of 1.5°C is to remain within reach. There is one area on which all parties agreed: the need for urgency of action. In 2022, we have seen growing climate-induced extreme weather and disasters. That emphasises the immediacy of the threat not just in Pakistan and east Africa but to all of us. We are code red on climate.

**Maurice Golden:** Will the minister provide members with her assessment of the SNP Government's ability to meet its targets prior to 2021, when she took office?

**Lorna Slater:** I am not sure whether Maurice Golden is asking for historical data or about our progress this year. The Government is certainly working very hard on concrete actions to deliver. The examples on the table include the half a billion pounds just transition fund in the north-east, which is going to projects to create new jobs and to support new technology; free bus travel for under-22s; our nature restoration fund; and the recycling improvement fund. Our commitments to tackling the climate crisis go on and on.

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** Does the minister think that cutting the budget for Marine Scotland will help us to meet our climate targets?

**Lorna Slater:** We all know that we have to ensure that our budget stretches, and that sometimes means difficult decisions. We have to ensure that we get the best impact for every pound that is spent. Each pound can be spent only once. Douglas Lumsden will know about our need to balance our budgets.

I will comment on the amendments. There are some positive contributions in Scottish Labour's amendment. We absolutely agree that there is a need to realise Scotland's renewables potential and to secure as much benefit as possible for Scotland from that industry.

However, as usual, Labour is ignoring what powers the Scottish Government actually has. Realising our renewables potential must be a joint endeavour, with the UK Government doing its bit, too. For example, it must ensure that proper support is in place for emerging technologies in which Scotland could lead, such as tidal power and reducing connection and transmission costs.

**Monica Lennon:** The minister will be aware of Common Weal and its important policy work on democratising energy. The SNP and the Greens made a commitment around the public ownership of electricity generation. There has been progress in Wales. Are ministers speaking to their counterparts in Wales to see where we can learn from their work to try to get the action that many of us want to see?

**Lorna Slater:** I am absolutely aware of what is going on in Wales. Although that is an interesting project, the scale is so small that it would do very little to tackle our renewable energy challenges in Scotland.

Mr Kerr makes the important point in his amendment that meeting our targets requires working "collaboratively across borders". However, that means that the UK Government has to do its bit, too.

**Brian Whittle:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Lorna Slater:** No, I need to carry on with my speech.

That means more support for the renewables sector in Scotland, for example through delivering a fair Great Britain-wide transmission charging regime that enables the rapid growth and deployment of renewables. It also means that the UK Government must stay true to its commitments. Is the Tory Government in Westminster really going to consent to a new coal mine in Cumbria?

Mr Kerr's amendment also removes the references to the critical COP15 talks that start this week. Addressing the climate and nature crises must go hand in hand.

Difficult decisions lie ahead if we are to keep 1.5 alive. The knock-on effects of the war in Ukraine, the cost of living crisis, which is driven by energy prices in particular, and the lasting impacts of Covid-19 teach us that we should push forward with our energy transition ambitions if we are to be resilient to global shocks.

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

**Lorna Slater:** I will take one more.

**Liam Kerr:** I respect the fact that the minister has taken four interventions. On a point of order, however, my amendment does not remove the reference to COP15.

Earlier in the debate, we heard about the importance of the Acorn project. The Green Party is on record as being opposed to carbon capture, utilisation and storage. Does the minister agree with her party or with the Government of which she is a member?

**Lorna Slater:** The Climate Change Committee accounts for the use of CCUS in its calculations. The Scottish Green Party and others are sceptical about the practical implementation of CCUS because some of that technology is untested.

Scotland's participation in COP27 and the meetings that were held with leaders and ministers from multiple continents proved that we have a lot to offer to and learn from others. There is huge interest in our just transition to net zero in particular, and our expertise in offshore wind and green hydrogen shows that Scotland is seen as a world leader in those technologies.

There is no doubt that Scotland must move away from fossil fuels as quickly as a just transition will fairly and effectively allow. Our highly skilled oil and gas workforce has long been at the forefront of energy innovation. That is why we see a bright future for a revitalised North Sea economy.

**Foysoyl Choudhury:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Lorna Slater:** I am sorry, but I need to crack on.

That economy will drive a net zero energy system as well as providing huge employment opportunities for that innovative workforce in the energy transition. However, let us be clear: we are still talking about an end date. Unlimited extraction of fossil fuels is fundamentally incompatible with our climate obligations. Ultimately, oil and gas licensing, regulation and taxation are reserved to the UK Government. We need to see more investment in renewables and energy transition from our Westminster colleagues.

We have already shown that our actions can move the dial internationally. Loss and damage was a central issue in Egypt, and Scotland played a small but significant role in that space. The decision to establish a fund is the result of more than three decades of hard work by vulnerable nations and small island states. Scotland's ongoing commitment turned up the pressure on that decision in a way that had been done by no developed country before. We are acting on a world stage.

I will be attending COP15 this week, where I will emphasise the twin crises and the inextricable link between biodiversity loss and climate change. I will launch our new draft biodiversity strategy and, through the Edinburgh process and the Edinburgh declaration, promote adoption of the subnational plan of action. Those actions will showcase nature-based solutions in Scotland and how they contribute to reducing biodiversity loss and meeting our net zero target.

**Graham Simpson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Lorna Slater:** No—I am sorry, but I am running out of time.

Our space on the world stage should encourage and motivate our ambitions at home. Scotland's international presence is an opportunity to maximise our impact and to see the change that we effect at home multiplied elsewhere. We are a small country, but our efforts can and do influence great global change.

Liam Kerr asked about the allocation and spending of Scotland's loss and damage fund. Of the £2 million fund, £1.7 million has been allocated. Those funds are currently in use in Malawi, the Pacific Islands and Bangladesh, where that money is being spent on the ground.

However, the £5 million will be allocated based on community-led needs assessment in consultation with stakeholders experiencing loss and damage, as will monitoring and evaluation.

The £5 million loss and damage commitment at COP27 is specifically to address non-economic and slow onset loss and damage, which, so far, has received insufficient global attention. The £5 million will be allocated and spent according to a four-stage methodology. The methodology has been tested extensively with the global community and was discussed at length at the loss and damage conference that Scotland hosted.

## Standing Order Rule Change (Proxy Voting)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-07078, in the name of Martin Whitfield, on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, on a temporary rule change to standing orders to allow a proxy voting pilot.

16:32

**Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to open the debate, even if the topic has one of the longest titles those in the chamber will have been confronted with.

The founding principles of this Parliament are openness, accountability, the sharing of power and equal opportunities. It is worth considering those foundations as we go forward. We need to design a Parliament for the future; we must not become a Parliament that is stuck in the past.

However, I will revisit the past, and 1999 in particular. As Susan Stewart recalled in “‘Lords o State’ and ‘Lusty Banqueting’: Images of Scotland from 1999-2003”:

“A lot of the MSPs, when they were taking their oath, had their *children* in the *gallery*, so it had a *less formal* feel to it than the parliament that we were *used* to: Westminster. Right from the start it signalled, ‘This is a family-friendly parliament. It’s going to be a parliament that represents *all* Scotland and both women and men.’”

Despite that hope of being a family-friendly Parliament, before the last election, four female MSPs cited family as their reason for not seeking re-election. It is on that foundation that the committee looked at what changes could be made.

It is an important pillar of the Parliament that we are family friendly, because it speaks to the principles that I have mentioned. However, currently, our standing orders do not provide for proxy voting—that is, one vote cast by one MSP on behalf of another MSP. The committee’s “Report on inquiry into Future Parliamentary procedures and practices” included the recommendation that a proxy vote pilot should take place. The evidence indicated that MSPs, like the rest of the population, have times in their life when circumstances such as illness, bereavement or parental responsibilities mean that they cannot vote in person or use the remote voting platform and they are unable to attend the Parliament.

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** The committee’s report refers to three different categories to which proxy voting might apply, which I agree with. However, Mr Whitfield

will know about the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and other international events that parliamentarians can attend. Did the committee give consideration to those aspects in its work?

**Martin Whitfield:** I am grateful for that intervention. It is right that, in our short-term investigation, we limited the areas in which we think proxy votes should be used, but that does not mean that the Parliament cannot look at other areas in the future. Indeed, if parliamentarians and colleagues have responsibilities that take them to other countries—for example, through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which has just been mentioned—we could look at that.

The measure is temporary, and we will observe how it works over the year. It would be helpful for the committee to be informed of situations in which a proxy vote was not available to a member, so that we can take that into account, too.

What lies behind today’s motion? The committee published a relatively short report following consultation with members, the Presiding Officer and the Parliamentary Bureau on key elements of what the chamber proxy voting scheme should look like. It is important to say that the change applies only to the chamber; proxy voting will not be available in committees, for which there is a separate substitute provision.

The proposed pilot is a means of complementing the existing remote voting platform and the informal pairing arrangements that are in place for some members. It provides an institutional provision that will allow members an additional route to vote in certain circumstances.

The committee is mindful of one person holding a significant number of proxy votes for other members of their party or, indeed, for members across the chamber, so we recommend that a member should hold no more than two proxy votes. The holding and granting of such votes is based on trust between two members, so that is best dealt with by members who trust each other. The members might be from different political parties, but the proxy vote will be given on the basis of trust.

The committee has made a number of recommendations on the proxy voting scheme, but I will draw attention to two in particular. First, for the prevention of doubt, the proxy vote will have the same status as a vote cast by a member in person. Secondly, the proxy vote will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting so that that pillar of transparency can be addressed.

There is a crucial relationship between MSPs in the Parliament and their constituents, which speaks volumes to the trust that constituents place in us when they cast their votes to send us here. The same basis should exist when a member, in

certain circumstances, trusts another member to cast their vote; respect between those two members must be held.

We have invited the Presiding Officer not to adjudicate on proxy voting but to administer the scheme, and she has consented to do that.

On that basis, I invite members to endorse the temporary change so that we can see whether proxy voting is right for the chamber and for the Parliament.

On behalf of the committee, I move,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 7th Report, 2022 (Session 6), *Report on a Proxy Voting pilot* (SP Paper 270), and agrees that the temporary rule change to Standing Orders set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 4 January 2023.

16:38

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam):** As always, I welcome the opportunity to participate in such debates on behalf of the Scottish Government. On 22 September, the Parliament held a debate on the subject of the committee's report and its inquiry into virtual and hybrid working. There was clear and broad consensus on the need for the Parliament's working practices to retain the flexibility that has been offered by new ways of working. The Scottish Parliament has adapted over time, not only because of the need to react to the pandemic but in the light of practical experience and Scotland's ever-evolving constitutional journey.

The committee identified the establishment of a proxy voting scheme as a necessary and prudent reform. I reiterate that it is for the Parliament to consider any proposals relating to its operation, including any changes to its voting arrangements. Colleagues might recall that I noted that the merits of a proxy voting scheme, as outlined in the committee's report, were clear. That view was widely shared, as evidenced by those who contributed to the committee's inquiry.

The committee recognised the need to ensure that any such arrangements were robust and fit for purpose, and it said that it would engage further with the Parliamentary Bureau and others to refine the details of the model scheme. As a member of the bureau, along with other business managers, I had the opportunity to consider the correspondence from the committee seeking further input on the practical implications of proxy voting and how any issues could be addressed. I found those exchanges on the technical and procedural aspects of the arrangement to be helpful and productive.

The Scottish Government welcomes the committee's position that decisions on agreeing a member's request for a proxy vote should rest with the Presiding Officer. That will ensure the integrity of the scheme and that such requests are monitored and considered on a consistent basis. I believe that that is extremely important as we move forward with the pilot, and it is especially important to the success of the pilot scheme in handling requests for proxies in relation to illness. That aspect of the scheme clearly adds a further dynamic to the implementation, in terms of evaluating fairness.

The Government also highlights the issue of ensuring that those who are nominated to exercise a proxy vote do so in a manner that is consistent with the wishes of the absentee—in other words, that the person who is nominated votes the right way for the individual who asked for the proxy.

It is important to mention the committee's finding that, despite recent events, the Parliament was able to fulfil its scrutiny function. The Scottish Government welcomes that.

Members who are also ministers should of course be treated equally when it comes to requests for proxy votes. To be clear, that would not detract from the Government's commitment to ensuring that ministers are made available in order to be held to account.

I do not intend to take up too much more time. The Scottish Government once again commends the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee for its work on this matter and will closely follow the operation and experience of any pilot scheme.

16:41

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** The Parliament prides itself on being a flexible and open institution that accommodates people from as many different backgrounds as possible and with different lifestyles. That has been particularly clear since the pandemic, when remote participation in parliamentary business was put in place. The introduction of virtual proceedings has not been without its problems, but there is no doubt that it has helped the Parliament to evolve. Given that, it is right that we consider how further improvements to parliamentary business can be made. Therefore, I welcome this debate on the proposed pilot for a proxy voting system.

We know that virtual participation has been made possible, with members voting remotely, but there are also times when it is neither practical nor reasonable to expect members to participate in that way. A proxy voting system would help to address many of those circumstances. Although

informal pairing arrangements have existed and worked reasonably well, there is an opportunity to ensure that individuals who want their vote to be dealt with at decision time get that chance, and proxy voting will allow that to happen.

As a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, I am happy that the report outlines how a pilot could be effectively installed. One important aspect of the pilot is the circumstances in which the proxy vote will be granted. Those circumstances have been outlined as being illness, bereavement and parental leave. Those may not be the most effective set of circumstances, but they will be the starting point for the scheme, and a judgment will be made on what can be achieved.

The report is right to emphasise the importance of the Presiding Officer having the final say on when proxy votes are granted and ensuring that a large number of votes are not controlled by a small number of people, which is vital. Various issues have arisen in circumstances and situations in the past, including in stage 3 debates, which involve votes on a large number of matters. Several possible solutions have been proposed, and I know that the trial and error approach of the pilot scheme will help to determine the system that we adopt going forward.

Many members will be aware of previous examples in which a proxy vote system would have been beneficial to individuals. My colleague Edward Mountain MSP has very much been involved in that regard. For a significant time, he was unable to be here due to ill health, and he has spoken about the fact that the current system made him feel that his vote did not count. I have no doubt that the introduction of a proxy voting system will support MSPs effectively and that it will be done in accordance with the committee's report to ensure that individuals have the right to select someone to be a proxy for them. That would have been of great support to Edward Mountain and, like him, I want the process to proceed as soon as possible.

The introduction of proxy voting could be another important step forward in making the Parliament a place that is truly accommodating to people with different needs, backgrounds and circumstances. The success of the pilot scheme will depend on clear communication between members, the Presiding Officer and the designated proxy. It is important that the whole Parliament is clear about the role, the process and what will take place during the pilot. However, I am very confident that, working together, which we have seen many times before in Parliament, we will arrive at a system that truly works for better democracy in this establishment.

16:45

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** I join other members in commending the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee for its work on this issue, and I am pleased to support the measure on behalf of Scottish Labour. I believe that it is a victory for common sense.

All members elected to this Parliament should have the opportunity to have a say on legislation or in debates that impact on their constituents. Illness, bereavement and parental leave should not be obstacles to that.

If we recall the circus that surrounded the knife-edge Westminster votes on the Brexit deal—when MPs were wheeled into the lobbies in wheelchairs and expectant mothers voted when past their due date—those were not the images of a modern democracy and they shamed our politics. It was frankly embarrassing, at a time when faith in our political process among the public was already wearing thin.

**Stuart McMillan:** I just make Neil Bibby aware that that was not the first time that such activity took place in Westminster. The previous time I remember it happening was when there was potential reform of the House of Lords.

**Neil Bibby:** Mr McMillan is right. It has happened over a number of years and, frankly, it is a situation that should not be able to come to pass.

We in the Scottish Parliament have always prided ourselves on being a different kind of Parliament, less bound by ancient traditions and more open to a family-friendly outlook for its members. However, our actions have not always met that rhetoric.

Today, the committee has put forward a fair proposal to allow colleagues in those circumstances to represent the electorate and to allow all members of Parliament to have their say on the matters of the day. It is up to us, now, to make a success of the trial and build confidence in the processes.

The pandemic was a dark chapter in this country's history and the consequences are still being felt today. One of the silver linings, though, was that it forced us all to rethink working practices so that we could function during the necessary lockdown periods and to embrace technology where possible to make us more efficient. That meant that changes to the way that we operate as a Parliament that were seen as theoretical or experimental became the norm, as we were forced to make them work.

Today is a welcome update to that, and I am confident that the proposed trial will be a success. As a Parliament, we should not fear change and

we should be open to better ways of working, particularly as the world around us is rapidly evolving and opening up opportunities to work smarter.

My only regret, which is similar to Martin Whitfield's, is that this has come too late for many colleagues who in the past have been unable to balance family life with their responsibilities as a parliamentarian. As a father, I know the daily juggling act and how difficult it can be for new parents to keep all the balls in the air. I consider myself very fortunate that I can make all of that work, but we all know colleagues who, for different reasons, whether it be geography or the lack of a support network, simply could not maintain that, and our politics is all the poorer for it.

We all want to see the brightest and the best attracted to public service and this is a small but progressive step, removing a potential barrier to elected office for good people in the future. With this welcome reform, there is also a responsibility on elected members to use the allowance wisely, as Alexander Stewart said. It is right that proxy voting is enabled on the basis of trust, with appropriate privacy safeguards in place, but our constituents expect us to be in Parliament when possible, representing them in person when we can.

I agree that proxy voting is a privilege, that it should be used judiciously and that we should be mindful of our responsibilities in order to preserve the accommodations. After all, being a politician is a very fortunate position; we must always remember that plenty of other workers are not afforded anywhere near the level of flexibility that we enjoy. In any case, this is a positive step for Parliament and I look forward to working with colleagues to ensure that the trial is a success.

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

16:49

**Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** I thank the members of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee for their work on the proxy voting scheme over the past few months.

Following the steps forward taken during the pandemic, and considering the potential issues that could arise from the current pairing system, I am pleased that we are now at this point. As a member of the Parliamentary Bureau, I confirm that we have discussed the issue on a number of occasions.

Proxy voting will provide individual members with the ability to exercise their vote on matters that are important to them when they cannot

otherwise participate. With the ability to participate online, which I am doing today, there is less likelihood of the mechanism being used than in previous parliamentary sessions, but it is still an important part of voting in the chamber.

I am pleased that the pilot will cover illness, parental leave and bereavement, but I ask that, after the pilot is concluded, caring responsibilities be considered for inclusion in the scope of reasons for a proxy vote. We should be aware that, for some, caring means more than parental responsibilities and the omission of caring responsibilities from a full scheme in future parliamentary sessions could put someone off putting themselves forward for election, if they perceive there to be a lack of flexibility.

I agree with other members that the Presiding Officer administering the scheme is the correct, appropriate and fair route.

I am sure that many members across the Parliament appreciate the focus on confidentiality throughout the report. The measure is in no way intended to allow us to avoid scrutiny or duck questions on why we might or might not be present, but it will prevent the possibility of any member's medical condition or family situation ending up being made public against their wishes.

As with any new system, the proof will be in the implementation, and any issues will need to be considered as part of the evaluation of the pilot.

I note that there are no recommendations in the report with regard to corrections if a member who is exercising a proxy accidentally exercises their vote in the wrong way. I am keen to understand from the convener or any other member of the committee whether that was discussed.

Obviously, a vote cannot be changed once it has been cast—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Mackay, I have received a request for an intervention from Martin Whitfield. Do you wish to accept the intervention?

**Gillian Mackay:** Absolutely.

**Martin Whitfield:** I am grateful to Gillian Mackay for giving way. During the trial period, we will sit under the same restrictions that apply now for voting in the chamber: namely, if a vote was incorrectly cast or not counted, it could appear in the record, but it would not affect the numbers in the calculation of how the vote went. I hope that that helps.

**Gillian Mackay:** I thank Martin Whitfield for that helpful clarification.

I would also be interested to hear about the timescales for notifying the Presiding Officer of the need for a proxy. Obviously, bereavements, caring

responsibilities and parental responsibilities can happen suddenly and are outwith members' control, so I hope that the process will be responsive and adaptable to members' needs, while respecting the need to give clerks time to get a proxy in place.

I welcome, in paragraph 36 of the report, the flexibility around allowing members to participate in chamber business

“for a period of time when the proxy is in place”.

Something akin to a phased return and participating in some but not all business would be beneficial to members who have been off with a long-term illness.

I welcome the report and the piloting of the proxy voting system, and I look forward to the outcomes of the pilot. I again thank the SPPA Committee for its work.

16:53

**Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** This important, if brief, debate is part of a far wider consultative process. The committee thanks members who attended focus groups, completed surveys or participated in the two parliamentary debates in the chamber, all of which were designed to tease out how Scotland's Parliament can reform, enhance and modernise itself.

This temporary rule change takes forward a key recommendation of our inquiry into future parliamentary procedures and practices, the report on which was published in July. Our committee has sought to listen to and reflect the emerging broad consensus in the Parliament on the reforms. Our proposals for a temporary rule change to permit a year-long pilot for proxy voting fit in well with that consensus. It is our hope that the proxy voting pilot will contribute to making our Parliament more flexible in its working practices to support parliamentarians to fulfil their democratic duties, and that it will send a clear message to people who might consider stepping forward for elected office in the future that Scotland's Parliament will do what it can to support them and their life circumstances.

Ill health, parental circumstances and bereavement are everyday realities for the people we represent and for members in this place.

The temporary rule changes feel like measured and reasonable adjustments. History may very well show that this could have been rolled out some time ago. As we have heard, had the adjustments been in place, along with the important innovations for a hybrid Parliament and remote voting that were developed at pace and

out of necessity, we might even have retained some now-departed MSPs. That is our loss.

I will focus on two aspects of the rule changes. The first is that parental circumstances and parental leave should be seen as widely as possible. We talk about parents and about adoptive, foster and kinship parents. All modern parenting relationships must be reflected in the rule changes.

Secondly, as we heard earlier, someone who is using proxy voting is gone but should not be forgotten. They might still want to participate from time to time in the life of this Parliament. They may have a fluctuating health condition; they may be interested in a particular issue. I think that Mr Mountain would have had something to say about that, had he been here today. It is important to know that a person can temporarily withdraw a proxy vote so that they can participate in the life of this chamber and Parliament without that interfering with the long-term request for proxy voting.

The pilot must be evaluated. The SPPA Committee intends to do so towards the end of next year, with a view to deciding whether to recommend a permanent rule change. It is also worth noting that this is the first time that a temporary rule provision introduced at the end of the previous session of Parliament is being used to pilot such a procedural change.

The contributions made today will help in the preparation of the proxy voting scheme. Although the committee has made recommendations, there will be further detail in the scheme about how a proxy vote can be arranged and cast. If Parliament supports the motion, that detail will be in place before the temporary rule change comes into effect.

As previously indicated, today's motion is about being a modern and flexible Parliament and ensuring that all who live in Scotland can step forward and play a full part in Scotland's national Parliament. Getting our Parliament right for the future is an important responsibility for MSPs. I thank colleagues for their support in fulfilling that important endeavour.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate.

## Urgent Question

16:57

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The next item of business is an urgent question. Any member who wishes to ask a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button during the question or enter the letters “RTS” in the chat function.

### Breast Cancer Care (NHS Tayside)

**Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reported claims that there was a cover-up in relation to the publication of the Royal College of Physicians report into breast cancer care in NHS Tayside.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf):** I reject claims that there was a cover-up in relation to the publication of the RCP report. As NHS Tayside has already publicly stated, it was made aware of an error in the first version of the redacted report that was published on its website. As soon as NHS Tayside was made aware of the error, it was corrected and the report was published on the NHS website.

The only thing that has been, to use Michael Marra’s words, covered up is the names of the report’s authors, in line with data protection. The rest of the report is completely unchanged.

**Michael Marra:** There is obviously nothing in the general data protection regulation that mandates the removal of the names of authors of reports. To say otherwise is arrant nonsense. It is vital that we know who the authors are, because this is the second report on the issue to have been hobbled by a conflict of interests. The names were removed after that conflict of interests was put to NHS Tayside. On whose authority did that happen? Who ordered that the names of the report’s authors be hidden from the public?

**Humza Yousaf:** With the greatest respect, I note that Michael Marra should, of course, put those questions to NHS Tayside, and he should get a satisfactory response. There is a lot that I deal with and manage throughout my day, but I do not busy myself with redactions of reports from the NHS health boards. That is a job for them to do in relation to their own GDPR practices. Of course, if Michael Marra wishes to question that, he absolutely should.

What I was busy doing yesterday was meeting the clinicians in the breast cancer service. When I was at Ninewells, I talked to them for a good hour and a half and engaged with them about the service. I was not looking back. There have been

a number of independent reviews and investigations, but all of us around the table—the clinicians included—are interested in looking forward and addressing some of the workforce challenges that the breast cancer service in particular is facing, and that is where my focus will be.

**Michael Marra:** Surely the cabinet secretary accepts that there has to be confidence in the reports that have been issued about this critical service, particularly given that reports have previously been withdrawn. Just days ago, the report that we are discussing was the principal defence that the First Minister used in answering questions from the Labour Party regarding the service. Now, the report is falling apart.

The report contains no data or scientific citations on dosage. On consent issues, it contradicts David Dunlop, NHS Tayside and the General Medical Council. It references standard dosage in National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines. Those do not apply in Scotland, of course, but even if they did, the guidelines that are cited do not contain any guidance on standard dosage, despite what the report claims.

Last week, the First Minister told Labour that she would reflect on the case and decide whether an independent inquiry would happen. Surely the case for that has now been made beyond all reasonable doubt. Will the cabinet secretary back an inquiry today?

**Humza Yousaf:** No, I am not backing a public inquiry today. Michael Marra, not unusually, is indulging in some element of hyperbole here. To describe the report as “falling apart” because some authors’ names have been redacted is, I think, not an accurate description of what has happened.

There are genuine questions. I do not fault Michael Marra or, indeed, others in the slightest for asking questions about the breast cancer service in Tayside. There are genuine questions around the workforce and its sustainability, and I could give him chapter and verse on what NHS Tayside and the Government have been doing to support that workforce. However, if we have accusations of cover-up and conspiracy when the reality is far more benign—it relates to data protection, as NHS Tayside has said—I do not think that we do that very important issue the justice that it deserves.

If Michael Marra would like to meet me, I am more than happy to go through the issues that he has raised in the chamber and the concerns that have been raised, be it by clinicians whom he knows who have been involved in the service or by patients in Dundee. I am happy to have that conversation with him. However, I do not think that

we can say that the number of independent investigations have all “fallen apart” because some authors’ names have been redacted.

**Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con):** In June, I called on the cabinet secretary to release a buried report on allegations of bullying at NHS Tayside oncology. Now, a second report on Tayside cancer services has been redacted, and it seems not to have enough detail in it. A public inquiry is needed now more than ever in order to restore clinicians’ and patients’ faith in the department. Does the cabinet secretary recognise that transparency is a huge issue, not just in our NHS but across Scottish National Party secret Scotland? Will he commit to a public inquiry?

**Humza Yousaf:** I think that Sandesh Gulhane, with his latter comment and party-political point, exposes his motivation around the issue. As opposed to his motivation being the patients and the breast cancer service, he tries to use the issue as a stick to beat the SNP over the head with. As I said, that betrays his real motivation.

I say to Dr Sandesh Gulhane that there have been three other published reviews of the issue: the Healthcare Improvement Scotland report in April 2019; the work of the Scottish Government’s immediate review group, which reported thereafter; and the report of the independent advisory group. We now have the RCP report. He talked about redaction. It is really important to be clear that what has been redacted—NHS Tayside says that it was done in relation to data protection law, but I will question that, as Michael Marra asked me to do, and he is also free to pursue that with NHS Tayside—is the names of the authors.

All the reviews and reports have similar findings in relation to the clinical practice at the time. My relentless effort in relation to the breast cancer service, and particularly the cancer service more generally, is not necessarily to look back, because reviews have been done, but to look forward and see how I can support the service with the workforce that it requires.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** One report is without the right experts and has no evidence references; another is withdrawn because of a conflict of interests; findings are contradicted by experts; numbers are made up; patients are confused; relatives of patients who have passed away are confused; and an oncologist feels under attack. The cabinet secretary must understand that none of this is going to go away. For the sake of the service, therefore, there must be an independent inquiry. Why can he not agree to that?

**Humza Yousaf:** I do not know whether Willie Rennie has done this—he may well have done so—but I have met the clinicians on a number of

occasions, including as recently as yesterday. He is absolutely right that there have been a number of reviews. People will question those reviews. Some will disagree with their findings, and some will agree with those findings.

Given those independent—I stress that word—reviews, which have been done over a number of years, it is exceptionally important not to look backwards but to look forwards at how we will support the service. There are genuine oncology workforce challenges in the breast cancer service and in the cancer services generally in Tayside. I have asked my senior clinicians to do some work in and around that.

The imperative is not for the Government to look backwards. Our focus should be on looking forwards at supporting that service, and that is what I intend to do.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** Effective recruitment for an effective workforce is vital to delivering sustainable specialist services in Tayside and across Scotland. Will the cabinet secretary outline how the Scottish Government and the health boards, including NHS Tayside, are supporting recruitment to breast cancer services?

**Humza Yousaf:** Again, that is an important issue for Tayside breast cancer services. Clearly, the oncology workforce is a challenge not just for NHS Tayside but right across the United Kingdom—in fact, globally, as Emma Harper will know only too well.

NHS Tayside has been working exceptionally hard on those workforce issues. I am happy to report the recent appointment of a locum consultant in NHS Tayside. That will help to reduce the number of patients—currently, around seven a week—who have to travel to other cancer centres for treatment.

In addition, I have asked one of my senior clinicians to chair a national oncology task force, which will provide—and has provided—me with some additional solutions for and recommendations on the oncology workforce across Scotland. We will take forward those recommendations.

We will work closely with NHS Tayside. It is engaged with recruitment agencies across the UK and globally to bring as many oncology experts as possible to the service in Tayside. I will keep members updated on progress.

**Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** The cabinet secretary will be aware that this is just the latest in a long list of events that call into question the leadership of NHS Tayside and cause people to question the care that they might receive. That is not good for any of our public services. The cabinet secretary has also indicated

that he does not think that a public inquiry is necessary. I think that many of us disagree with him. If not an independent investigation, what kind of open, transparent and independent process does he consider necessary to restore people's trust and confidence in the service?

**Humza Yousaf:** Maggie Chapman has asked me what kind of independent investigation I consider necessary. There have been a number of independent investigations, including a report of the RCP, which is independent of Government. The report is independent of the health board. The royal college is a very respected organisation. As I have said, those findings can be read in detail. I am happy to provide Maggie Chapman with a copy of that report if she has not seen it.

As I have said, my focus is on looking forward at how I support the breast cancer service and the other cancer services in Tayside, as opposed to looking back over the independent reviews that have been done.

I go back to what I said to Willie Rennie: with almost any review that is conducted, independent or otherwise, some people will agree and some will disagree with the recommendations or the analysis. It is exceptionally important that we objectively recognise the independence of those reviews and the clinical expertise of those involved in them, and that we move forward as opposed to looking back.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes discussion of the urgent question.

## Motion without Notice

17:08

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** I am minded to accept a motion without notice under rule 11.2.4 of standing orders that decision time be brought forward to now. I invite George Adam, the Minister for Parliamentary Business, to move the motion.

*Motion moved,*

That, under Rule 11.2.4, Decision Time be brought forward to 5.09 pm.—[George Adam]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Decision Time

17:09

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-07093.2, in the name of Liam Kerr, which seeks to amend motion S6M-07093, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on COP27 outcomes, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There will be a division. There will be a brief pause to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:10

*Meeting suspended.*

17:12

*On resuming—*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The question is, that amendment S6M-07093.2, in the name of Liam Kerr, be agreed to. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is closed.

**Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP):** Presiding Officer, my app would not connect. I would have voted no.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you. We will make sure that your vote is recorded.

### For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)

McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-07093.2, in the name of Liam Kerr, is: For 31, Against 90, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-07093.1, in the name of Colin Smyth, which seeks to amend motion S6M-07093, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on COP27 outcomes, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### **For**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

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

#### **Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)

Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-07093.1, in the name of Colin Smyth, is: For 56, Against 66, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-07093, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on COP27 outcomes, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)

Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)

Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)  
 (SNP)  
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

#### Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)  
 (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on motion S6M-07093, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on COP27 outcomes, is: For 92, Against 30, Abstentions 0.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes the outcome of COP27; recognises the ground-breaking global agreement to give formal recognition to the fact of loss and damage as a result of the climate crisis and to establish a fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), alongside other financial mechanisms, to provide support to those countries suffering loss and damage; commends the commitment of the Global South and campaigners over 30 years in arguing for such a fund; notes that the agreement at COP27 follows the commitment by the Scottish Government at COP26 of &#pound;2 million for loss and damage, making Scotland the first developed nation to recognise its obligations in this area; is disappointed that COP27 was unable to build on the progress made in Glasgow towards keeping 1.5 degrees alive, and failed to extend the language of the Glasgow pact on a phasedown of unabated coal-use to include other fossil fuels, despite support from the EU, USA, UK and others for doing so, and calls for a coalition of action to be built ahead of COP28 to secure greater progress in global efforts to tackle the climate crisis; welcomes the focus on human rights during COP27 and urges the Egyptian government to take firm action to

ensure that human rights in Egypt are fully respected, protected and fulfilled; notes that COP15, the biodiversity COP, begins on 7 December 2022 in Montreal and that it is vitally important that nations reach an ambitious global agreement on the protection and restoration of nature, including reaching agreement on protecting 30% of land and seas by 2030, and welcomes the conclusion of the Edinburgh Process, which collated views from over 400 subnational governments, cities and local authorities, and resulted in nearly 300 signatories to the Edinburgh Declaration committed to take action for biodiversity.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The final question is, that motion S6M-07078, in the name of Martin Whitfield, on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, on the standing orders temporary rule change on a proxy voting pilot, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 7th Report, 2022 (Session 6), *Report on a Proxy Voting pilot* (SP Paper 270), and agrees that the temporary rule change to Standing Orders set out in Annex A of the report be made with effect from 4 January 2023.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes decision time. We will move on to members' business after a short pause. I ask members who are leaving the chamber to do so quickly and quietly.

## Carers Rights Day 2022

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-06783, in the name of Paul O'Kane, on carers rights day 2022. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises that Carers Rights Day 2022 takes place on 24 November 2022; understands that Carers Rights Day is about raising the awareness of the rights that carers have, but also of what carers still lack in rights and representation; notes the view that amplifying the voice of carers has become even more vital; believes that they have been demonstrably impacted by particular pressures, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the rise in the cost of living; notes the view that, as the cost of living crisis continues, carers must be listened to and their concerns taken seriously and acted upon by the Scottish and UK governments; notes that the State of Caring in Scotland 2022 survey, conducted by Carers Scotland, found that 40% of carers on carers allowance are cutting back on food and heat to make ends meet; celebrates what it sees as the immense contribution that carers make, firstly to their own families and loved ones, who they take care of and support, but also to their wider communities, and believes that their efforts, in turn, prevent added pressures being put onto health and social care services.

17:20

**Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab):** I am delighted to have the opportunity to open this members' business debate to mark carers rights day 2022. I thank colleagues on all sides of the chamber for joining me to contribute to the debate, and I thank all those who supported the motion, which has allowed it to take place.

Carers rights day is an important marker on the calendar that provides an opportunity to spread awareness of the fundamental rights that apply to all carers. Some of those rights include the right to request flexible working options from an employer, the right to be identified and recognised as a carer, the right to request certain immunisations, such as a flu jab, and the right to be consulted on things such as hospital discharge. Fundamentally, however, it is about acknowledging the rights that carers have to be supported and respected. It is about the dignity and value that people have in our society, and acknowledging that people are human beings who are giving all that they can to care for a loved one.

As we begin the debate, it is important to recognise that we cannot simply reduce carers rights to one day, or one debate in the chamber, per year. The lived experience of carers should, and must, be mainstreamed in all our policy discussions and proposals, across everything that we do.

Before I came to the chamber this evening, I was tweeted by Lynn Williams, a carer whom I know well. She said that enough is enough—carers have to be at the table where decisions are made, and they have to be involved in “carer proofing” our legislation and our budgets. As we often hear in debates on human rights, our aim should be to do “nothing about us without us”, and that is as true for carers as it is for other groups.

This year, carers rights day was marked on 24 November, and the theme focused on the cost of caring. That can be the cost on an unpaid carer's wellbeing or the financial costs that are associated with looking after someone, or it can refer to how caring for someone can cost carers in the quality of their relationships and the activities that they often have to sacrifice. Of course, the cost of caring is particularly pertinent this year, given that we find ourselves in the midst of an unparalleled cost of living crisis. In Scotland, there are an estimated 800,000 adults who provide care for someone who is seriously ill, someone who lives with a disability or someone who needs additional support in later years. Carers Scotland has estimated that it would cost £10.9 billion every year to replace the cumulative labour of unpaid carers.

We meet tonight not only in the context of the current cost of living emergency, but in the context of Covid. Unpaid carers were crucial in the response to the pandemic, and they shouldered enormous burdens to keep their loved ones safe. For many carers, Covid has not gone away, and they continue to feel real fear and anxiety as they try to care for their loved ones. They are crying out for continued support in the form of antivirals and other types of support.

As our society began its recovery from Covid, we all dreamed of creating a new and better future. The rhetoric was to build back better: there was a vision of a fundamentally better society that seemed tangible, and politicians of all stripes promised a new deal for carers. However, if we are honest, we can say that the action has not yet matched the rhetoric, and we are still very much on a journey towards changing things for the better.

In the past year, I have, along with colleagues, had round-table sessions with unpaid carers, and I have listened to them as they have shared with me the everyday challenges that they are facing right now. Tragically, in Scotland, unpaid carers are facing a choice between turning on their heating or feeding themselves. That is not just a glib phrase—it is the reality that is faced by tens of thousands of unpaid carers.

New research from Carers Scotland, which was released in its “State of Caring 2022—A picture of unpaid caring in Scotland” report, has revealed

that 40 per cent of carers on carers allowance have cut back on food and heat in order to make ends meet. I implore colleagues on all sides of the chamber to read the report if they have not yet done so, as it makes for important and sobering reading.

It is important to remember that the burden of the cost of living crisis is not shared evenly. Unpaid carers have been disproportionately impacted by the crisis, as people with caring responsibilities typically have higher energy costs. Carers may need to operate essential life-sustaining equipment such as hoists, oxygen and wheelchairs, which all require the use of a great deal of energy.

In addition, unpaid carers must commonly keep their houses warmer than average to ensure that the person for whom they care is comfortable and well. We have seen some stark stories recently, in the press and elsewhere, about individual circumstances. Members will be familiar with the case of Carolynne Hunter, which was reported at the weekend. She is facing energy bills in excess of £17,000 per year to care for her 12-year-old daughter, Freya. As members may have seen, the actor Kate Winslet has contributed money to help Carolynne pay those exorbitant fuel bills. However, we have to be honest in recognising that, although that is a generous gesture, carers should not have to rely on philanthropy or charity in order to be able to pay their bills. There must be meaningful support from Government for carers who are faced with such extortionate bills because they have to run vital life-sustaining equipment.

We know that there are ways to do that. In England, a warm home prescription is currently being piloted, in which people's bills are paid for by the national health service. That is a preventative measure that can keep people out of hospital and prevent people with disabilities and complex health problems from becoming seriously ill. I hope that the Scottish Government is exploring the various potential policy options in that space, and I am sure that the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care will want to say something on that in his contribution. It is important that we try to think outside the box and work together to find the ways in which we can support people in this very precarious time.

I pay tribute to the incredible work of unpaid carers across my region of West Scotland, many of whom I have had the privilege to meet and support since I was first elected to Parliament. I put on record my support and thanks for the work of not only carers representative organisations such as Carers Scotland and Carers UK, which commissioned the "State of Caring 2022" report, but the local carer centres in our own areas, which I am sure that we all know well, and which do a

huge amount of work to protect and support the rights of carers. I thank carer centres in East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire and Inverclyde, because they are a vital lifeline for unpaid carers, providing advice and guidance, advocacy services and emotional support.

Let us all, in this place, rededicate ourselves to listening to carers and respecting their rights, and—crucially—let us act together to make the changes that they so need.

17:27

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I congratulate the member on securing the debate and pay tribute to all who care for another, be it family, friend or neighbour, whether or not they are eligible for carers allowance, because caring comes in many forms. It may be simply calling on a neighbour to help with the messages and check that they are okay, or it may involve living in a household, providing 24-hour support for seven days—and nights—a week, and everything in between.

Carers come in all ages, from the school pupil who cares for a disabled mum to the octogenarian who cares for his equally elderly wife who has dementia. Those are not random examples, but constituency cases that have, along with many others, crossed my desk during my many years in the Parliament.

It is reckoned that the number of carers in Scotland, as Paul O'Kane said, stands at more than 800,000, but the real figure is probably much higher as many do not identify themselves as carers—they are simply looking after a loved one, keeping them in their own home where they want to be.

According to the Carers Trust website, carers save the Scottish purse some £10.3 billion each year in meeting needs that would otherwise have to be met by social and health services. During the Covid pandemic, carers had an even heavier burden to bear, while worrying that they might bring the virus into the home. When we clapped for carers, it was for all carers.

There is some financial support available through the carers allowance if certain criteria are fulfilled—if, for example, the person who is caring does so for more than 35 hours per week and the person for whom they care is in receipt of certain benefits such as the personal independence payment. There is also in Scotland—and only in Scotland—the carers allowance supplement, with two payments of £245.70 for the year 2022-23. Even then, it is a struggle for carers, and inflation on all fronts, including in food, fuel, mortgages and

rent, has meant that, according to Carers Scotland—as Paul O’Kane mentioned—some 40 per cent of carers have cut back on their food and heating and on other necessities of life.

Indeed, there are dreadful issues of high energy bills, when the person who is supported requires specialist medical equipment—let alone heating—often with electricity running day and night. I have raised that issue in the chamber and am following it up with NHS Lothian and NHS Borders to establish whether any financial support is available.

Finally, there is the issue of respite for carers. A break can make all the difference to a carer maintaining their own health and wellbeing. A recent case of mine concerns a loving daughter who cared for her father. He suffers from dementia and requires almost constant supervision so as not to endanger himself. He lives close by her and, with her help, is keeping much of his independence. No respite service was available to her just a few days ago. She was therefore concerned for others in a similar position.

I have established that, in the Borders, in five council care homes, there are only 28 beds, of which 14 are currently unavailable, nine are intermediate, and five are in planning. Members can work out the small number of respite beds that are available for people to put their loved one in. Given the demographics of the Borders, it is as plain as a pikestaff that that is a drop with the ocean. However, if carers do not have periods of relief, they may reach breaking point—then, at least two people will require care and support.

I would like there to be progress in that area perhaps most of all. Put bluntly, that would save the public purse, as well as be the right thing to do. I ask the minister—if he cannot today, then at some point—to address the position of respite for carers not just in Midlothian and the Borders but across Scotland.

17:31

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I congratulate my Labour colleague Paul O’Kane for securing this important debate on carers’ rights and for the thoughtful comments in his speech.

Carers are the backbone of our community, providing social care to family and friends. Carers rights day is an opportunity to highlight the challenges and inequalities that are faced by carers, and to ask the Government to take action.

Carers stepped up to the plate during the pandemic. Many shouldered the responsibility of looking after family and loved ones to keep them safe. Often, they took on roles that they were unprepared for, such as carrying out personal care

and administering medicine. It is estimated that the care that was provided by unpaid carers over the course of the pandemic saved all the Governments in the UK more than £193 billion per year. Because they were caring for vulnerable people, many carers shielded, in order to minimise the transmission of Covid-19. For many of those who are cared for, the threat of Covid remains real, and some of them are still shielding.

However, as we go into what will be a hard winter, access to antiviral medication is patchy at best. Prophylactics such as Evusheld are non-existent in the NHS, despite being approved for use in more than 30 countries around the world, including America. The Scottish Government has suggested clinical trials. I have a suggestion: trial it on the population that is, in effect, shielding, and on the carers of those people.

Many carers feel abandoned by the Scottish Government. The rest of the country has moved on, but carers are left in the same position as they were in two years ago, with no access to the medicine that could help their lives return to some normality. Care packages have not been fully restored, and access to respite has still not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

On top of that, the cost of living crisis has left carers and those cared for facing unprecedented pressure on their finances. Ending non-residential care charges is vital in order to ensure that people can continue to be cared for comfortably at home. That was in the Labour and Scottish National Party manifestos. When will the Government do it?

Carers UK found that a quarter of carers are cutting back on essentials such as food and heating, and that 63 per cent are extremely worried about managing their monthly costs.

As the bills mount up and energy and water prices are set to rise even higher, some carers are left facing impossible decisions. Carolynne Hunter, who has been mentioned, has been facing the decision whether to place her daughter into full-time care just to make sure that her care can continue. Nobody should ever be forced into making such a decision. Like Paul O’Kane, I welcome the generosity of Kate Winslet, who is giving financial help to Carolynne and Freya, but she should not have to do that. That is the Government’s responsibility.

Unlike in a hospital or a care home, the cost of running life-saving equipment at home is not fully resourced by the Scottish Government. When I asked the First Minister and the Scottish Government how much it would cost to cover such bills, the answer was simply, “We don’t know.” That is not good enough.

Without proper respite care, with the continuation of non-residential care charges and

with the lack of access to prophylactics and antivirals, we make life more difficult for carers and those who are cared for. There is simply insufficient support for carers. I do not want to return to the chamber every year on carers rights day to find that not much has changed or improved. Carers are grateful for our warm words, but that is not what they really need. They need action from the Government, and they need it now.

17:35

**Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** I thank all the charities and others who furnished me with briefings for tonight's important debate, and I thank Paul O'Kane for securing it.

Carers can often feel as though they are an invisible and forgotten group in society, but we convey a powerful message from the Parliament by standing together to promote the rights and causes of our caring community.

I should perhaps declare an interest, in that I have a paid carer in the morning, and my wife and children help me, too.

In the brief time that I have this evening, I will focus on unpaid carers—some of the most selfless people in the world. Day in, day out, they support the most vulnerable in our society, with little to no compensation for their service. Without them, there would be a huge deficit in care that could not be replaced, which would result in many people lacking the aid that they require to function in their day-to-day lives. Unpaid carers deserve our respect, and they need our support.

For many unpaid carers, life has become more difficult now than it was just a couple of years ago. The pandemic threw into sharp relief the extent to which unpaid carers rely on the support of Government programmes. During 2020, all day centres and respite facilities were closed to tackle the spread of Covid-19, especially among the vulnerable. As a targeted and time-limited measure, that was a good policy, and one that we all supported. However, we still see the effects of the closures today.

Let me give a recent example. A constituent who is a carer for her son, who has severe autism, told me that, before the pandemic, he went to day centres five days a week, and there was a significant level of respite care in the evenings and at weekends. Now, since 2020, her son gets only two days a week at the centre and has no support in the evenings and at weekends—no respite care at all. That is unacceptable. I accept that that is not the Scottish Government's issue; it is the City of Edinburgh Council's issue. However, my constituent is having to make up for that shortfall without any help from the local authority. The couple are not young, so what will happen to the

boy in a few years when his parents are not able to care for him any more?

As a Parliament, we should be doing everything that we can to lobby the Scottish Government and local authorities across Scotland to reopen those vital services and to provide aid to those who feel as though they have been abandoned for the past two years. I know that the minister and his team do this regularly, but I ask him to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities again to have an honest discussion about reopening such centres.

Finally, I turn to an issue that many members have spoken about, which is not unpaid carers but is the level of compensation for paid carers. We have come through the pandemic and we are feeling the effects of war in Europe and the global cost of living crisis. Everyone is feeling the squeeze, but for people who care, the effects are multiplied. Caring is not an easy job and it is not a low-skilled job. Caring is a vocation, which demands time, patience, compassion and no small degree of emotional and mental strength. We must ensure, collectively, that people who take up that calling are properly compensated. I call on all local authorities and the Scottish Government to be as generous as possible during pay negotiations.

17:40

**Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank my colleague Paul O'Kane for bringing this important debate to the Parliament. I know that, for months, he has been working tirelessly with carers and carers groups to find out exactly what we need to do to improve their lives and those of their loved ones, and I know that, with them, he will continue to fight to get the measures that they need to support them put in place.

It is important to be clear that we are talking about carers who do not receive employment payments. We are talking about people who step in to look after and support a family member, a loved one or even a close friend. Those carers are not employed. Often, they do not see themselves as having that role or job, or as providing an essential service. However, all members in this Parliament know that that is the case.

Carers Scotland tells us that, every day, almost 1,000 people in Scotland become carers. Most carers would call themselves a loving partner, a parent, a child or a good friend, and would not immediately identify with the caring role. That means that they miss out on practical support, which is important. Research found that 97 per cent of carers took a year or more to identify themselves as carers, and 46 per cent—nearly half—cared for a decade without identifying themselves as carers. Of course, that means that

carers are missing out on essential financial and practical support. We must all do what we can to ensure that carers understand that they are entitled to such support.

In my life before I came to the Parliament, I was lucky enough to have a job that allowed me to support and work with many unpaid carers. That was a number of years ago, at a time when that care provided by unpaid carers really was invisible. In my early days of working, I do not recall anyone looking at supporting carers or providing services to a house in which mum, dad or gran was providing care and support. Perhaps there was the occasional day service or weekend respite care. I recall families and extended families who provided high levels of care, as well as social and emotional support, to their loved ones—they did so, as carers do now, without question and absolutely willingly.

I am heartened to hear that such carers are fighting back at a system that has forgotten them. That is quite right; as a society, we need to support and value the role that they undertake. The UK and Scottish Governments must be prepared to offer practical, emotional and financial support to carers in Scotland and throughout the UK.

As members have said, we know that approximately 800,000 unpaid carers in Scotland provide care and support to family or friends who are affected by disability, illness or frailty that is associated with age. Care is deeply gendered: in Scotland, as many as 70 per cent of unpaid carers are women.

The current cost of living crisis is being felt more acutely by carers throughout Scotland. In October, Carers Scotland published “State of Caring 2022”, after running a survey of more than 2,000 carers to ask about the impact on their lives of caring and the cost of living. Carers Scotland found that carers were more likely to be in poverty than non-carers and twice as likely to be in poor health.

It is completely unacceptable to have that knowledge but do nothing. In this Parliament, we have a responsibility to ensure that there is change. We must stand up for unpaid carers.

Carers Scotland tells us:

“Carers need financial help and practical health and care support right now to ensure they can make it through this Winter.”

That is an urgent priority. Such support includes increasing benefits by the inflation rate, providing cost of living support to carers and providing an energy payment to people with severe disabilities, to help households to manage the extra costs of living.

I support those demands from carers organisations and I hope that the cabinet secretary can give us some idea of how we can try to meet demands for essential support for carers and their loved ones.

17:44

**Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and to mark carers rights day. I congratulate Paul O’Kane for securing the debate and I have also signed the motion.

I put on record my support for the many carers in my constituency and thank them for what they do. During my time as part of the nursing team at the St Margaret of Scotland Hospice, I saw at first hand how caring and compassionate unpaid carers are, and, as I have said here before, I saw their unwavering and unconditional love and support. I also take the opportunity to praise the staff and volunteers of Carers of West Dunbartonshire and Carers Link East Dunbartonshire for providing outstanding support to carers in my constituency. I also thank Carers Scotland and Myeloma UK for their helpful briefings and for their on-going efforts to highlight the pressures faced by unpaid carers.

A quarter of all carers are struggling to make ends meet and more than a third have had no break from caring in the past year. We know that there are approximately 800,000 unpaid adult carers in Scotland and that it would cost an estimated £10 billion every year to replace the care that they provide.

Carers are among those hardest hit by the cost of living crisis, with many not eligible for support payments. For far too long, unpaid carers have been given a raw deal by the social security system. For example, since carers allowance was introduced in 1976, successive United Kingdom Governments have refused to align the amount paid with other earning replacement benefits. Both Labour and Tory Governments gave no priority to carers and UK policy seems to continue to be the same. There should surely be parity at UK level with other earning replacement benefits. Matching our policy in Scotland would bring more to the budget to fund the radical overhaul of carers allowance and shape our new carers assistance benefit.

This Parliament has made welcome changes to the financial support provided to carers, including introducing the supplement to the young carers grant, but we know that more needs to be done. Just some of the issues that must be addressed include: the earnings limits; the bar to students making claims; help for those caring for more than

one person; and support for those with underlying entitlement.

Carers deserve better and the Scottish Parliament must do all that it can to ease their burden, create better policy and improve levels of support. That ambition should be matched by Westminster, but it is not, no matter who is in Government. Look at the payments going out to carers this week: the Scottish carers supplement is £245.70; the Westminster Christmas bonus for carers is £10.

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** If I remember correctly, the member was on the Social Security and Social Justice Committee when the minister came and assured the committee and carers organisations that the doubling of the carers allowance supplement would continue until the reform of carers allowance was complete. That has not happened. Given all that she has said, does the member agree that that should happen?

**Marie McNair:** Before the Labour Party asks us to do more, it should catch up with us. Its record in Westminster shows that it has ignored carers for years.

To return to my speech, there is a real contrast in approaches to levels of support. The Tories introduced the Christmas payment in 1972, Labour kept it and it is still set at £10 today. It is estimated that, if it had kept pace with inflation, the Christmas bonus would be worth in excess of £100 today. Surely, given the impact of the cost of living crisis on carers, all parties must believe that they deserve more than a measly £10. Do we not all believe that it should be adjusted, recalculated and paid at a rate that values carers for what they do? Actions are better than words.

In the short time that I have had, I have focused on the social security system. Although that is important, especially now, carers need much more than that. This Parliament should unite to provide a compassionate system of support that does carers justice and recognises the massive contribution that they make.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next speaker is Gillian Mackay, who is joining us remotely.

17:49

**Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green):** I thank Paul O’Kane for bringing this important members’ business debate to the chamber. I also thank carers up and down the country for all the work that they do in looking after their loved ones.

At some point in our lives, any one of us might have to provide care. We have heard at the cross-party group on carers that getting people to see

themselves as carers in the first place is difficult in itself. I take the opportunity to shamelessly plug the good work of the CPG—we have a meeting tomorrow lunchtime for anyone who is interested.

Many members who are in the chamber know that I did not see myself as my grandpa’s carer. Like many other people, I believed that I was just doing what was done. We cannot get people to use the support that exists if we do not identify the people who need support in the first place.

Representation and parity are important parts of Paul O’Kane’s motion. It is key that carers be seen as key partners in the support of the person for whom they care rather than the last stop in the chain. Carers’ input is vital and can often provide an insight that gives a view of the whole person and their needs. We need to support carers to be involved in decision making and anticipatory care planning. Support is key to that. We hear that many carers are focused on getting from one end of the day to the other rather than on how to engage and further their to-do list.

I share other members’ concerns on the stark findings in the “State of Caring 2022” report. As noted in the motion, the report, produced by Carers Scotland,

“found that 40% of carers on carers allowance are cutting back on food and heat to make ends meet”.

The human aspect of that is stark and concerning. We are in a uniquely difficult situation with inflation now spiralling out of control. The direct results of the Conservative UK Government’s economic policies are hitting the most vulnerable the hardest and, through more austerity, stifling the devolved Parliament’s ability to mitigate that disaster.

The findings provide a stark reminder that we cannot be complacent about the progress that we have made. There is always more to do and the progress that we have made can so easily be rolled back.

It is important to note the distinction between paid and unpaid carers as we have these discussions. Although both provide vital care services, the circumstances in which paid and unpaid carers operate are starkly different. According to the “State of Caring 2022”, there are:

“approximately 800,000 people in Scotland who provide unpaid care”

and support to family and friends affected by disability, ill health or frailty associated with older age.

Carers save the economy in Scotland some £10.9 billion each year. The contribution of people who provide unpaid care in Scotland is massive. I welcome the support that the Scottish Government offers to unpaid carers through the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and the support that is

available online, such as the carers charter and advice on carers benefits and local carers centres, about which we have heard from many different people.

The report also points out that nearly two thirds of carers say that financial worries are having an impact on their physical and mental health. For those on lower incomes, the impact was even greater: 73 per cent of carers on carers allowance and 84 per cent of carers with a household income of £1,000 a month or less said that the cost of living was having a negative impact on their health.

We need to provide the highest possible support for carers' financial, physical and mental wellbeing. When people have to choose between heating and eating, we are not giving them the best chance of success.

I reiterate my deepest thanks for doing what they do to the people across the country who provide care. The Scottish Greens and I recognise the hard work that that takes—we would be lost without them.

17:53

**Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab):** It is a privilege to speak this evening, and I congratulate my friend and colleague Paul O'Kane on securing this debate to mark carers rights day.

This year's campaign focuses, as other members have said, on caring costs and looks beyond the additional financial pressures that carers face by also considering the costs to their emotional and physical wellbeing. The campaign highlights the point that every day around 1,000 people become unpaid carers, as Carol Mochan has mentioned, and in doing so every one of them makes sacrifices in their lives. They pay the price of a state unable as yet to meet the needs of people whom it has a duty to protect as they step up and care for their loved ones.

In recent years, the additional costs of being a disabled person have become more widely recognised, but it is also important to understand that such costs often go hand in hand with the additional costs of those who care for disabled people. Yet, in the various cost of living packages that both the UK and Scottish Governments have announced so far, not one targeted measure has been adopted to give direct support to carers.

Charging wheelchairs, keeping the heating on and operating medical equipment all mean increased use of energy at a time when the price of energy has skyrocketed. It is worth pointing out that, for many disabled people and their carers, the pandemic is still a real threat, as my colleague Jackie Baillie has pointed out. What little support

they had, including help with the provision of personal protective equipment, has now gone, leaving carers to pick up further additional costs.

That is partly why we are asking the Scottish Government to maintain the uplift to carers allowance supplement that was introduced at the height of the pandemic and which I referenced a moment ago. Not only did the Government not do so; it misled the committee, and carers themselves, by promising that it would. Now, we have the cost of living crisis, too.

**Marie McNair:** Does the member believe that the Westminster Government should align carers allowance at least with any replacement benefits and uprate the Christmas bonus to £100?

**Pam Duncan-Glancy:** I simply do not have enough time to go into all the things that I think the Westminster Government is doing wrongly and should start doing very quickly, including on carers allowance and supporting people through the current crisis.

It is no wonder that so many carers are living in poverty. The "State of Caring 2022" report shows that, even of those who work alongside their caring role—no small task in itself—one in five is struggling to make ends meet. The Scottish Government must move quickly to develop the new Scottish carers assistance, which is due to replace the current carers allowance, a benefit that is administered by the Department for Work and Pensions and which has become increasingly unfit for purpose. In doing so, it must work with carers to make changes to the eligibility rules, removing the full-time study rule and increasing the number of hours that carers are allowed to work, so that people are not forced to reduce their hours just to ensure that they do not lose out on essential income.

The dither and delay that have happened instead of the Government's taking action have meant that carers, like the disabled people whom they care for, continue to be forced to play by the DWP's unfair rule book. Make no mistake, though: simply allowing carers to work more will not solve the problem. In fact, having to balance work-life and caring responsibilities can be an impossible task, especially in the absence of flexibility and understanding by employers. It can mean carers—who are often women—giving up the limited time that they have to themselves or giving up work altogether.

As I said in my opening remarks, caring has a cost that goes beyond money, most of which comes down to the fact that carers have to go it alone. Their time is entirely consumed by their caring responsibilities, and it takes an emotional toll. However, it is far more than that. If they take time out, there is no one else to look after the

person they care for. That is where the other costs of caring come in: the loss of relationships, the inability to enjoy five minutes alone for a cup of tea and the lack of time to attend medical appointments.

Ensuring that growing numbers of employers are carer confident would mean having more supportive and inclusive workplaces that take into consideration the additional demands on carers. It would also be beneficial to employers by reducing recruitment costs and preventing unnecessary staff turnover.

When my colleagues and I come to the chamber to raise the voices of carers in our communities, what we hear more and more often from the Government is that we, and carers themselves, should wait for the national care service, which will solve all their problems. However, carers cannot wait; they need solutions now. That is why days such as carers rights day are so important.

I close by saying thank you to every single carer, up and down the country, who makes sacrifices every day—most of which go unrecognised—to fill the roles of two Governments that are not doing enough. I say to them that we see them, we appreciate them and we thank them.

17:58

**The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care (Kevin Stewart):** As Ms Duncan-Glancy has just done, I thank all carers across the country for the invaluable work that they do in support of their friends and families. I thank Paul O’Kane, too, for initiating this important debate. Like him, I think that we should be thinking about carers every day, not just on carers rights day. The onus is on all of us to ensure that we put carers at the heart of all that we do.

The debate has been invaluable in allowing the Parliament to acknowledge the crucial work that carers do and to highlight the particular pressures that they face. I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss some of the actions that we are taking to support them.

Before I do so, though, I would like to pick up on a point that Carol Mochan made. I agree with her that it is absolutely vital that people identify as unpaid carers to enable them to access the support that they are entitled to. That is why earlier this year the Government ran a marketing campaign to highlight that point, get folk to recognise that they are in a caring role and tell them how to access support. It is incumbent on us all as parliamentarians to do that on a daily basis.

Scotland’s unpaid carers make a crucial contribution to our communities, but I know that the pandemic has added significant additional

pressures. I therefore welcome the “State of Caring 2022” report, the findings of which shine a valuable light on carers’ experience, which at this moment in time is, I am sad to say, particularly hard for many, if not all.

As Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care, I know how crucial it is to have regular meetings with carers and the organisations that support them. I am committed to listening to unpaid carers and to amplifying their voices, because that is the only way of truly understanding the challenges that they face and responding accordingly.

In November, I attended the carers parliament main event and the carers parliamentary reception on carers rights day, which focused on the cost of caring.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** The minister talked about amplifying the voices of carers. Next week, I will chair a meeting of the cross-party group on health inequalities, at which Richard Meade from Carers Scotland will give a presentation on how such inequalities affect people. Does the minister agree that cross-party groups are a useful way of elevating people’s voices so that we can identify problems and solutions?

**Kevin Stewart:** Cross-party groups are one way of amplifying voices, but beyond that, all of us should, as the Government is doing, listen more and more to the voices of those with lived experience right across the board as policy is being formulated.

On the point that I was making about the cost of caring, it has never been so important for carers to be aware of their rights and to know how to get the help and support that they need, as has been mentioned. I was particularly struck by the experience of Carolynne Hunter, who was mentioned by Paul O’Kane and who cares full time for her daughter, Freya. At the events that I attended, Carolynne talked very powerfully about the huge financial challenges that she faces due to rises in energy and wider living costs. More important, though, she talked about the costs to her own health and wellbeing of balancing her caring responsibilities for her daughter with other work and wider family commitments. Carolynne spoke movingly about her experience, and I know that many other people face similar difficult situations.

From listening to carers’ stories, I know that, as Christine Grahame evidenced in her speech, regular breaks are crucial to helping them maintain their health and wellbeing. For too long, many carers have been unable to take breaks, because of a lack of support, and that situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic. In that respect, it is

important to highlight the changes that the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill seeks to make to the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 to deliver a right to personalised breaks for support for any carer who is not able to access sufficient breaks. The bill intends to ensure that the ability to take sufficient breaks from providing care is an “identified personal outcome” in carers’ personalised plans under the 2016 act.

That said, the NCS bill is about the future, and we know that there are challenges now. This year, we have invested an additional £20.4 million in local statutory carer support, bringing our total investment under the 2016 act to £88.4 million per year. In addition, we have expanded easy-access short breaks with an extra £5 million on top of the annual £3 million voluntary sector short breaks fund.

I heard what Mr Balfour had to say about day care. We wrote to local authorities last week on that matter, and I have to say that it is frustrating that many of those services have not reopened. The member can be assured that we will continue discussions with COSLA and individual local authorities about getting that right for people, because it is absolutely essential that we do so.

As for the cost of living, we are very much aware that folks are facing higher bills, and we have allocated almost £3 billion this financial year to help households face the increased cost of living, including £1 billion for services and financial support not available elsewhere in the UK.

Social Security Scotland is continuing to work with carers and stakeholders on developing a replacement for carers allowance—Scottish carers assistance—that works better for the people of Scotland, including additional support for people with multiple caring roles. I should highlight that, since the launch of the carers allowance supplement in 2018, more than 744,000 carers allowance supplement payments totalling around £210 million have been made to more than 133,000 carers. As Marie McNair said, carers will receive a further £245.70 on 9 December 2022. By the end of this year, Scottish carers who have been continuously in receipt of the carers allowance supplement will have received more than £2,700 above carers allowance since the supplement’s introduction. We are doing more on that, but we know that there is more still to do.

Once again, I acknowledge the work of unpaid carers across the country, and I acknowledge members’ contributions to the debate. I could probably talk about the subject for many hours; I see you shaking your head at that, Presiding Officer, so I will not do so. Instead, I make a pledge to the members here that I will write to them with all the support that is available,

including from the fuel funds that the Government has established.

I, too, acknowledge the huge contribution that carers make in looking after family and friends across Scotland, and I recognise their value in alleviating pressures in health and social care. I reiterate the Government’s commitment to doing what we can to ensure that they can access the support that they deserve when they need it, and I hope that other members will help us in that regard.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate.

*Meeting closed at 18:07.*

## Correction

Alex Cole-Hamilton has identified an error in his contribution and provided the following correction.

**Alex Cole-Hamilton:**

*At col 24 paragraph 6—*

*Original text—*

Scotland met its emissions reductions for the first and, so far, only time in 2020, in the context of a national lockdown when everybody was at home, leaving the distinct impression that Covid has done more to curb emissions than the Scottish Government has managed so far.

*Corrected text—*

Scotland only met its 2020 emission reduction target in the context of a national lockdown when everybody was at home, leaving the distinct impression that Covid has done more to curb emissions than the Scottish Government has managed so far.

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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