



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 25 January 2023

Session 6



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 25 January 2023

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

Point of Order

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Good afternoon.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The events over the past week have been unprecedented. The United Kingdom Government's decision to invoke a section 35 order in response to the Scottish Parliament overwhelmingly passing the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill in December raises serious questions about devolution that should be of huge concern to every member serving the Scottish people in this institution.

Furthermore, concerns about the matter have been amplified in recent days, given that UK Government ministers—namely, Alister Jack and Kemi Badenoch—have refused three invitations to appear before Scottish Parliament committees to explain their extraordinary use of a section 35 order to block a bill that is defined clearly within the powers and responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament.

In the light of that, under rule 12.4 of standing orders, which refers to section 23 of the Scotland Act 1998, what can be done to ensure that the UK Government respects the Scottish Parliament, its devolved powers and the legislation that we pass, and that this Parliament holds the UK Government accountable for blocking the passing of a devolved law that, as I said, was overwhelmingly supported by parties across the chamber?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I thank Ms Grahame for advance notice of her point of order. I know that the committees sent out letters, and I have noted the responses. In the first instance, it is a matter for the committees to decide how they wish to proceed in eliciting the information that they are looking for. I do not think that there is an awful lot more that I can add at this stage.

Portfolio Question Time

Rural Affairs and Islands

14:01

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The first item of business is portfolio question time, and the first portfolio is rural affairs and islands. I invite any member who wishes to ask a supplementary question to press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question. As ever, there is quite a bit of interest, so I make the usual plea for brief questions and responses whenever possible. I will try to police that as lightly as is necessary.

United Kingdom and New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (Agriculture)

1. **Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government, regarding any impact on Scottish agriculture, what its most recent assessment is of the UK-New Zealand free trade agreement. (S6O-01804)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The UK Government's economic modelling for the New Zealand deal shows that the agriculture and semi-processing sectors will be losing sectors. The former UK Government Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs shares our view that that deal and the Australia deal are "not ... very good" deals for the UK.

Scottish farmers have been clear that the trade deal—which provides New Zealand exporters with unfettered access to the UK market despite having lower operating costs and regulatory standards—will undercut domestic agri-food producers and put jobs and the rural economy at risk. The outcome is also in stark contrast to the outcome from the recently negotiated European Union and New Zealand trade deal, which better protects the EU's agri-food sector. That reinforces our view that the best place for Scotland is within the EU.

Fiona Hyslop: I preface my next question by paying tribute to Scotland's most famous farmer and poet, Robert Burns, on his birthday—25 January.

Is the cabinet secretary aware that Conservative Lord Hannan of Kingsclere and UK Government minister in the Department of International Trade Lord Johnson of Lainston both stated during a House of Lords debate that New Zealand lamb is better for the environment than home-produced lamb? Does she agree that that is not only wrong but an insult to Scotland's farmers, who work extremely hard to provide a product of internationally renowned quality, and that it

demonstrates the continuing failure of the Conservative Party to defend and safeguard the interests of Scottish farmers?

Mairi Gougeon: The member is absolutely right. We know that there has been a catalogue of failures to protect the interests of Scottish farmers. One example is Brexit, but there has also been the UK Government's abject failure to secure trade deals that protect our agri-food sector. As I said in my initial response, the former UK secretary of state, who was in post during the negotiations on the trade agreements, has criticised them now that he is no longer in that post.

I could not disagree more with the comments that were made during that Lords debate. Scots lamb is produced to some of the highest standards anywhere in the world and, looking beyond quality at the wider production and supply chain, it supports jobs throughout our rural communities and economy. By eating Scots lamb, we are supporting our local producers instead of consuming a product that has been shipped halfway around the world, with the obvious climate impact that that has.

Blue Economy

2. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to how its blue economy vision for Scotland can support developing industries within the blue economy in the drive to net zero. (S6O-01805)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The blue economy vision represents a long-term strategy that serves as an overall framework for marine policies and actions. We have committed to mainstreaming a blue economy approach so that policies and decision makers have clear alignment with that vision.

For example, the blue economy vision is at the heart of the marine fund Scotland, through which we are providing £14 million annually in grant funding to a range of sectors that support Scotland's net zero commitments. That protects and creates jobs in Scotland's coastal communities, and it supports local supply chains and industries to adapt and invest for the future.

Brian Whittle: The value of natural capital is referenced across many of the Scottish Government's policies and strategies, including the blue economy vision and the paper "Delivering Scotland's Blue Economy Approach". However, if we are to deliver good policy that benefits Scotland's natural capital, we must have a complete understanding of what we have. Currently, there is a significant knowledge gap, as NatureScot's natural capital asset index does not

include marine habitats, citing the lack of available data as a reason for that exclusion. Given how vital good data is to good policy, how does the Scottish Government propose to improve the quality and quantity of its data gathering?

Mairi Gougeon: We are always looking to see where we can improve and what other information we can gather, because we want to base the decisions that we are taking on the best available science and data. Unfortunately, when it comes to the marine environment, the area is vast, so, even with all the resources at our hand, it would be nigh impossible to map out all the assets that we want to map out and gather all the science and data that we want. That is why we have set out a number of policies on how best we can adapt to the situation; how we can develop policy in the absence of science and data; and how we intend to work to improve the situation where we possibly can.

An important element of that process is looking towards collaboration. The question is about how we can work with our stakeholders, industry and academic institutions to build the science and evidence base.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The paper "Delivering Scotland's Blue Economy Approach" states that we will

"consult on applying a cap to fishing activity in inshore waters ... that will limit activity to current levels and set a ceiling from which activities that disrupt the seabed can be reduced in the light of evidence as it becomes available."

Why are we using evidence only to reduce activity instead of following wherever it takes us, even if that means an increase in inshore fisheries activity?

Mairi Gougeon: That question follows on from Brian Whittle's point. Willie Rennie makes an important point about gathering data and evidence. I will not prejudge the outcome of any consultation, because we will look to set out more information and have more engagement on those policies in due course. I would be happy to discuss that question further with the member as we look to launch that consultation and as the policy continues to develop.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 3 is from Sandesh Gulhane, who joins us remotely.

Avian Flu

3. **Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on avian flu, including any measures it is taking to tackle its spread. (S6O-01806)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): Since the start of October 2022, there have been 18 confirmed

cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 in poultry and captive birds and 81 findings in wild birds in Scotland.

The Scottish Government responded to the risk of avian influenza from wild birds through the introduction of an avian influenza prevention zone in October 2022, which requires all bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures and continues to remind keepers of those obligations. The Scottish Government and its operational partners have a robust control strategy in place and a proven track record in dealing effectively and rapidly with controlling outbreaks.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Sandesh Gulhane.

I think that we might have lost Dr Gulhane's connection.

I will take a brief supplementary question from Paul McLennan.

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): Understandably, this is a worrying time for poultry farmers and all those who keep birds. Scotland continues to be guided by the science, so will the cabinet secretary reiterate what the CVO has said on biosecurity? Given the key role of biosecurity, that message cannot be repeated enough.

Mairi Gougeon: I thank the member for raising the point, because he is absolutely right about getting the message out about biosecurity. We cannot stress enough how important those measures are. The scientific opinion from the European Food Safety Authority concludes that housing birds gives a twofold reduction in risk but that that is effective only if there are other good biosecurity measures in place. However, adopting that high level of biosecurity gives a predicted forty-fourfold reduction in cases.

Housing birds that are normally kept in a free-range way also has consequences for the welfare of birds, which we cannot forget about. We must remember that housing birds is not a panacea for the disease and its spread. I invite all members to support the chief veterinary officer in sharing those vital biosecurity measures with their constituents.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We still do not appear to have a connection with Dr Gulhane, so I call Beatrice Wishart to ask a brief supplementary question.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): The spread of avian flu has had a dramatic impact on seabird populations, and Shetland is no exception. Mousa nature reserve is famous for its population of breeding European storm petrels. The island was closed to the public last August to help to prevent the spread of avian flu. NatureScot was to carry out a risk assessment review and report

back in March 2023. Can the cabinet secretary provide an update on progress with the review?

Mairi Gougeon: It is obviously devastating to see the impact that avian influenza has had on our wild bird population. The member is right in what she says about the work that is being undertaken by NatureScot. I am happy to write to her to provide more of an update on where that work is at the moment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 4 has been withdrawn.

Post-Brexit Border Control (Impact on Farmers of Delays to Introduction)

5. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it last engaged with the United Kingdom Government regarding the reported impact on farmers in Scotland whose livestock may be exposed to animal diseases as a result of delays to the introduction of post-Brexit border controls for checking meat and other products entering the country. (S6O-01808)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The Scottish Government shares the member's concerns and takes disease prevention and control very seriously. As the UK Government continues to develop its new border controls target operating model, we constantly emphasise that those controls must be based on veterinary and plant health expertise. We regret that we were not consulted when the UK Government took the unilateral decision to postpone the previously planned introduction of import controls last year.

We continue to bring in safeguarding measures whenever appropriate to maintain our high biosecurity standards, and Scotland's chief veterinary officer is an active participant in the UK-wide animal disease policy group. I will, of course, stress the point when I meet UK minister of state Lord Benyon on 30 January.

Graeme Dey: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer. The view of the NFU Scotland is that

"Amongst all the chaos of securing a 'Brexit deal' the mechanics of how border controls would operate was somehow lost".

That is a reference to the UK Government kicking the can down the road last April. While we sit in limbo, the threat of African swine fever has become of particular concern to our pig farmers. Does the cabinet secretary share my dismay at how the Tories and the Brexit that they forced on us have left the agricultural sector exposed in this way?

Mairi Gougeon: I agree with Graeme Dey. In particular, African swine fever, which he mentioned, is a concern and a very real threat. Not

only that but, right now, we have a situation in which our producers and businesses in Scotland have an unlevel playing field: importers have the freedom to bring their goods to the UK, but our exporters have had the barriers of checks since day 1.

Not only is that a competitive disadvantage that has impacted, and continues to impact, on businesses here, but it poses a very real risk in relation to biosecurity. I raised that with the UK Government way back in September 2021 in a letter to Lord Frost, in which I stated that the difficulties that led to that decision are due entirely to the UK Government's reckless approach to exit from the European Union, which is repeatedly being shown to have been done without responsible planning or co-ordination. The results of that are clear. We have inconsistency and constant change and delay, which result in the incurring of unnecessary costs, resource difficulties and delays across the economy and our communities.

Farming (Help with Costs)

6. Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what it will be doing in the coming year to help farmers to mitigate any impacts of rising costs in the sector. (S6O-01809)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The Scottish Government has committed to measures that are worth almost £3 billion this year as a whole to help with the cost crisis. Farmers and crofters will benefit from some of the general measures that we have set out, both as individuals and as a sector.

In relation to the sector in particular, we announced in June last year that farm payment dates would be brought forward to as early in the year as was practicably possible in order to provide support to businesses, which we know had immediate cash-flow challenges. We have delivered on that commitment. More than 17,250 businesses have already benefited from the change, with around £413.5 million having been paid out to date.

Daniel Johnson: We are in the midst of a cost of living crisis, which, in turn, is a cost of business crisis, which is a cost of farming crisis. The rising costs of fertiliser and fuel are well documented. Just in the past week, it has been announced that the price of soy—a major constituent of animal feed—has risen to £100 per tonne. In addition, we have issues such as new and second-hand tractor prices increasing by 30 to 40 per cent. As the member for Edinburgh Southern, I am surprised to find myself bringing up tractor prices in Parliament.

Nonetheless, what steps is the Scottish Government taking to monitor those costs, and what contingencies is it considering so that it can step in and prevent farmers in vital parts of the agricultural sector from going under due to unforeseen rises in costs?

Mairi Gougeon: First of all, I note that we absolutely do not want that to happen.

We monitor the on-going situation in a number of ways. Daniel Johnson will, no doubt, be aware that I established a food security and supply task force last year. It was a short-life task force and produced a number of recommendations towards the end of June last year. We agreed to have a further two meetings in order to continue that monitoring capacity and to ensure that we were delivering on the recommendations. We had one meeting towards the end of last year and are looking to set up the second meeting shortly, when we will, no doubt, discuss some of the key issues that the sector is facing.

There is also a monitoring group at United Kingdom level. We had the interministerial group meeting with the UK Government and the other devolved Administrations at the start of this week, at which we looked at the outcome of monitoring and discussed the importance of collecting and sharing data among the Administrations.

I assure Daniel Johnson and members across the chamber that we continue to monitor the situation and to consider what support we can provide, where necessary. I highlight again that not all of the matter falls within the remit of the Scottish Government. However, where we can help, we always strive to do so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will take two brief supplementary questions.

Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP): There is someone who could have made a really big difference to farmers in terms of mitigating costs—the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Instead, the UK Government decided that farming businesses should be classified as non-high-energy businesses. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, in that decision, the Tories have shown us all what they think of our farmers and our food security?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Be as brief as possible, cabinet secretary.

Mairi Gougeon: I am, of course, aware that energy costs are a serious issue that I know is causing a great deal of concern right across the farming sector. Energy pricing is reserved, and we have repeatedly called on the UK Government to clarify how businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises such as our farmers and crofters, will be supported through the energy

crisis from April, after the energy bill relief scheme ends. Unfortunately, we are still waiting for answers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Emma Harper, who will be brief.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): In addition to the increase in costs for farmers associated with the cost of living crisis and Brexit, farmers also experience attacks on their livestock by out-of-control dogs, which has financial and emotional impacts.

Will the cabinet secretary join me in encouraging all dog owners to ensure that they are following the Scottish outdoor access code? Will she agree to meet me so that we can further publicise the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2021, which I took forward in the previous session?

Mairi Gougeon: I thank Emma Harper for highlighting the legislation that she took through Parliament in the previous session. It is really important, because we now have penalties that reflect the seriousness of sheep worrying, which we know is a significant issue in rural areas. I would be happy to meet her to discuss that further and to see what more we could do collectively to build awareness.

Squirrelpox

7. Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to curb the recently reported outbreak of squirrelpox. (S6O-01810)

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): We have had outbreaks of squirrelpox, a virus that affects mainly red squirrels, in various parts of Scotland since 2005. I am aware of the local outbreak that has been reported near Lockerbie through the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels partnership. Action is being taken to tackle the spread of the virus. That includes targeted grey squirrel control, encouragement of the public to report sightings of infected animals, and asking them to remove and clean feeders in order to minimise transmission. Where we have had outbreaks in the past, targeted grey squirrel control has ensured that local red squirrel populations have successfully recovered.

Michael Marra: The minister will know well the importance of ensuring diversity in species across the country and across our natural world. My home city of Dundee and neighbouring Angus have a long history of trying to preserve our red squirrel population. I would appreciate any reassurance that the minister can give that she will continue to monitor the situation and to report back on further outbreaks.

Lorna Slater: I thank Michael Marra very much for the question, and I encourage local enthusiasm for red squirrels and biodiversity in general. Fortunately, the virus has currently been reported only in the south of Scotland, which is one of Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels key priority areas. So far, no cases of squirrelpox have been detected in red squirrels on the Highland line or elsewhere.

To make sure that that remains the case, the teams are engaged in strategic squirrelpox sampling of red and grey squirrels. When the virus is detected in a grey squirrel in the area, the teams deploy a rapid response monitoring and control protocol.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): The recent reporting of squirrelpox in the Borders is cause for concern. The 2022 great Scottish squirrel survey has shown that concerted efforts in Aberdeen have been very successful, with red squirrels returning and the grey squirrel population significantly decreasing.

Will the cabinet secretary join me in commending the efforts of those who have worked to preserve that iconic Scottish species in the north-east?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary. I am sorry—I mean minister.

Lorna Slater: I thank the member for the promotion and for asking her question. I recognise the hard work and perseverance of the people who are working to support the survival of our iconic red squirrel. The dedicated work of those who are involved in the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrel project, particularly the grey squirrel control officers, has been vital in protecting the Highland line. That has ensured that the red squirrel population in the Highlands has remained safe and free of grey squirrels and squirrelpox. I thank the people concerned for that and for protecting our native biodiversity.

Aquaculture Regulatory Framework (Update)

8. Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the aquaculture regulatory framework. (S6O-01811)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): I welcomed the independent regulatory review of aquaculture consenting last year, when I announced an immediate change in the validity period for new marine licences for shellfish and fish farms, from six to 25 years.

I established and chair the Scottish Aquaculture Council to ensure that progress is made across all our commitments. That includes progress of the

regulatory review, in addition to delivery of the actions that are set out in our response to the salmon interactions working group report and the new vision for sustainable aquaculture. I am pleased to inform members that they can keep up to date with developments at the Scottish Aquaculture Council on the Scottish Government's website. Recent activities include establishment of a dedicated consenting task group to explore and pilot new ways of working in the consenting process.

The Scottish Science Advisory Council is currently considering the use and communication of science in the fish farm consenting process, and I look forward to receiving the conclusions of that project this spring.

Annabelle Ewing: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the importance of the salmon industry to my constituency, with 600 jobs being based at Mowi in Rosyth. How much more time is to elapse before the Griggs report is fully implemented? What is the reason for the delay of nearly a year in doing so? Has the Scottish Environment Protection Agency been supportive, or otherwise, of the process?

Mairi Gougeon: I recognise, and the Scottish Government recognises, the importance of aquaculture to the member's constituency and a number of constituencies across Scotland. It is an important sector to our economy, and we remain committed to its sustainable development. That applies not only to where farms are located, but to the wider supply chain and the jobs that the sector supports, including the jobs in the member's constituency.

I emphasise that there has not been a year-long delay. I hope that the member will recognise, given what I said in my initial answer, that a number of pieces of work have been initiated and are currently under way. We always knew that the timescales that were put forward in the Griggs review would be challenging to meet, but we wanted to make sure that we hit the ground running and got started.

We have made significant progress since the report was published. That progress includes the establishment of the Scottish Aquaculture Council and the consenting task force.

I want to assure Annabelle Ewing and other members that SEPA is fully engaged with us on the journey and is a positive and active member of both groups. We want to and will maintain momentum to ensure that we deliver a fit-for-purpose consenting system for aquaculture as soon as possible.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have two supplementaries. It would be good if they and their responses were brief.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests as a wild salmon fisher.

In 2018, the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee published its salmon farming report, which had 65 recommendations. It is clear that the industry is not improving. Fish farm mortalities increased to a high of 29,000 tonnes last year. If we were to put them all in lorries, we would have a nose-to-tail queue of rotting fish from here to Edinburgh airport and beyond. Mortalities are unacceptably high—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question, please.

Edward Mountain: Does the cabinet secretary agree and what will she do about it?

Mairi Gougeon: Again, I refer to the action that we are taking across the piece, on the back of the Griggs review. We are making progress on a number of its recommendations. I also outline that we have made significant progress since publication of the reviews. I would be happy to write to Edward Mountain with more detail on that and to outline all the progress that has been made in that time.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): There is a growing interest in sustainable kelp cultivation rather than kelp dredging. The sector would benefit from an independent regulatory framework, as was recommended in the aquaculture regulatory process review. What progress has been made on establishing such a framework for a kelp farming industry?

Mairi Gougeon: Of course, one of the first steps that we have said we will take is publication of our vision for aquaculture. It is an exciting and burgeoning industry, and we want to make sure that it is developed sustainably and that we get regulation of it right. The first step will be publication of the vision, and we will take forward further work from there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions on rural affairs and islands. I will allow a brief pause for front-bench members to change places.

Health and Social Care

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next portfolio is health and social care. If members wish to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question. Again, there is quite a lot of interest in this portfolio, so I would appreciate brief questions and responses that are as brief as possible from the ministerial team.

Drugs and Alcohol (Harm Reduction)

1. **Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to reduce the avoidable harms associated with drugs and alcohol. (S6O-01812)

The Minister for Drugs Policy (Angela Constance): We have a range of activity under way to reduce harms from drugs and alcohol. That includes a drugs policy national mission specifically to save and improve lives, which is focused on early intervention and prevention and which will also improve the quality of and access to treatment. That was set out in the cross-Government plan, which was published on 12 January.

Furthermore, our national alcohol framework sets out our national prevention aims on alcohol. That includes evaluation of our world-leading minimum unit price policy and our alcohol marketing consultation, which is currently open to responses. Those activities are aimed at reducing consumption and minimising alcohol-related harm.

Evelyn Tweed: Health inequalities are a feature of alcohol-specific deaths. Deaths attributed to alcohol are 5.6 times as likely in the most deprived areas of Scotland as they are in the least deprived areas. What steps is the Scottish Government taking within its powers to tackle the root causes of health inequalities and the disproportionate impact that alcohol has?

Angela Constance: Ms Tweed is right to highlight the social gradient of alcohol harms. Maree Todd will continue to lead the work on minimum unit pricing and the consultation on the restriction of alcohol advertising and promotion, which work is crucial to changing Scotland's troubled relationship with alcohol. Much of the work that I lead on the drugs policy national mission has a direct bearing on improving the quality of and access to alcohol treatment through, for example, the expansion of residential rehabilitation, which is supporting families and tackling stigma and trauma.

To overcome the wider root causes of health inequality, the Government is investing £4 billion in social security, including an extension of the Scottish child payment to £25 per child per week for eligible families, and, this financial year, an additional £3 billion to help households who face the United Kingdom's cost of living crisis, £1 billion of which is providing services and support that are not available anywhere else in the UK.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): Scottish National Party and Green ministers approved a cut of £1 million to the alcohol and drugs budget in November, at a time when more than 100 families were grieving the loss of a loved one because of drugs. My thoughts are with those families and I

send them my condolences. The SNP has said that tackling the issue is a national mission, but it cannot mean that if it then cuts funding. Front-line services are key to saving lives. Will the minister commit to reversing the cuts to the alcohol and drugs budget, to ensure that services are fully supported to tackle the on-going crisis?

Angela Constance: The draft 2023-24 budget for substance use overall is £160 million, which is an increase from £146.5 million. It includes investment in health boards and investment in the crossover between addiction and mental health, and—crucially—an increase from £85.4 million to £99 million is proposed in the alcohol and drugs budget. Of course, people can look at the budget line by line, but the overall budget is increasing.

The synergy between my work on drugs policy and our work on alcohol policy is important. For example, over the lifetime of this parliamentary session, the £100 million that is to be invested in residential rehabilitation and aftercare will benefit as many people with alcohol problems as it benefits people with drug problems.

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): On Monday, Public Health Scotland published its rapid action drug alerts and response quarterly report, which, tragically, confirmed an increase in the number of suspected drug deaths in October and November 2022, with a 20 per cent increase in November compared with the same month in the previous year. Every one of those deaths was preventable, and every one of them was a tragedy. What action is the minister taking, in response to those figures, to ensure that we make significantly faster progress, particularly on the implementation of medication-assisted treatment—MAT—standards?

Angela Constance: Part of the national mission was to publish more data and information more quickly, so that services could respond on the ground.

Public Health Scotland has issued an alert around a new substance, nitazene. The number of suspected drug deaths went down over the first nine months of last year, but the member is correct in saying that there was an increase over October to November. It is still too early to say whether there is a direct link between nitazene and the increase in suspected drug deaths in October.

On the action that has been taken, an alert has been issued to drug and alcohol services, emergency services, healthcare and high-risk settings that underlines the on-going importance of naloxone as an effective treatment, along with good harm-reduction advice. There has also been a warning about counterfeit medication: people are

being warned not to take oxycodone tablets unless they have been prescribed by a medical person.

Outreach facilities are important as part of the implementation of MAT, and Public Health Scotland has been engaging directly with areas where issues have been detected.

Transvaginal Ultrasound Examinations

2. Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that some women have been denied transvaginal ultrasounds on the basis of not yet being sexually active. (S6O-01813)

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): As the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has said, no one should ever be denied access to healthcare on the ground of virginity.

Specific guidance on transvaginal ultrasounds has been produced by the British Medical Ultrasound Society, which all national health service boards are encouraged to adopt. The guidance sets out that a patient who has not had penetrative sex is still entitled to be offered a transvaginal ultrasound, in the same way as cervical screening is offered to all eligible patients regardless of whether they have had penetrative sex. Not yet being sexually active should have no bearing on clinical decision making around access to diagnostic scans.

Carol Mochan: It is critical that no one is denied access to vital healthcare on the basis of their not being sexually active. Although the number of reported cases of that happening in Scotland is low, one case is too many. Will the minister commit today to ensuring that the guidance notes that are provided for practising and future doctors on transvaginal ultrasounds are clear in saying that women who are not sexually active are eligible for procedures, to give everyone the best opportunity to detect abnormalities?

Maree Todd: I am happy to commit to that, and I am more than happy to work with the member if she wants to contact me with ways in which we can ensure that that message goes out loud and clear.

Given that it is cervical cancer awareness week, I take the opportunity to reiterate the point that cervical screening is routinely offered to all eligible patients. It is one of the gynaecological myths that persist in the present day that a woman does not need to have a cervical smear if she is not sexually active. The cervical smear is offered to all eligible patients regardless of whether they have had penetrative sex. I thank the member for the opportunity to reaffirm that in the chamber today.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Hospice Beds)

3. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the number of hospice beds available in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area. (S6O-01814)

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has a total of 38 hospice beds across the health board area. It is the responsibility of integrated joint boards to plan and commission palliative and end-of-life care services using the integrated budget under their control, so that is a matter for health and social care partnerships, working with NHS boards and independent hospices.

Rona Mackay: Last week, I met with a general practitioner in my constituency who raised concerns over hospice beds in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, with patients being admitted to the acute hospital sector due to a lack of beds. After a discussion with one hospice, it was suggested that some of the capacity issues relate to on-going Covid restrictions. Can the minister confirm which of the restrictions that are in place could be creating capacity issues and whether there are plans for those restrictions to be removed?

Maree Todd: It is fair to say that our NHS is experiencing immense pressure at the moment, which means that there has been a redoubling of our efforts. There has been a power of work going on across the board to ensure that patients can access the right care at the right times and as close to home as possible.

On Covid-19 measures, the continued transition to national infection prevention and control—IPC—guidance sees a return to service user placement based on the assessment of risk alongside the application of routine standard infection control precautions and transmission-based precautions in line with the pre-pandemic IPC practices. However, some pandemic measures remain, and those are the subject of continuous review. That guidance remains in place for a large number of community-based services, including hospices throughout the whole of Scotland. As part of our work on developing a new palliative end-of-life care strategy for Scotland, we will seek to ensure that there is palliative care wherever and whenever it is needed. To that end, we are mapping the services and support that are delivered across Scotland through hospitals and community settings, including in people's homes and care homes.

NHS Lothian and NHS Borders (Meetings with Government)

4. **Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last spoke to NHS Lothian and NHS Borders. (S6O-01815)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Ministers and Government officials meet regularly with the leadership of all national health service boards including NHS Lothian and NHS Borders, to discuss matters of importance. It will be no surprise at all to the member that the most recent discussions have centred around the challenging winter pressures. Ralph Roberts, the chief executive of NHS Borders, was on the most recent Scottish Government resilience call, which was chaired by the First Minister last week, in his role as the chair of chief executives.

Christine Grahame: The cabinet secretary will be aware that, in November last year, NHS Borders launched a single-point-of-contact cancer hub for people who are referred to Borders general hospital with a suspected cancer diagnosis, to provide support and information and to relieve stress. That is being phased in now, and everybody who requires it should have access to that service by spring 2023. Does the cabinet secretary, like me, welcome the initiative, and would he like to comment on it?

Humza Yousaf: I welcome the initiative. All members across the chamber—whether we have personal experience of going through a cancer journey or know somebody, such as a constituent, who has—know that one of the common points of feedback that we get is that people often feel that they are being passed from pillar to post. They want a single point of contact to help to navigate a very difficult time in their lives.

The initiative is one of the key actions in our national cancer plan, and it will remain an important part of our new cancer strategy, which is due to be published in the spring. I commend NHS Borders and the other boards that have the single-point-of-contact cancer hub in place. As the member says, we will look to roll the hubs out nationally.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Non-urgent Elective Operations)

5. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when non-urgent elective operations will resume in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. (S6O-01816)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): I have been clear that health boards can and should take the necessary steps to prioritise and protect critical and life-

saving care if that is deemed necessary. Local health boards, healthcare professionals and clinicians are best placed to judge what reasonable measures should be taken in each board area to manage the severe pressures.

Like other boards, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has taken the decision to pause non-urgent elective procedures to ensure that those with urgent healthcare needs, including cancer, are prioritised. That decision was not taken lightly and it is under constant review. I spoke with senior management at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and they assured me that they are monitoring the situation daily.

I expect that, where there has been an impact on non-urgent elective operations in a health board area, they will be resumed as soon as possible.

Jackie Baillie: In the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde health board area, there are something like 11,000 patients waiting more than a year and nearly 2,000 waiting more than two years for elective surgery, which is an increase of almost 50 per cent since the current cabinet secretary took office. Can he offer clarification of whether urgent and day-case surgery is still going ahead in Glasgow? I know of patients who have had urgent procedures cancelled at the last minute. Given that day surgery does not require overnight beds, can he explain what is going on?

Humza Yousaf: I say again that it is non-urgent elective surgery that has been paused. If Jackie Baillie or any other member knows of cases that are deemed urgent in which procedures have been cancelled, I am happy to raise them with the health board. Equally, Jackie Baillie can raise those issues herself, and she will get an explanation as to why those elective procedures have been cancelled.

Non-urgent elective surgery is cancelled for out-patients as well. That decision was taken locally. We spoke about that with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde today. The ability to free up beds and staff can be very important, as staff may have to be relocated to busy sites and wards such as those in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.

I give an absolute assurance to Jackie Baillie and other members who have similar concerns about not only NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde but other health boards that have made similar decisions that the pause will not be in place for a second longer than it has to be. The decision is under daily review. I am happy for Jackie Baillie to pass on any individual constituency-related concerns that she has, and I will raise them with the health board.

Trainee Doctor Workforce (Update)

6. Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on Scotland's trainee doctor workforce. (S6O-01817)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Trainee doctors account for approximately 42 per cent of doctors in hospitals, so they play a major role in service delivery. I am grateful to them for all the work that they have done, particularly during the past few years. The number of doctors in training is up by more than 24 per cent—or 1,295.6 whole-time equivalents—under this Government.

The recruitment of trainee doctors in 2022 was the most successful to date, with 1,073 posts being filled. More broadly, we are continuing to implement the recommendations that formed part of the 48-hour maximum working week—without averaging—for junior doctors from the Scotland expert working group's report.

Collette Stevenson: In 2011, junior doctor Lauren Connelly from East Kilbride tragically died while driving home from work. Since then, her father, Brian Connelly, has campaigned to reduce junior doctors' working hours to make them safe. I am grateful to Humza Yousaf for meeting us last year.

Can the health secretary provide an update on the work that is being done to make the working hours of junior doctors safe? Does he agree with Mr Connelly and me that junior doctors should have a maximum 48-hour working week without averaging, which the First Minister committed to work towards in 2017?

Humza Yousaf: I thank Collette Stevenson for asking such an important question. I once again pay tribute to Brian Connelly for continuing to campaign tirelessly to improve working conditions for the medical workforce. He has gone through the most unimaginable tragedy, but he makes sure that he campaigns day in, day out by advocating with his local MSP or directly with Government to ensure that working conditions are improved for the medical workforce.

During the past year, the Scottish Government has worked in partnership with junior doctors and employers to restrict consecutive days of long shifts—those that are longer than 10 hours—to four in any seven days for junior doctors. Progress continues to be made on implementing the broader recommendations of the expert group, including on improvements to facilities, rota design and staff governance.

In respect of the specific question on a 48-hour working week, without averaging, for junior doctors, I remain committed to pursuing that goal,

as does the Government. I say to Collette Stevenson that we are seeking to address the longer-term issue. Achieving a 48-hour working week is a process that requires careful consideration to ensure that we get it right and make lasting improvements for the working conditions of our junior doctor workforce.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for sharing those details on trainee doctors in Scotland, but he will know that Australia and New Zealand are carrying out extensive marketing and recruitment campaigns that are targeted at trainee doctors who work in Scotland's national health service. That is exacerbated by a lack of available specialist training posts and general burn-out due to high working hours. Can he advise us what proactive steps the Government is taking to retain those doctors once they have completed their foundation training? Why does he think they are being seen as such an easy target?

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

Humza Yousaf: What can I say? Paul Sweeney is of course right to raise the issue. First and foremost, we are making sure that we are creating the necessary training places for our trainee doctors here. We have increased them by an additional 725 places; 152 were agreed recently and will be recruited to this year. We will also seek to try to make the improvements that I outlined to Collette Stevenson so that their working conditions are improved, which I think will help to retain them.

On top of that, we will continue to discuss with junior doctors and the medical workforce more generally what we can do around pay and pensions to make sure that we retain those doctors in Scotland as opposed to losing them elsewhere.

NHS Shetland

(Dentistry and Orthodontic Treatment Waiting Times)

7. Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it is having with NHS Shetland to address waiting times for NHS dentistry and orthodontic treatment. (S6O-01818)

The Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport (Maree Todd): The Scottish Government continues to meet NHS Shetland regularly to review all aspects of the board's service delivery. The current areas of focus for dental and orthodontic treatment include addressing waiting times in the context of the board's response to Covid-19. In addition, the board is developing an improvement plan for

dental service provision, which is due to be concluded in the coming months.

Beatrice Wishart: There are continuing long-term issues for people in Shetland who are trying to access national health service dental services. I have a 16-year-old constituent who is on a waiting list to join an orthodontic waiting list and she says, “I was told that I needed a brace when I was 10, so I have been waiting for six years with a sense of insecurity.” Her case was confirmed as a priority case, but she has been waiting indefinitely to start treatment. The delay in treatment could have lifelong impacts on my constituent’s dental health. I am in dialogue with the minister about that specific case, but does she think that such delays in treatment are acceptable?

Maree Todd: First, I understand the challenging position that NHS Shetland is facing with respect to orthodontic treatment. NHS dental access is undoubtedly challenging in certain areas across Scotland. In many cases, that has been exacerbated by Brexit controls as well as by the unique difficulties following the pandemic.

With regard to the specific case, I can reassure the member that the board has recently taken a number of successful mitigating actions to improve the provision of specialist orthodontic services, including the recruitment of a new specialist orthodontic consultant who has additional capacity at weekends. Provisional assessment by the board suggests that the service is now seeing substantially increased numbers of patients compared with previously. The board is also in a recruitment process to replace other clinical staff and we understand that that is looking very positive.

There are other mitigating actions on the way, including additional training with, in particular, the prospect of remote training for orthodontic therapists.

With regard to the individual case that the member raises, I understand that the board adopted a new model for prioritising patients, which was communicated to patients in October 2022. All patients on the waiting list have been fully informed of the current situation. The immediate priority in terms of catch-up is the patients who are currently under treatment. On completion of the treatment of that cohort of patients, the service will focus on the patients who are waiting for treatment.

I understand that that is disappointing for the constituent that the member mentions and it falls below the standard of service that we would hope for. However, the service has undoubtedly been challenged by the pandemic, as all our dental services have been. I am glad to see that it is an

improving situation. I must also say that the board is very—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, I am going to have to stop you there. I am keen to fit in a couple of supplementary questions. The first is from Jamie Halcro Johnston. It needs to be brief.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Too many dental practices across Scotland are going private or closing completely. Next month, Skye and Lochalsh dental practice will close its doors for good. Has the minister made any assessment of the impact that cuts to NHS dentistry will have on rural dentist practices? How does she expect dental practices across Scotland to provide NHS services at a loss now that crucial funding has been withdrawn?

Maree Todd: I reiterate that, as I have said previously, the Government provided an enormous amount of funding to sustain NHS dentistry during the pandemic, when dentists could not operate at all. Without that Government funding, they would have gone under completely. We are now working with the dental sector to review and reform dental payments. Our intention is that there will be a more sustainable model going forward.

For the Conservative member to mention the challenges across dentistry without mentioning the word “Brexit” represents a serious omission because, if he was to visit any dental practice in Scotland, as I have, he will find that European dentists are no longer able to come to Scotland and sustain our workforce, as they could previously.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will take question 8, but responses will have to be briefer.

Health Foundation Report (“Leave no one behind”)

8. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the report, “Leave no one behind”, from the Health Foundation. (S6O-01819)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): The report is sobering. It is deeply concerning that in 2019 there was a 24-year gap in healthy life expectancy between people living in the most and least socioeconomically deprived 10 per cent of localities. We know that one of the reasons behind that and the driving force for it is the impact of Conservative austerity on public services, which is why we are using all the powers and resources that are available to us to create a fairer Scotland.

Richard Leonard: Infant mortality in the most deprived areas two and a half times that in the least deprived areas; people living in the poorest households almost eight times as likely to report

poor health as those living in the richest households; and life expectancy—already the lowest of the United Kingdom nations for the past 70 years—not going up but coming down, even before the pandemic. Health inequalities are rooted in wealth inequalities; wealth inequalities are rooted in class inequalities. Does the Scottish National Party Government have any plan, any strategy or any idea whatsoever for tackling the inequalities that have been identified in this report, which, at their root, are based on the divisions of economic and social class?

Humza Yousaf: I do not disagree with Richard Leonard that the cost crisis, which the Conservatives are the architects of, is a public health crisis. [*Laughter.*] That is why we are committing £19 billion to the national health service and social care services in the next year. The Conservatives might laugh when I say that the cost crisis is a public health crisis, but they would do well to listen to the points that we make about that.

That is why we are providing £4 billion in social security and welfare payments over the next financial year and extending the Scottish child payment to families with eligible under-16-year olds, increasing it to £25 per week, per child. We will continue to make the necessary investments with an absolute focus on people in the most deprived areas. I say to Richard Leonard: rather than leaving powers in the hands of the Conservatives, who are the architects of the cost crisis, would it not be much better to have all the financial levers in this Parliament?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions. As time is tight, we will move straight on to the next item of business.

Urgent Question

14:54

Scottish Prison Service (Gender Identity Review)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is an urgent question. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary, they should press their request-to-speak button or indicate that in the chat function.

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the Scottish Prison Service's gender identity and gender reassignment policy review?

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): I have asked Teresa Medhurst, the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, for an update on the progress of the policy review, and she has confirmed that the SPS's policy review is being conducted in five stages. The policy initiation stage and the evidence and engagement stages have now been completed, and the policy review is now moving through the analysis, recommendations and authorise, and publish stages. The SPS anticipates the updated policy being published in the coming months. Following implementation, the policy will be subject to on-going monitoring and evaluations.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before calling Mr Findlay, I remind members to refrain from discussing the circumstances of any specific cases, particularly any cases that are not yet concluded.

Russell Findlay: Yesterday, a double rapist was sent to a women's prison—for the legal reasons that you have cited, Presiding Officer, I will need to be careful about what I say. That scenario is exactly what I tried to stop during the passage of Nicola Sturgeon's Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill, but my attempt was voted down by the narrowest of margins. Even with the flawed bill in limbo, violent criminals are exploiting the system and putting vulnerable women at risk.

Can the cabinet secretary tell me why his Scottish National Party Government thinks that any rapist should be allowed inside a women's prison?

Keith Brown: Of course, if the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill had passed into law instead of being stopped by another Government—completely wrongly—it would not have changed the SPS's approach to trans prisoners, which is not dependent on the

possession of a gender recognition certificate. The possession of a GRC will continue to have a minimal impact on how the SPS manages transgender people. The important thing is that its process is one that is based on the assessment of risk—*[Interruption.]*—for the individual, for other prisoners and for prison staff. It has a tremendous track record in dealing with the management of that risk. I would suggest that the SPS is far more expert in assessing and dealing with that risk than any of us in this chamber.

This morning, I visited the SPS to discuss its management of risks in relation to serious and organised crime. The SPS is a fantastic organisation that manages risk every day of the week. It has a great track record in relation to trans prisoners and I have faith in its ability to evolve its policy to continue that track record.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I encourage members to listen to those asking and answering the questions.

Russell Findlay: That answer was pretty much as expected: the cabinet secretary immediately tries to shift the blame on to someone else, in this case the United Kingdom Government and the SPS, whose professionalism and commitment to public service and the public interest no one doubts.

What Keith Brown knows full well is that his Government has the power to intervene and stop this situation. I suggest that he familiarise himself with the SPS's rule 15(1), which lets him put this situation right with the stroke of a pen or one phone call. Will the Government agree today to direct the SPS to block that rapist and any others from being sent to a women's prison?

Keith Brown: It would have made for a more illuminating discussion if Russell Findlay had listened to my answer before going on to his preset next question.

The simple fact is that, as I have said already, I trust the SPS to deal with this. It does not follow the practice in England and Wales, where the process is determined by the presence of a GRC. That is not how it is done in Scotland. In Scotland, if someone has a GRC, it does not give them the right to be transferred to the place of their choice. Here, every decision is carried out on the basis of risk. I trust the SPS to do that.

Of course, the Parliament and I will be interested in the outcome of the policy review. We can have a discussion about the review when it is published. However, as things stand, I trust the SPS, and my faith in it is borne out by its track record. When it has a case of a trans prisoner, all the appropriate assessments—including by health and possibly psychiatric services—are made. That is the right way to deal with these situations. If

anyone does not think that it is, they can look at the SPS's track record in this regard, which is exemplary, as it has ensured the safety of prisoners for many years.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary confirm whether the GRR bill changes the process of the SPS in respect of transgender prisoners?

Keith Brown: It is an important point—*[Interruption.]*—and it bears repetition, because it has not been taken on board by some of those who are asking questions about it and are shouting just now.

The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill does not change the SPS's approach to trans prisoners, which is not dependent on the possession of a GRC. The possession of a GRC will continue to have a minimal impact on how the SPS manages transgender people in its care. Decisions on placement and management are not based solely on the possession of a GRC but are based on a range of multiple factors and thorough individualised assessments. The SPS will retain the ability to place an individual in an estate that does not necessarily correspond to the gender on their GRC if it determines that not doing so would place that individual or others at risk. It is a risk-based approach.

Of course, the GRR bill is not currently in force, so it is not relevant to any current cases.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary accept that ordinary women and members of the public are outraged by the imprisonment of a rapist, who was convicted of two counts of rape, which is one of the most serious charges in the Scottish criminal legal system—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms McNeill, I caution you to refer to the comments that I made earlier about references to particular cases.

Pauline McNeill: The fact that prisoners might be segregated in a women's jail in the first place speaks to the fact that the very nature of the women's prison estate is being changed to accommodate that. I agree that it has nothing to do with the GRR bill, because it is about the risk assessment. Would the cabinet secretary consider that that risk assessment is obviously failing in some way, because it is impacting on other women prisoners, who have not been consulted on how they feel about that assessment? I call on the cabinet secretary to assure me that there will be a rights-based approach, which will include the views of women, women prisoners and women who have served time in prisons; that the crime of rape remains a crime that cannot be recorded as being committed by a woman; and that he will

consider whether the new risk assessment meets those requirements.

Keith Brown: In relation to the policy review and its outcome, both Pauline McNeill and Russell Findlay have the ability to question that in detail, as members of the Criminal Justice Committee as well as the Parliament.

I confirm to Pauline McNeill that a rights-based approach is taken now. The rights of everybody concerned are taken into account by the SPS. Again, the Criminal Justice Committee can go through the process of inviting the SPS in to ask it about those issues. The approach that we have taken is rights based and assesses the risks that are involved.

As well as that, during the course of the consultation that was undertaken as part of the current review, prisoners, including women prisoners, were consulted on the process, so they will have fed into the outcome of the policy review.

Therefore, I am content with the process that is there just now and I think that the SPS has a tremendous track record. Of course, I want to look at what the policy review comes back with, as will Pauline McNeill and the Criminal Justice Committee. At that point, if we remain dissatisfied, we can ask further questions. I am not dissatisfied—I trust the SPS to do what it is doing in this area, and its track record has shown that it is more than capable of assessing the risks.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes this item of business. We will have a brief pause before we move to the next item of business.

Point of Order

15:02

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would like to raise a serious concern that proper parliamentary procedure has not been followed ahead of today's Conservative Party debates.

As you might know, members across the chamber, outwith the Conservative Party, did not have official advance sight of the second of today's party business debates until after 1 pm yesterday, which was late in the parliamentary working day. We were informed of the topic of the debate only when a pre-prepared briefing from Scottish Land & Estates and the Scottish Association of Landlords landed in members' inboxes at 3.40 pm the day before.

Further, the Conservative Party appears to have issued a press release to the media containing details of today's motion before that motion was agreed by the Parliamentary Bureau. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Members, please listen to Ms Roddick with a degree of respect.

Emma Roddick: That the Conservative Party thought it appropriate to communicate parliamentary business to landlord lobby groups and the press before it did so to the Parliament is a matter of profound concern. Indeed, given that the Tory member Stephen Kerr has previously stated in the chamber that it is

"a matter of fundamental respect to the Scottish Parliament"—*[Official Report, 15 December 2022; c 29.]*

that business is communicated first to the Presiding Officer and members—as opposed to the media or interested stakeholders—it is only appropriate that I raise this point of order and request an apology from the Scottish Conservatives, so that proper democratic process and the integrity of the Scottish Parliament are not further undermined.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I thank Ms Roddick for advance notice of her point of order. Although guidance determines that the Government must respect the place of Parliament when making announcements, there is no formal arrangement in relation to Opposition parties. I can inform members that there was a delay on one of the motions being circulated while issues of admissibility were considered. However, as a matter of courtesy and respect, it would have been preferable had the details of the debates not appeared in the public domain before the wider Parliament was informed of the topics.

Homelessness

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-07613, in the name of Miles Briggs, on the homelessness emergency. I invite members who wish to participate to press their request-to-speak button now or as soon as possible.

15:05

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): It is regrettable that, once again, it is only because of Opposition debating time that Parliament is able to debate the crisis that is faced by individuals and families across Scotland today.

Sometimes in politics, the Government of the day needs a wake-up call and ministers need to pause and understand that the Government is failing to deliver on its outcomes and is failing the people of Scotland. One such example is the drug deaths crisis that our country is facing. As the health spokesman for the Conservatives, I led debate after debate in the chamber—at a time when the cabinet secretary was the health secretary—and warned ministers that they needed to stop and understand where drug deaths in this country had escalated to and to understand the crisis that was being faced by individuals, families and drug services across our country.

That warning fell on deaf ears as ministers parroted out the same lines, saying that everything was fine and that the Opposition parties were wrong—very much like the Scottish Government's amendment to today's motion does. However, the reality on the ground was very different, the result being that we now see a record number of our fellow Scots dying drug-related deaths, which has escalated year on year under this Government. After Scottish National Party ministers cut the drugs budget, and following outrage from the public, the First Minister accepted that SNP ministers had taken their "eye off the ball" and they were finally forced to pause and declare a public health emergency.

I am sorry to say that the same is the case today for homeless people in Scotland with the housing emergency that our country faces. After 15 years of the SNP in office, it is clear that we are facing a homeless emergency and a housing crisis. It is not only the Scottish Conservatives who are saying that and calling for action; Shelter Scotland has repeatedly called on ministers to declare a housing emergency.

I thank the organisations, including Shelter Scotland, that have provided helpful briefings ahead of today's debate, and I also thank them for

the life-saving work that they undertake across all our communities, particularly here, in the capital.

It is no exaggeration to say that the SNP-Green Government is presiding over a national housing crisis. Although much of the media attention recently has focused, understandably, on SNP-Green ministers' abject failures in health and education, the housing emergency has, for too long, gone under the radar. However, it is very real and it demands urgent Government action.

I believe that it is completely unacceptable that, in Scotland today, 47,000 people are currently registered as homeless and a third of a million Scots, including close to 100,000 children—I ask members to just think about that—and more than 24,000 disabled people, are on social housing waiting lists. There are also more than 600 armed service veterans registered as homeless, which should embarrass us all as a nation but should also, which is more important, shame the SNP-Green Government into action.

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): On the issue of being shamed and taking responsibility, does the member accept that the principal responsibility for armed forces veterans lies with the United Kingdom Government and the Ministry of Defence?

Miles Briggs: The responsibility for housing lies with the member's party and the Scottish Government. That is what this debate is all about.

Tragically, last year, we saw one of the highest numbers of deaths among people experiencing homelessness. Since the SNP Government took office, it has failed to meet all of its home-building targets. There is little hope of the situation improving, given that John Swinney's most recent budget outlined an additional £170 million cut in the housing budget. Shelter Scotland said:

"We are deeply concerned at the significant 16% cut to the housing budget in 2023/24, which has the potential to completely derail the Scottish Government's ability to reduce housing need in this parliamentary term."

On top of that, the Government's policy interventions have been counterproductive in the housing sector and will be damaging for tenants in the long term by ultimately reducing private rental stock, which will lead to housing developments being paused or shelved. It all adds up to a perfect storm, and it cannot be allowed to continue.

In Scotland today, every 18 minutes a household becomes homeless. Last year, in Scotland, 13,945 households were living in temporary accommodation, with 14,372 children being made homeless last year. That needs to change, and it starts with ministers accepting that they have failed to deliver solutions over the 15 years that they have been in office.

The housing emergency in Scotland has never been about houses; it is about people. It is about the young family that is renting a run-down flat and wondering whether they will ever be able to afford a home of their own. It is about the record number of children in Scotland today who are living in emergency temporary accommodation, forced to change schools every time that they move. It is about the failure of the SNP-Green Government to meet its affordable home targets. It is about the need for a Scottish Government that, at the very least, acknowledges the housing emergency and the need for an all-Government approach to start developing solutions.

The housing policy decisions taken by the SNP-Green Government are making the housing emergency in Scotland worse. It is time for it to pause and reflect on the fact that Scotland faces a housing emergency. It is also time for the Parliament to act collectively to save lives and to work to give everyone in Scotland the safe homes that they deserve.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the large number of homeless people in Scotland, people in temporary accommodation and people on social housing waiting lists; expresses particular concern at the number of vulnerable people in these categories, such as veterans, children and disabled people, and calls on the Scottish Government to declare a homeless emergency and to prioritise finding suitable accommodation for people in need.

15:11

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison): We would have thought from Miles Briggs's speech that the Tory cost of living crisis has no impact on people's ability to afford their home or, indeed, on the increase in homelessness. The fact that there was no reference to the cost of living crisis really tells members everything they need to know about the motivation for the debate.

It is a national priority of the Scottish Government to tackle homelessness, end rough sleeping and transform temporary housing. Our ambition is to ensure that everyone has a safe and warm place to call home. I am proud that this country has some of the strongest homelessness legislation in the world for people who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness, and we are going further. Local authorities already have a legal duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is at risk of homelessness, and people have access to permanent accommodation in law. We also announced last week that we will introduce prevention duties in our forthcoming housing bill, and we will introduce a right to housing in our planned human rights legislation.

Our proposals for a human rights bill will seek to incorporate the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate housing, as far as that is possible within devolved competence. Ensuring that people are aware of their rights and when to exercise them is an important part of building the Scotland that we want.

We also propose new duties on public bodies to ask and act to prevent homelessness so that the prevention of homelessness is key and the risk of homelessness is acted on regardless of the service first approached. That is key to our no-wrong-door approach. Taking a joined-up and early intervention approach aims to strengthen existing practice, improve consistency and deliver long-term savings and benefits to services, as well as to reduce instances of homelessness.

Let me turn to temporary accommodation. Although the latest statistics show that the use of temporary accommodation has gone down in 20 local authority areas, I am well aware that there are far too many households in temporary accommodation at the moment. The majority of such households are in council or housing association homes, while two thirds of families with children who are in temporary accommodation are in social rented homes. I am particularly concerned at the increase in the number of children in temporary accommodation. However, the Scottish Government is firmly committed to reducing that number.

That is why we established an expert task and finish group, chaired by Shelter Scotland—to whose work I also pay tribute—and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers. The group is expected to deliver its final report next month. The report will make recommendations on homelessness services, social housing and managing the current stock. The group will propose innovative ways in which to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation and the length of time that households spend in it. That will enable us to support the areas that have challenges and ensure that they can learn from others that have made progress.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): The simple question is this: why are so many people in temporary accommodation, and why are they in it for so long? We should already know the answer to that.

Shona Robison: A lot of work has been done to get underneath why people end up in temporary accommodation. There are multiple reasons for that. One reason for the increase has been the Covid pandemic, during which people were taken into temporary accommodation. There was a big

jump in the use of temporary accommodation for all the reasons that we understand.

The cost of living crisis is, without a doubt, having an impact, and we also need to get the supply right. The member will be aware of the pause in the construction industry's work and that the costs of inflation, which affects everything from materials to labour, have put pressure on projects.

However, we have maintained our commitments to deliver 110,000 homes by 2032 and to invest £3.5 billion over the current parliamentary session. We are working with partners to ensure not just the supply of new builds but the acquisition of existing off-market properties, which can help in moving people into settled accommodation.

In the time that I have left, I want to talk about the actions that we have taken since receiving, in 2018, the recommendations of our homelessness and rough sleeping action group. We accepted those recommendations in full, and they informed our ending homelessness together action plan, which was published in 2018 and refreshed in 2020. The plan is supported by stakeholders and ensures that we work in partnership to reduce and prevent homelessness. We are doing what they have asked us to do.

We are making good progress. The number of people who are sleeping rough in Scotland continues to fall, we have taken important steps towards strengthening rights for tenants and preventing homelessness, and we are leading the way in the delivery of affordable homes—we are delivering far more than are being delivered anywhere else on these islands.

When homelessness occurs, the Scottish Government continues to promote a housing-led approach, with a focus on rapidly rehousing people in settled accommodation. We are providing local authorities with £52.5 million for rapid rehousing and housing first programmes to ensure that people are given a settled place to live as soon as possible. Our actions are backed by funding to 2025-26 of more than £100 million, which covers two action plans.

I am well aware that the current cost of living crisis places people at more risk of homelessness. That is why the Government took action to support people in the rented sector through our Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022, which I am sure we will talk about more in the next debate. We have also taken other actions, which I will touch on in my closing speech.

No one in Scotland should be at risk of homelessness, so we will do all that we can to prevent it and support people. That is also the case for people who are at risk of destitution because of their immigration status. It is very disturbing that the UK Government does not allow

people with no recourse to public funds to access homelessness support and other essential services. That could be changed urgently, and I urge the UK Government to do that.

I move amendment S6M-07613.2, to leave out from “expresses” to end and insert:

“shares concern at all people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, which is why tackling homelessness is a national priority through the joint Scottish Government/COSLA Ending Homelessness Together action plan; acknowledges that a Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group, co-chaired by Shelter Scotland and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers, has been established with the aim of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation; notes that the Scottish Government has delivered 115,558 affordable homes since 2007, of which, over 81,300 were for social rent, including 20,520 council homes; notes the Scottish Government's intention to legislate on both homelessness prevention and the right to housing in this parliamentary session; regrets that the UK Government's mismanagement of the economy has caused increased inflation and significant rises in energy and basic day-to-day living costs, which has led to a cost of living crisis affecting most households that has a disproportionate impact on those on the lowest incomes, and calls on the UK Government to use all the powers at its disposal to tackle the cost of living crisis on the scale required, remove the so-called bedroom tax and benefit cap, increase the Local Housing Allowance, which, as of 2023-24, has been frozen for the third year, and change the no recourse to public funds rules to allow all people, regardless of their nationality, to access homelessness support.”

15:17

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): For the purposes of this debate and the following debate, I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests, which shows that I am the owner of a private rented property in the North Lanarkshire Council area.

We welcome today's debate on Scotland's homelessness emergency and we will support the motion at decision time.

Last February, when the cabinet secretary led a debate on the prevention of homelessness duties, she spoke about our world-leading legislation, the £100 million ending homelessness together fund and the refreshed action plan. However, since then, the situation has become worse. The number of housing applications is up, as is the number of children in temporary accommodation. Families simply want the right to safe, secure and affordable housing that provides the stability that they need for a normal work, school and family life. Instead, they are going without that most basic need.

During last year's debate, countless colleagues raised the issue of council budget cuts, which affect councils' ability to tackle the crisis. Those decisions have consequences.

Here in Edinburgh, where homelessness is at its worst in terms of gross numbers, the council is running out of road to deal with the crisis. Last November, it reported a projected homelessness gap of £19 million, which will double year on year. Today, Ewan Aitken, the chief executive of Cyrenians, reports that the number of people rough sleeping in Edinburgh is back to 30 to 40 a night.

Shona Robison: The member raises an important point. Does he recognise that that increase is driven, in large part, by people who are destitute but have no recourse to public funds? We need to resolve that issue. The UK Government has to help resolve that matter, too. Unfortunately, a number of people to whom that increase relates are asylum seekers and people with no recourse to public funds, so we need to sort that.

Mark Griffin: That is clearly an area that needs sorted. The cabinet secretary will know from her time as a member on the Social Security Committee in the previous session of Parliament that the Labour Party is firmly committed to reform the position on no recourse to public funds, especially when it comes to wider social security. If that issue is a contributing factor, it needs to be dealt with urgently. However, it is clearly not the only factor and other people who are part of that increasing number are rough sleeping.

A third of people who are in temporary accommodation across this country are in this city and they stay in such accommodation for almost a year. Further afield, a number that is equivalent to the whole population of Stirling made a homelessness application last year, and the number of children who are included in those applications—about 13,000—is the same as the number of children in St Andrews. I note the figures on housing supply in the cabinet secretary's amendment; I am sure that we will touch on that more in the next debate.

In short, I agree with my colleague Miles Briggs that the Government has taken its eye off the ball on housing. Last week's response from the Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights confirmed that the Government has run out of steam, with neither the will nor the skill to tackle the homelessness emergency. The ban through which the Government claims to deliver new homelessness duties, including on itself, was used to pass the rent freeze and evictions moratorium legislation, which further delayed the housing bill into the autumn.

Our amendment calls on the Government to get serious on homelessness by designating

“a single housing minister with overall and direct responsibility for tackling Scotland's housing emergency and”

meeting people's

“housing needs”.

That call is backed by the social sector, the house building industry and a wide range of those with an interest in the sector. The Government must reprioritise housing and homelessness because the current arrangements are not delivering.

Those prevention duties, which are needed now, must also apply to the Government, because it seems to be contributing to homelessness. This is a Government that thought that £2,500 was a reasonable level of arrears for which to evict someone, and that, four months ago, announced an extension to the eligibility for the tenant grant fund but refused to renew funding for it and updated the rules only two weeks ago. When the statistics show that 14 councils have spent upwards of their allocation and 19 have less than 10 per cent remaining, who then does that fund help to keep a roof over their heads?

Time and again, the Government has shown that it does not have the capacity for, and is not serious about, this emergency. It even seeks to delete the word “emergency” from today's motion.

Another issue that I raised with the minister during the passage of the Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Bill—we met and discussed it—was that of in situ purchases. I feel that that issue is urgent and that we need to see progress made on it. Landlords, their agencies and their representatives keep telling us that they are looking to sell up, so why are grant rules on the affordable housing supply programme not designed to acquire those tenancies and stock, which could help landlords seek an exit and keep people in a home, too?

Shona Robison: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that he is just winding up; he is beyond his time already.

Mark Griffin: I would be happy to meet the Government again, particularly to talk about that issue.

The case remains that that requires for a home to be made vacant and, for that to be achieved, someone is likely to be made homeless.

I realise that I have fast run out of time. Fundamentally, councils need the funding to tackle the issue properly.

I move amendment S6M-07613.1, to insert at end:

“; notes that the continued lack of sufficient funds for local authorities granted by the Scottish Government is having a direct effect on the ability of councils to meaningfully tackle the housing emergency in Scotland; urges the Scottish Government to designate a single housing minister with overall and direct responsibility for tackling Scotland’s housing emergency and addressing the housing needs of people in Scotland, and calls on the Scottish Government to use all the policy levers at its disposal to tackle this crisis, including reversing the delay to its proposed Housing Bill, urgently extending and revamping the Home Owners’ Support Fund Mortgage to Shared Equity scheme, and making changes to its affordable housing supply programme grant rules to facilitate the purchases of properties with tenants in-situ to expand stock and prevent further homelessness.”

15:24

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): This is a spaghetti soup of a plan—it talks about action plans, action groups, task and finish groups, rights to a home, joined-up work and of there being no wrong door. The reality is that we have a crisis and the Government’s slick presentation of policy does not build any new homes.

To be fair, new housing has been built in my constituency, in Guardbridge, Gauldry and St Monans. However, those were the first developments of their type for some time and it hides the reality that the Government is in trouble on meeting its housing targets. I think that the minister indicated in her contribution that she is behind the pace of progress that is needed. The Scottish Federation Of Housing Associations rightly pointed out that there has been a 16 per cent cut in new builds and that, so far, only 5,000 homes are being built. We need to get to—

Shona Robison: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Willie Rennie: I will finish my point first. We need to build 110,000 homes by 2032. It is reckoned that, by 2026, we need to build 38,000, and we are not on track for any of that.

Shona Robison: The sector will also have told Willie Rennie that the key issues are Covid recovery, the cost of materials and labour, Brexit and, indeed, inflation, which is running rampant. I am sure that the sector has told him that, because that is what it told me. Those are the key issues.

Willie Rennie: Yes, of course, but the Government needs to build the houses or people will not get the homes, so what action will the cabinet secretary take to address that? Rather than just complaining about somebody else making mistakes elsewhere, what action will she take, other than the soundbites and slogans that she gave me earlier, especially when she is considering making a £112 million cut to the capital budget to build homes? That is not a

response to all the issues that she rightly identified in her contribution.

The action that the Government has taken as a result of the crisis does not match the problems that we are facing, because demand is huge. I have seen people living in suspended animation for years on end, desperate for a home. They do not have enough points—they might have 40 or 50 points, which is nowhere near the 100 points that are needed, although even those on 100 points do not get a home. Thousands of people are in that situation for years on end. That is no way to live a life or build a family.

When we consider the number of children in temporary accommodation, we see life in suspension. Those numbers have doubled. People can wait for up to two years in temporary accommodation, so I was not surprised that Shelter Scotland took Fife Council to court in Kirkcaldy last year. It was infuriated that families were in that position for so long. It succeeded in that case and housing in Fife is now in utter chaos. There is a desperate need to get new temporary accommodation because all the temporary accommodation that was previously available has been turned into permanent accommodation. That is a good result for the affected families, but the situation will be a challenge for everybody else. However, what was the Government’s response? There has been nothing; there has not been one response to that successful court case.

We need a Government that gets real about the problems with housing in this country. Unlike everybody in the chamber, who has a home, people out there are desperate to get something. The situation has been going on and building up for years on end. What is the Government’s response? The response is a £112 million cut to the capital fund to build homes. The Government is way behind its target to build 110,000 homes by 2032, but we would not think that from the cabinet secretary’s response. I think that she needs to get real.

15:28

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): It is undeniable that we face a housing emergency. There can be no dispute that the situation has spiralled out of control under the SNP-Green Government. Since Nicola Sturgeon came to power, the number of households living in temporary accommodation has increased from just over 10,000 to almost 14,000.

In the past year, the number of both homeless households and homeless applications in Scotland have increased by 3 per cent, and applications are taking an average of 19 days to be assessed.

However, the Government is cutting local government funding.

After they are eventually processed, many homeless families in my Lothian region are sent 150 miles away to emergency accommodation in Inverness. There are almost 100,000 children on Scotland's social housing waiting lists. That is 21st century SNP Scotland. That number is simply unacceptable.

Currently, more than 24,000 people with disabilities are on social housing waiting lists. The longest that a person with a disability has been on a waiting list is 60 years—yes, 60 years. A freedom of information response from the City of Edinburgh Council read:

"The longest waiting time a self-assessed disabled applicant has had on the common housing register for social housing is from 1 Mar 1963."

We can call that an emergency—or perhaps even worse—and an embarrassment to the Government. The Government should be ashamed. It should be ashamed that each of those numbers represents an individual or a household that has been let down. It should be ashamed that they represent a staggering number of children who do not enjoy the safety and security of a stable and warm home, and it should be ashamed that it is seemingly doing nothing to fix that. Warm words do not build houses.

Shona Robison: Will Jeremy Balfour take an intervention?

Jeremy Balfour: I am afraid that I do not have time.

Shona Robison: No, I bet that you do not.

Jeremy Balfour: This is not a new emergency. Yet again, we have heard the cabinet secretary blaming everybody but herself and her Government. The writing has been on the wall for a number of years. The Government has consistently missed its house building targets and allowed the supply of quality affordable housing to plummet during its time in power.

I am afraid that the outlook for the near future is not much better. With the introduction—and now the extension—of rent control measures, we are already seeing the knock-on effects of policies that prevent landlords from renting out their properties. I am already hearing from a number of stakeholders in my Lothian region—particularly in Edinburgh—that they can no longer rent out their properties as a viable option and that they will sell. That will further reduce the number of homes available for those who need them.

Let us be clear: those who are bearing the cost of those policies are not wealthy companies that could potentially afford a price freeze; those who

are bearing the cost are the smaller-scale landlords, who simply cannot afford to continue renting out their properties while losing money, and the most vulnerable in our society, who cannot find a stable place to live due to a shrinking market.

I hope that the Scottish Government will wake up and take a long, hard look at itself, because the responsibility for the emergency lies squarely at its feet only, and not those of anyone else.

15:32

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Many will know that I have a personal interest in the topic of homelessness and a lived understanding of it and how important it is that we tackle it.

I know that people lose a lot when they are homeless—that could be possessions, security or even their sense of self—but homelessness is not a given; it is a symptom of something else and evidence that someone has fallen through a net. Maybe they had to wait six weeks to get their first universal credit payment. Maybe they lost their job due to shameful UK employment rights, or maybe they were failed by insecure housing. Despite what the Tories will try to tell us later today, that cannot be addressed solely by building more homes.

Nonetheless, the Scottish Government is building more homes. It has delivered nearly 113,000 affordable homes since 2007, and it has committed to £3.5 billion of spending on the affordable housing supply programme. However, all that is made harder when our Conservative colleagues insist on propping up a UK Government that has just cut our capital spend on housing by 3.4 per cent in real terms.

More important, the SNP Government is taking a progressive approach to tackling homelessness by looking at the drivers and preventative measures; increasing affordable housing availability by tackling the loss of residential properties to holiday lets and second homes; keeping people in the homes that they already have; and supporting people who are in poverty or are at risk of ending up in poverty.

We have recently seen some great steps forward being taken in the Parliament. There was licensing for short-term lets, which are eating up housing in communities across my region, such as many of those on Skye. Conservatives voted against that. There was the rent freeze, which Conservatives voted against, and there was a moratorium on evictions, which the Conservatives voted against.

Miles Briggs: Does Emma Roddick realise that both pieces of legislation had to be challenged by bodies outside the Parliament and that the Government has had to delay another piece of legislation by six months because it is unworkable for councils?

Emma Roddick: I think that the period of time between now and when the housing bill is introduced is exactly why emergency legislation was brought forward. It is a shame that the Conservatives would not support that interim measure, which we know is already supporting people to stay in the houses that they have.

We must be clear that the biggest drivers of poverty today—housing costs and food costs—are linked to inflation, which has been caused by reckless UK Government decisions. My constituents are paying the price—and it is a steep one—for preposterous levels of Tory economic mismanagement. Inflation is eating up the Scottish Government's budget and the budgets of households across the country, no matter how well off they were just a year ago.

With the best will in the world, that cannot be entirely undone by a devolved Government, especially one that is up against an increasingly litigious Whitehall that stands ready to knock back legislation that it does not like. We are all getting used to that, and it seems almost normal but, if we take a step back, we realise that it is a ridiculous concept that we are making progressive decisions here, such as those on the rent freeze, the new deal for tenants and anti-poverty measures that include the Scottish child payment, within a financial context that has been set by a right-wing Tory Government elsewhere, whose ideas Scotland has overwhelmingly voted down over and over again. It is a nonsense. At this point, the UK looks like a rejected idea for a political dystopian novel.

Everything that we do comes with a "but". Here in Scotland, the average first-time buyer spends around £100,000 less for a property than is the case in England, but mortgage rates rose substantially after the UK Government's mini-budget last year. The Scottish Government is tackling poverty through the Scottish child payment, the welfare fund and more, but the UK Tories insist on a five-week wait for universal credit, more sanctions than ever before, a benefit cap and a penalty for being under 25.

The Scottish Government is introducing duties to prevent homelessness, but UK Government decisions keep pushing folk towards it by making life more expensive and poverty harder to avoid.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Ms Roddick, I ask you to bring your remarks to a close, because your time is up.

Emma Roddick: However bold and ambitious our housing policy is, Scotland is at the mercy of UK Government decisions, and that only reinforces the urgent need for independence.

15:37

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I begin by thanking all those people across Scotland who work day after day and night after night to prevent homelessness and support those who are at risk of homelessness or who are homeless. In particular, I thank Crisis and Shelter, which do such work and have provided briefings in advance of today's debate.

It is important to acknowledge just how connected having and staying in a home is to so many other aspects of life, including health and wellbeing, social care and employment. Tackling homelessness is not just about providing homes.

We have a problem with homelessness in Scotland. I do not think that anyone here is trying to deny that. It should be obvious that the pandemic and the current cost crisis have certainly not helped, but it is clear that the problem is not new. Indeed, Shelter says explicitly:

"the housing emergency has been with us since long before the Covid pandemic hit and long before the current cost-of-living crisis".

Decades of political and economic choices have led us to where we are today.

I know that I am not alone in thinking that the Tories have cynically appropriated the Shelter campaign. Miles Briggs has called on the cabinet secretary to

"acknowledge the scale of the problem ... and outline immediate plans to tackle homelessness and accelerate homebuilding".

However, if we look at what Shelter's plan actually says, it is quite clear. It says:

"Any effort to address the housing needs of people in Scotland will work best if the UK Government also uses its powers to improve the benefits system and tackle energy prices."

Shelter has called for all subsidy for home ownership projects and mid-market rent to be ended. The plan says that we should

"Redirect all subsidy from the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme exclusively to homes for social rent. Public subsidy should only go to social housing".

Shelter is saying that the more than £1 billion of investment that has been earmarked for private developers and home ownership support should all go to the not-for-profit sector. In Shelter's words:

“At a time when the costs of delivering social housing have risen dramatically it can no longer be justified to divert finite public subsidy to benefit private sector developers.”

Shelter’s campaign also highlights the damage to our housing supply that has been done by the right to buy, which is the flagship Tory policy that has been supported by successive Westminster Governments. That policy removed nearly 500,000 homes from the social sector. Shelter is calling for the appropriation of empty homes in the private sector, so that they can be directed to people in need.

Like Shelter, I believe that homes should be for living in, not for profit. I do not think that anyone thinks that the Conservative Party genuinely believes that. I have yet to hear anyone in the party back all of Shelter’s proposals.

Let us look at how the Conservative UK Government has exacerbated the issue for more than a decade. Its attack on social security—the bedroom tax, the benefit cap, cuts to universal credit, the local housing allowance freeze, and so much more—its relentless campaign of othering and marginalising people seeking asylum, and its continued opposition to dealing with the loss of homes to holiday lets or the second homes market all paint a very clear picture of Tory priorities for society. While claiming to care about the homelessness crisis, the Tories have consistently acted in ways that make it worse.

What we need is action—and that is what the Scottish Greens, through the Bute house agreement with the Scottish Government, are taking and will continue to take. We will tackle empty homes and increase the availability of homes in rural areas, and we will embed homelessness prevention and housing rights in law. We are already delivering housing first with local authorities and protecting people from eviction and extortionate rent hikes—and there is more to come.

Yes, we have our work cut out for us. No, none of this will be easy. However, it is right that we work to deliver homes for living in, not homes for profit, and that we tackle homelessness in the round, ensuring that all the elements of support are accessible and available to those who need them. I do not think that the Conservative Party can say the same.

15:41

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Homelessness is an issue that unfortunately affects people and families across every city, town and village in Scotland. As we heard from the cabinet secretary, it is an objective of the Scottish Government for everyone in this

country to have a safe, warm and affordable home that meets their requirements.

The numbers that we have heard are indeed stark. Crisis, which is the national charity for people experiencing homelessness, received 35,230 applications for assistance from homeless households in 2021-22. A few months ago, Crisis conducted a survey that firmly highlighted the role that the cost of living crisis has played in exacerbating the homelessness issue that we are speaking about today. The survey found that almost half of respondents had mortgage or rent increases in the previous 12 months and that just under 10 per cent of low-income renters in Scotland are behind on their rent. Perhaps most shockingly, a third of respondents in Scotland acknowledged that they will likely need to skip meals to keep up with housing costs.

The cost of living crisis is affecting everyone, but its disproportionate impact on those on the lowest incomes must be highlighted. That includes tenants who are already struggling with housing costs, people who are out of work and people who are unable to work for reasons outwith their control. People in such households already find it very hard to manage rising bills, so any further financial pressure will no doubt push more people towards homelessness.

The simple fact is that all of us in this country are paying the price for grotesque economic mismanagement at the hands of the Tory Government in Westminster. Tory members will say that I am just looking for someone else to blame, but I am talking about the cold, hard facts. I have to give credit to the Conservative Party for bringing this debate to the chamber, because it cannot be accused of playing on safe ground.

Inflation has soared to its highest level in nearly 40 years, hitting 10.5 per cent in December. Brexit added almost £6 billion to UK food bills in the two years to the end of 2021, disproportionately affecting the poorest households. I see that today Mark Carney was again criticising the effect of the Brexit decision on the UK economy. In response to the autumn statement last November, the Institute for Fiscal Studies noted that the UK was now

“reaping the costs of a long-term failure to grow the economy”,

which was worsened by a

“series of economic own goals”

by the UK Government.

Although I could continue to list ways in which we are all suffering due to Tory economic mismanagement, I will instead comment on ways that the Scottish Government has yet again had to mitigate the economic woes inflicted on us.

People renting their homes will be among the hardest hit. Tenants, especially in the private rented sector, spend a greater proportion of their income on housing than people who own their homes. As we have heard, the Scottish Government took decisive action, legislated accordingly and introduced a rent freeze and a moratorium on evictions. The aim of that bill was to protect tenants during the cost crisis. I should add that the Tories were the only party in the Parliament to vote against the introduction of those measures. In addition, the Scottish Government extended the eligibility criteria for the tenant grant fund, which allows local authorities to use any remaining funds to help households who are in arrears as a result of the cost of living crisis.

Other measures include the £84 million in the budget for discretionary housing payments, to directly mitigate the impact of UK Government policies such as the bedroom tax. The Scottish Government's investment of £2.6 million to mitigate the benefit cap is helping more than 4,000 families meet their housing costs.

All that is in addition to policies such as the Scottish child payment, which will make a great difference to many of my constituents in Coatbridge and Chryston.

It is ironic that I am coming up to my four minutes, as I still have loads to say about mitigating—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that you will have to save that for another day, Mr MacGregor, because you need to conclude.

Fulton MacGregor: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Try as the Scottish Government might to combat poverty and homelessness, its actions are consistently undermined by the UK Government's frankly cruel welfare policies, which actively push people into poverty. We are at the mercy of UK Government decisions, and it is my view and, it seems, increasingly that of many others, that that reinforces—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr MacGregor, I had asked you to conclude.

Fulton MacGregor: The situation reinforces the urgent need for independence.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you.

I advise members that we have no time in hand.

15:45

Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con): Let me make this clear from the outset of my speech: whatever words the SNP Government chooses to use to make the situation sound better than it is,

Scotland is in a housing emergency, on its watch. Some 330,000 Scots, including nearly 100,000 children, are stuck on social housing waiting lists; there are almost 47,000 homeless people, nationally; and there are almost 14,000 households in temporary accommodation, according to Scottish Government figures.

Those numbers are so big that they are hard to comprehend, never mind tackle, but behind every one of those figures are real people. Those people include some of the most vulnerable in our society, such as hundreds of veterans and many disabled people, who have been forced on to the street. They include struggling families who need urgent help to make ends meet. They include young children who are growing up without a stable home and a roof over their heads.

The most worrying thing is that the number of people who need help is rising. The situation is getting worse, not better. The number of homelessness applications from adults and children is rising, and applications are taking longer to deal with. The number of homeless people dying has gone up by an estimated 50 per cent. That is not just a housing emergency; it is a national tragedy.

All that is happening while more than 55,000 domestic properties across Scotland lie unoccupied. Homes that could be in use are lying empty. That should be a wake-up call to SNP ministers that something is deeply wrong with their approach.

Shona Robison: Will the member give way?

Sharon Dowey: Will I get the time back, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that there is no time in hand; you would have to absorb the intervention.

Sharon Dowey: I am sorry, I will not take the intervention.

The failure is the consequence of years of missing affordable homes targets and broken promises to build enough homes for the social rented sector. It is what happens when the SNP Government takes its eye off the ball, just as it did with Scotland's drug death crisis. Those national tragedies are linked.

For all its talk of tackling poverty, the SNP Government has forgotten so many of Scotland's most deprived communities and most vulnerable people. SNP ministers live in a Holyrood bubble that seems to ignore the reality of what happens in working-class communities across Scotland.

The First Minister grew up in Ayrshire, but she has not done anywhere near enough to help the people who still live there. Shelter Scotland has

said that Nicola Sturgeon should spearhead a Scottish housing emergency action plan. She must listen.

However, action cannot stop at just another plan, strategy or national mission. The SNP Government needs to do more than get a few good headlines. A nice press release will not put a roof over anyone's head. Public relations soundbites will not give people the homes that they deserve and need.

For once, the Government needs to commit to a clear target and actually deliver it. We need a realistic target, with a clear, well-funded, smart plan to deliver it. The plan must produce more homes, especially affordable homes and social housing. It must reduce the bureaucratic hurdles and the issues that people face when they try to build. It must slash the red tape that prevents empty business premises in some areas from becoming good-quality homes. It must produce a framework to bring long-term unoccupied properties back into use.

Most of all, the Government must support Miles Briggs's motion and treat this dire situation as a housing emergency.

15:49

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): The Scottish Government's vision is for everyone to have a safe, warm and affordable home that meets their needs. Since 2007, the SNP in Government has built more than 110,000 affordable homes, and is working towards delivering another 110,000 by 2032. In recent years, we have invested millions to prioritise settled accommodation for all and introduced rapid rehousing transition plans.

Councils have a duty to provide advice and temporary accommodation to anyone who is experiencing or threatened with homelessness. Although there is a large number of homeless people in Scotland, we should note the important statistic that, 20 years ago, 10 per cent of applicants had been rough sleeping the night before making their homelessness application, but last year, that figure was down to 4 per cent. That is welcome progress, but we cannot be complacent.

Scotland has powerful protections in place for people who are experiencing homelessness, but prevention is often best, and the best way to end homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. The Scottish Government will introduce new prevention duties in its forthcoming housing bill, which I hope all members will support.

That is the SNP's record; now let us look at the Tories' record. Last week, Miles Briggs highlighted

the ambition for affordable housing in national planning framework 4.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Collette Stevenson: No—I have no time in hand.

The Conservatives voted against that. When the Parliament approved the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, which abolished the right to buy in order to keep up to 15,500 homes in the social sector over the following decade, the Tories voted against it. In light of spiralling energy and food prices, the Scottish Government chose to implement a rent freeze to protect tenants and prevent homelessness, and the Tories voted against that, too.

Thankfully, the Tories are outnumbered by progressives in the Parliament but, unfortunately, Scotland also has a UK Tory Government that we did not vote for. It is a UK Government that vetoes Scottish Parliament laws and prioritises cutting taxes for the wealthy; it has destroyed the economy and let inflation run away, which will push more people into poverty.

To reduce homelessness, we must tackle poverty. Many employers in Scotland now pay the living wage, meaning that people earn enough to cover the cost of living. The UK Government has the power to make that the legal minimum wage, but it chooses not to exercise it. The Scottish Government introduced the Scottish child payment—a game changer in tackling child poverty—but then the UK Government cut universal credit. When the Tories introduced the bedroom tax, the SNP mitigated it, which means that the public purse in Scotland is paying the price of the UK Government's disgraceful decisions.

The Scottish Parliament can do only so much with one hand tied behind our back, so homelessness is a strange topic for the Conservatives to raise. The Tory UK Government's policies are causing misery and hardship for people across the country, and the Tories' voting record in this Parliament is loaded against supporting tenants and keeping people in their homes.

The Scottish Government will continue to invest in social and affordable housing and to mitigate the worst effects of the UK Government's policies, but the best way forward for Scotland is for this Parliament to have the full fiscal powers and levers that we need, so that we can get rid of Tory Governments that we do not vote for, end homelessness and build a fairer and more prosperous country. That can only be achieved with independence.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the closing speeches. I note that a member who participated in the debate is not in the chamber for the closing speeches, which is a discourtesy to all other members. I expect that member to be duly advised and to make an apology.

15:55

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): A warm, safe, affordable and accessible home is a human right but, as we have heard today, that is not the reality for too many people in Glasgow and across Scotland.

Glasgow has the fastest-increasing rate of homelessness in the country. Last year, there were nearly 7,000 homelessness applications to Glasgow City Council, and the situation has been getting worse every year since 2017. As the cost of living crisis drives more people into homelessness, I genuinely fear for the lives of people across the city, if the issue is not addressed. Indeed, as research from Crisis found, one third of respondents in Scotland will need to skip meals in order to keep up with housing costs this winter. People are being forced to choose between heating and eating. In Scotland in 2023, that is shameful.

Urgent action is needed, and that starts with making more homes available. There is simply not enough housing to meet demand. In response, the SNP has raided the house-building budget, thereby cutting off supply when we need it most. That is not good enough.

My region, Glasgow, has one of the longest waiting lists for housing in Scotland. In 2019, there were 20,000 people waiting for a home in the city, and—as Sharon Dowey noted—figures are consistently rising.

Although I appreciate the impact of Covid on construction, the truth is that not enough homes are being built to meet demand, which was a problem before Covid. We cannot address the issue by building fewer homes and, with the number of new homes being built having dropped by one third, I worry that people will be left out in the cold for years to come. We urgently need to get back on track. I agree with Willie Rennie that the action that is being taken does not address the challenge.

The Government must make good on its commitment to deliver affordable homes by 2032 and it must address the fact that we need homes for people, now. Ten years is a long time for anyone, but if a person does not have a roof over their head it can feel like a lifetime. For some people, it could well be a lifetime. Those people cannot afford to wait for the Government to get its act together.

The impact of the housing crisis is stark, but as Miles Briggs said, it is about people. We see that every day on our streets. Not having a roof over their head or living in inadequate housing robs a person of dignity and can lead to physical and mental ill health. People without homes struggle to access healthcare, have nowhere from which to register for a general practitioner and have no address from which to apply for work. Homelessness can even lead to early death: the life expectancy of a homeless woman is 43 years old. The loss of opportunity is devastating. I agree with my colleague Emma Roddick's characterisation that it is a symptom of failure.

Against that backdrop, incredible third sector organisations in Glasgow and across Scotland are stepping in to support people—Shelter Scotland, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, Housing Options Scotland, Living Rent and the Homeless Project Scotland, to name but a few. They work tirelessly to represent and organise tenants, to find homes and, in the case of the Homeless Project Scotland, to feed people. We are so lucky to have them all. I—like Maggie Chapman and others—want to record my thanks to them, although they, too, are struggling.

Sadly for one organisation in my region, the council and the SNP Government are far from helping; they are making things worse. The Homeless Project Scotland provides an invaluable service to people in Glasgow. I have visited it several times and have seen that for myself. I have been blown away by the work that it does and the people whom it helps. It has been trying for months to find premises to allow it to carry out its vital work, but so far the council has been difficult at best and obstructive at worst. It desperately needs a building. If people must rely on such services for food, the least that we can do is ensure that they eat their meals in dignity and in shelter.

Previously, I wrote to the First Minister about that, and I have repeatedly called on the Government and the council to do more to find premises for the project. I was concerned to learn that, far from helping, a spokesperson from the council has been quoted in various news outlets stating that Homeless Project Scotland has had three offers of accommodation but has rejected them. However, the project says that that is not true. I hope that all future correspondence on that matter will be honest and transparent.

Worse still, today Homeless Project Scotland has reported shocking news about more and more children queuing up—including some in prams. For more than a year, it has been doing its work outside. I again ask the cabinet secretary to act to find it a building so that the people whom it helps do not have to spend another night eating in the

cold. If the First Minister visits, she will see the work for herself. She will also see that it is helping more women, children and disabled people than before. As in all crises, people who face inequality are hit hardest—as Jeremy Balfour outlined.

The picture is bleak, but there is some good news. There are steps that the Scottish Government can take, and as is often the case, local activists, women, disabled people, homeless people and third sector organisations have the solutions. The Government must step up and tackle the housing crisis—as the motion in my colleague Mark Griffin’s name says. It must make the right to housing a reality by designating a single housing minister with direct responsibility for tackling the housing emergency.

The Government must reverse the delay to the proposed housing bill. It must embed women’s rights in all housing policy and strategy and take urgent action to ensure that accessible homes are delivered. Crucially, it must ensure that local authorities have the money that they need to meet their commitments and to address the blight of homelessness in regions including Glasgow and places across Scotland.

We must all work tirelessly to do that so that homelessness no longer exists and every person has a safe and secure affordable and accessible home. I and my Labour colleagues will do that; I hope that others across the chamber will do the same.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Shona Robison to wind up on behalf of the Scottish Government. You have up to five minutes, cabinet secretary.

16:00

Shona Robison: Unfortunately, this debate—and, probably, the next one—can be summed up by looking at some of the Tory speeches. They are essentially against anything, attacking everything, having no positive ideas and voting against every measure, including short-term lets, helping tenants to afford their homes, prevention of eviction and even the fourth national planning framework. Yet, the Tories come to the chamber and lecture us on poverty and deprivation. They have absolutely no self-awareness whatsoever.

Miles Briggs: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Shona Robison: I want to move on to the housing budget, because it is important, as I explained to Miles Briggs at the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee meeting last Tuesday. Unfortunately he obviously did not listen to the reality or to the facts—*[Interruption.]*—about the housing budget.

The housing budget remains the same, at £3.5 billion over the course of this Parliament. The profiling of that budget will vary from year to year. Willie Rennie is not correct that there has been a £112 million cut. There is a net decrease of £36.87 million, which is a 4.7 per cent net decrease on the previously published capital figure. That is mainly due to cuts in capital budgets from the UK Government and the challenges that those cuts bring.

However, as I set out to the LGHP Committee last Tuesday, that is being offset by financial transactions, with a £15 million transfer from the energy budget and income from charitable bonds. The £3.5 billion commitment for the housing budget remains the same over the course of this Parliament.

Miles Briggs: I do not think that the cabinet secretary’s own colleagues bought what she was saying at committee either, to be quite honest, so we need to make sure that we get more clarity on exactly why the Government thinks a cut is not a cut, when it certainly is.

However, I ask the cabinet secretary this. In relation to this debate, how bad do things have to get in Scotland for you to recognise that there is a homelessness emergency today?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that they need to speak through the chair.

Shona Robison: First, I am happy to provide any information about the housing budget. The £3.5 billion investment will remain a commitment over this session of Parliament.

I have never shied away from the fact that there are challenges, but not one Tory member has had the guts to address the cost of living crisis in this debate. They try to airbrush it out of every debate, but that does not wash. If we ask people out there, they know who is to blame for the financial circumstances that they face. It is the Tories, who are, ironically, sitting on the left of the chamber.

The other matter that I want to tackle is delivery. There is a stark contrast, if we look at the facts. Across the four years between 2018 and 2022, in Scotland 59 per cent more affordable homes have been built per head of population than were built in England. We have also delivered over nine times as many social rented homes per head of population. *[Interruption.]* I know that the Tories do not like to have their record on delivery exposed, but it is what it is. I know that there is a low bar, but we have nine times as many social rented homes per head of population, as well as per capita spending on affordable housing that is more than three times that of the UK Government, so I will take no lectures whatsoever from the Tories on affordable homes. *[Interruption.]* Yes, we have

more work to do to deliver more. We acknowledge that, but I will take no lectures from the Tories on the matter.

However, if the Tories want to know what they can do to be helpful, there are some practical things that they can do. They can have a word with their colleagues down south, because there are three areas where they could take action now that would absolutely help to move more money into addressing homelessness.

At the moment, we are having to make £83.73 million available to local authorities to spend on discretionary housing payments, with £69.68 million of that being used to fully mitigate the bedroom tax. That tax should be scrapped at source. I raised that issue with my UK Government ministerial colleagues just this morning, when I asked them, yet again, to scrap the bedroom tax at source, because that money could then be spent on addressing homelessness.

We have allocated £6.15 million to mitigate the benefit cap. Why do the Tories not scrap that, so that the money could be used for other purposes?

Finally, £7.9 million has been used to mitigate the damaging impact of the UK Government's welfare cuts, including the on-going freeze of local housing allowance rates. The Tory Government has frozen local housing allowance rates for three years, which is making it more difficult for tenants to afford their rent in all the areas that Tory MSPs represent, yet they have not mentioned that in the debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, you will need to conclude.

Shona Robison: Why do Tory members not have a word with their UK Government colleagues to get those things fixed? That would help the homelessness budget no end.

16:05

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I stand to support the motion in Miles Briggs's name, as the cries of, "Where's Willie?" ring out across the chamber. [*Laughter.*] I am sure that he will have a few words to say.

There is not much to be said that has not already been said in this short but important debate. Shelter Scotland said that it was delighted to see the debate being held in the Parliament because the motion reflects many of the concerns that it holds. That is something that some members ought to have reflected on before making their contributions. Despite the inevitable cries of whataboutery and "I will take no lectures" that we so often get from members on the Government benches when we talk about serious social issues such as homelessness, that is the

whole point of using our debating time in the chamber to address those issues.

I do not have a problem with saying that we are not in a safe space—none of us is when we talk about such issues, and we make no apologies for raising them in the chamber. We are using our precious time to debate housing and homelessness, which is why it is depressing that so few members are in the chamber to debate those issues with us.

There are an estimated 47,000 homeless people in Scotland. I also point out that there are 600 homeless veterans in Scotland. I do not disagree with Graeme Dey, who valiantly made his point that all levels of government are doing their very best for that cohort of people. The worst thing that the UK Government did was to sack Johnny Mercer as veterans minister and the best thing that it did was to reinstate him in that portfolio, because I believe that he is passionate about the subject. However, passionate as he is, he cannot magic up homes in Scotland that do not exist, which is the problem.

Of course, homelessness is not unique to Scotland, the UK or indeed the western world, but it is a problem that is felt acutely here due to its tragic consequences. National Records of Scotland reports that the homeless death rate in Scotland is 35.9 per million, which is more than double the rate in England. Of course, it is not a race to the bottom, but that statistic should concern us all. Drug misuse consistently accounts for more than half of Scotland's homeless deaths, which is a point that Miles Briggs made.

Members were right to point out that homelessness is a complex issue because poverty, addiction and some wider economic factors all play their parts in the scenarios in which some people find themselves. I accept that there are many issues and they are governed by both devolved and reserved competences, but it is simply wrong to say that homelessness is a new problem that has magicked itself up overnight. It is simply wrong to say that it is all Westminster's fault or all the Tories' fault. That is a very naive proposition because it does not admit that there is a problem in Scotland that has been a long time coming over successive years and under successive cabinet secretaries and Governments.

Equally, homelessness can happen to anyone. The idea that, somehow, only people who are on benefits or people in certain social classes or structures will end up in that scenario is wrong, because anyone—even well-paid professionals—can find themselves homeless. It can happen as a result of the break-up of a relationship, the loss of a job, a mental health breakdown or a person finding themselves with an addiction problem. Those challenges are not unique to any social

class. It is how we deal with those problems, or how we do not deal with them, that matters.

I admit that building new homes is not a magic bullet, but it is a good start. Shelter Scotland raised alarm bells as far back as August last year, when it told us that, due to drastic underfunding of local councils, it was having to turn homeless people away and that some of them were being sent to England for help. It pleaded for the First Minister's help and called on her to

"get a grip on the crisis".

Let us think about that language, because it is a crisis. Homelessness is not just about sleeping rough. As we have heard, there are huge numbers of people in temporary accommodation, couch surfing or relying on their friends to get by. The implications of that are huge. Homeless children miss an average of 55 days of school a year due to disruption, and homeless people are five times more likely to be admitted to a mental health facility and twice as likely to end up in an accident and emergency department. Further, we heard from members who spoke in the debate the shocking statistic that the average age of death for a homeless woman or man is just a few years higher than my age. That should shock us all.

However, the situation is fixable. Let us reflect on what happened when Covid landed upon us. Many of us were members of Parliament at the time. What did we do? We managed to clear the streets of homeless people in a week by offering safe sanctuary under the premise of our reaction to the pandemic. Everyone who wanted a roof over their head got one. Why did it take a pandemic to raise our collective willpower to get that fixed? Why were so many people turfed out into the streets at the end of the emergency? We are all shamed by the end of that scenario. The fact that there are homeless people out there right now who had a roof over their heads during the pandemic is a great source of shame for this Parliament.

We do not need to build new homes to deal with the situation. There are already homes out there. We have 67,000 unoccupied homes in Scotland.

Shona Robison: Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Greene: I do not have time.

I spoke to people from a housing association in Scotland who are baffled by the situation. They have excess stock, but they simply do not have the funding packages in place to refurbish them and get people into them. There are Ukrainian refugees living in boats and families living in bedsits, and that housing association told me that it has the necessary stock but the councils do not

have the money. That is the problem right there, in that one sentence.

The problems are piling up. The time that is taken for people to get out of temporary accommodation is increasing. The number of children in temporary accommodation is increasing. The number of people on social housing lists is increasing. People are entering the homelessness system and getting stuck in it, and there is a severe lack of available housing. If that is not an emergency that is worth debating, I do not know what is. If that is not an emergency, how bad does it have to get before it is declared to be one?

All the charities that are involved in the sector—including Shelter, Crisis and Homeless Project Scotland—are doing great work, but they care less about the politics of this than about the outcomes. They simply want politicians of all colours to listen to them and act. We are listening, but is the Government acting?

Housing

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-07614, in the name of Miles Briggs, on delivering the homes that Scotland needs. I ask those members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons.

16:12

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Scotland has a critical shortage of housing, as I think the previous debate clearly outlined. Given the amendments to my motion, I do not think that any parties question that assessment of the situation. In fact, Homes for Scotland has calculated that, across all tenures, there has been an accumulated shortfall of more than 110,000 new homes since Scottish National Party ministers came to power in 2007—that is their target for the next decade. That makes the drop in the number of new homes being started that was reported in yesterday's housing statistics all the more worrying.

Although the increase of 1,806 in completions in the year to the end of June 2022 is welcome, that is more than offset by the drop of 2,765 in the number of new homes started and it will further add to the housing crisis that Scotland already faces. Further, as well as private-led new build starts decreasing by 15 per cent in the year to the end of June 2022, social sector starts fell by 16 per cent—

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison): If Miles Briggs has been meeting with the sector, he will have heard what I have heard, which is that the key issue that it faces is the rate of inflation—interest rates, too, but particularly the rate of inflation. Does Miles Briggs acknowledge that that is the major driver at the moment?

Miles Briggs: I think that is where the global commodity prices have been impacting. Coming out of the pandemic, issues around steel and concrete have had a huge impact globally, not just in Scotland. The sector tells me that its major concern has been the impact of the Scottish Government's rent controls. I am sure that that is why the Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights, who is sitting beside the cabinet secretary, finally took action to remove the social rented sector from the rent control legislation. I welcome that, but I wish that he had listened to Conservative concerns on that at the time.

The cabinet secretary has spoken about peaks and troughs in relation to the Government meeting its housing targets, but the concern is that we are currently seeing only troughs. I agree with what

Willie Rennie said about delivering the homes that Scotland needs.

There is also a very real concern about the impact of the Scottish Government's current proposed budget cuts, especially on the housing and local government budgets, which face significant pressures, as we hear from every councillor across Scotland.

I do not know why the Scottish Government has decided to target the cabinet secretary's portfolios with such major cuts, compared with those of other ministers, but there will be a very real impact on meeting the housing targets of the future, and there will be a direct impact on key, vital council services.

The lack of new housing and affordable housing is a particular concern in rural and island communities. Last week, along with the Social Justice and Social Security Committee, I visited Uist, and the message that came across loud and clear from the islanders whom we met was that it is now critical for more affordable homes to be delivered in rural and island communities, in order to meet the needs of key workers and that, without urgent action, depopulation is rapidly becoming a real issue once again. That is not to mention the devastating impact that the on-going delay in delivering the new ferries, which the islands need, is having on transport connections and on those vulnerable communities.

Scottish Conservatives have continually called for the doubling of the Scottish Government's rural housing fund, in order to help incentivise construction in remote and rural communities. The Government needs to really listen to that.

With regard to Collette Stevenson's points about the national planning framework, the reason why I felt that we could not support the framework was that it did not acknowledge the housing crisis in Scotland. The Government needs to get real on that. It did not provide the framework that many wanted to see, with a focus on delivering the new homes that desperately need to be brought forward in all sectors across Scotland.

The situation for first-time buyers is also very concerning. The decision by SNP-Green ministers to scrap help-to-buy schemes has made it harder for many young first-time buyers to consider buying their first home. That is why Scottish Conservatives want to introduce a rent-to-own scheme, which would allow tenants to buy their home and receive a percentage of their rent to put towards a deposit. I hope that ministers will really take the proposal on board, look at the pressures that many households face and take that policy forward as soon as possible.

It is clear that ministers need to act and take into account the changing market—for example, by

allowing councils to respond to varying prices across Scotland and raising the national threshold for land and buildings transaction tax.

We need to see a new approach from the Scottish Government. We all agree that we urgently need more social housing to be built. I have met representatives from that sector; there is real anger at how the Scottish Government has treated the sector, and they want to look to a long-term solution to address the lack of affordable housing.

As many members have mentioned, more action on empty homes is needed. For 15 years, the Government has promised to bring empty homes back into use, but we have not seen that progress. I agree with the point that was made in the Labour amendment that

“urgent interventions are required to unlock”

those homes, but those interventions have not come forward from this Government.

It is clear that very real negative impacts are on the horizon for our property market in Scotland. Surveys that were conducted by Scottish Land & Estates, Propertymark and the Scottish Association of Landlords demonstrate that people are now looking at removing their private rented properties from the sector. Seventy per cent of agents report that landlords are deciding not to bring forward rental properties.

Government ministers say that they agree that the private rented sector has a key part to play in ending homelessness and the housing crisis, yet we have seen them attack that sector, and fewer homes are coming forward. That crisis will only build as we head into the autumn.

We have real concerns about what could be the collapse of the private rental market in Scotland, especially here in the capital, where supply is significantly decreasing at the very time that demand for housing is increasing.

Ministers need to start heeding those warnings and act before it is too late.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that building new homes is the best way to address the housing crisis; expresses disappointment that the Scottish Government missed its house building target deadline by a year; is dismayed by the cuts to the housing budget in the Scottish Government’s proposed Budget 2023-24 and that residents in Scotland will be forced to pay higher property taxes than in the rest of the UK; believes that restrictions on rent and evictions reduce investment in housing markets; recognises that Scotland is currently experiencing a housing crisis, and calls on the Scottish Government to prioritise the delivery of new homes, particularly for the social rent sector and in rural and remote areas.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call the cabinet secretary, I remind members to exercise a

bit of caution in any references—direct or indirect—to the Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022. As members have been advised, a petition for judicial review of that legislation has been lodged with the court, and the case is therefore considered to be active for the purposes of the sub judice rule. I think that members were provided with further information on that point, and I hope that all members will be very careful when referring to the issues.

16:20

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison): I will start by saying how refreshing it was to hear the tone of Jamie Greene’s closing speech in the previous debate. Would it not be so much more productive if the Tories took that tone in the chamber instead of making constant attacks? They say that it is all our fault; there is no positivity and no solutions are proposed. That is something on which the Tories need to reflect.

Jamie Greene mentioned the problem of empty homes, which is an important issue. We have been taking action on empty homes, which has brought more than 8,259 homes back into use since 2010. However, there is more to be done, without a shadow of a doubt. That is why we have made a commitment to look at compulsory purchase powers and to modernise the process. I wonder whether the Tories will vote for or against those measures when they are introduced. I suspect that, yet again, it will be a case of their saying one thing in the chamber and voting in a completely different way when it comes to introducing measures to resolve the problem.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I welcome measures to modernise the compulsory purchase process. With an awareness that councils do not have a lot of money to complete that process, will the Government introduce plans for compulsory sale orders, so that local authorities can expedite getting empty homes back into use without the capital requirements of a compulsory purchase order?

Shona Robison: Mark Griffin will be aware that we are considering the matter of compulsory sale orders as part of the review, but any new powers will have to be compliant with the European convention on human rights—there are issues there that he will be aware of. I am happy to speak to him separately in more detail about that. I am keen to look at using all the levers that we can possibly use.

We have focused very much on the delivery of affordable homes, and we are taking a world-leading approach to tackling homelessness, improving people’s experiences of living in the

rented sectors, and increasing our housing stock, albeit that there is more to be done.

Back in 2016, we brought an end to the Tory policy of the right to buy, which saw more than 500,000 social homes move out of the reach of people who would otherwise have been able to access them. Over a decade, our change to that policy secured 15,000 homes that would otherwise have been lost from our housing stock.

This Government is aware that the economic mismanagement of the United Kingdom Government has led to soaring inflation, spiralling energy bills and hardship, which are of deep concern to this Government. We continue to urge the UK Government to use the key levers that it holds.

This Government is providing almost £3 billion in the current financial year, including £1 billion that is only available in Scotland, which will help households who face increased living costs. We are taking concrete actions to help people through the current crisis, and we are taking longer-term action to support people with their housing costs, too.

We have seen raging inflation; damage to the labour supply and trade due to Brexit; surging energy prices; and an illegal war in Ukraine—all of which have had a huge impact on the delivery of affordable housing, as anyone in the sector will tell anyone who wants to listen. It is in that context that we are now working to deliver more affordable homes. That is a very difficult backdrop, without a doubt. However, we remain committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which 70 per cent will be for social rent. Work to meet that target will be supported by a total investment package of around £18 billion and will provide up to 15,000 jobs each year while also making an important contribution to the economy. It will be backed by £3.5 billion in this parliamentary term. Therefore, it is not credible for anyone to say that we are not putting in the resources.

On resources, I would be surprised if I had to tell anyone in the chamber that our capital budgets across the whole Scottish Government have been impacted by a 3.4 per cent real-terms cut by the UK Government. Our capital budgets depend on the UK Government's—it is basic economics. The Barnett formula means that, if there is a real-terms cut to UK capital budgets, our budgets are reduced, so budgets across the whole Scottish Government are reduced.

I set out in my closing speech in the previous debate the measures that we are taking to mitigate that £36.87 million or 4.7 per cent reduction in the published capital spending review figure. They are a mixture of financial transactions—a transfer from

the heat in buildings fund and donations from our charitable bond programme—to ensure that we keep the supply of funding coming through. That is what we will continue to do, but, as anyone will tell members, the biggest impact is through inflation.

The Government will continuously review the impact of current inflationary pressures and market conditions on our capital programme, and we will take the measures that we need to take. We have huge ambitions for housing in Scotland, which are set out in “Housing to 2040”, and we are working closely with local authorities, housing providers, landlords and the construction and house building sectors. I am proud that our long-term housing strategy sets out a route map for how the Government intends to deliver the “Housing to 2040” vision and that we will continue to work with others to translate that vision into action and reality.

I move amendment S6M-07614.2, to leave out from “building new” to end and insert:

“everyone should have access to a warm and affordable home that meets their needs; notes that the previous 50,000 affordable homes target was met in March 2022 following delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; further notes that global supply issues, rising costs and the impact of Brexit have affected the delivery of homes; acknowledges that £752 million is being made available in 2023-24 as part of more than £3.5 billion in the current parliamentary session towards the delivery of the Scottish Government’s commitment to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 70% will be for social rent and 10% in remote, rural and island communities, and agrees with the importance of giving tenants stability in their housing costs and housing security at a time of an unprecedented rise in the cost of living.”

16:26

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): We welcome this afternoon’s second debate. Although there is much crossover with the previous debate, we are absolutely clear that the faltering housing market in Scotland is as much a consequence of Tory economic chaos and mismanagement as it is one of Scottish Government inaction. On that basis, we do not find ourselves in a position to support the Government amendment or the Conservative motion at decision time.

The fact is that it is an uphill struggle for most families to get a home that they can be proud of—one that is warm, safe and affordable—regardless of whether it is in the social sector, in the private sector or owned, and, for many, the choice of tenure is limited. That is because we are not building enough and because too many properties whose primary purpose was to be someone’s home are going unused or are used by wealthy individuals to accrue further wealth.

We share the Conservatives’ disappointment that it took an extra year for the previous target to

be met, and we agree that we need to build our way out of the housing crisis. However, yesterday's statistics confirm that starts are down across all tenures, with dire prospects for the years ahead. Homes for Scotland calculates that we are now 110,000 homes short of where we should be. It is no wonder, then, that there is practically no choice in the market. We have just had a debate about homelessness, but those declines in starts will mean greater shortfalls in the future.

We should also consider the affordable housing pipeline. Approvals in the year to September were down 1,400 while starts were down almost 2,000, and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations has flagged up its belief that the Government is not on track to meet its targets. Having questioned the Government for months about construction, inflation and the suitability of benchmarks, I am glad that it now accepts that construction inflation has meant a slowdown in some of the delivery projects. That recognition is a start, but what follows from it is surely that a further review of the benchmark system is essential.

The Government has known internally that the pipeline has been drying up. Its risk register for the affordable housing supply programme, which I obtained over the summer, shows that the affordable house building scheme is struggling. Every issue was marked with a risk score higher than its target. Material shortages, underspends, rising tender prices, insufficient capital, and slow approvals and starts are all flashing red on the Government's risk register.

There is continued discussion about what the budget looks like for the year ahead and whether there will be peaks and troughs in investment, but Shelter is clear that it counts it as a 16 per cent cash cut. The Scottish Parliament information centre says that, if we compare like-for-like budgets, it is a 12 per cent drop in real terms and that capital grant funding is down by 19 per cent. It does not matter where we take our figures from—money is being lost from the building sector this year, so we will have fewer homes for the future.

It is not just about the overall budget. Another issue that is affecting the supply of local affordable housing is the hike in the additional dwelling supplement that was announced in December. Councils will have to pay that, but registered social landlords will not. Although we agree with the increase, we think that the Government should introduce measures to take that burden from local authorities.

In my region, North Lanarkshire Council and Falkirk Council have been liable for average payments of between £3,000 and £5,000 for their purchase of off-the-shelf homes or homes from the

market. Those figures will now increase by 50 per cent. I know that the Government consulted on exempting councils. Nine months on, that has to become the reality. The funding that the Government provides for house building is coming back to the Government through the additional dwelling supplement, rather than going towards its primary purpose.

In closing, I want to make it clear that the Tories are absolutely not off the hook in this debate. It seems slightly blinkered of them even to bring their motion to Parliament. We all saw that the Scottish Property Federation's briefing that was issued last week cites a £700 million loss of investment in the private rented sector, and we do not have short memories.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Griffin, you need to bring your remarks to a close.

Mark Griffin: That was clearly caused by the Conservatives' disastrous mini-budget, which wiped billions of pounds off the value of the economy. We must bear that in mind.

I move amendment S6M-07614.1, to leave out from "expresses" to end and insert:

"urges the Scottish Ministers to remove local authorities' liability for additional dwelling supplement when purchasing second hand and off-the-shelf homes, which risks councils' ability to increase affordable stock; agrees that the UK Government's disastrous mini-budget has vastly increased lending costs for owner occupiers, registered social landlords and investors in all housing tenures, exacerbating Scotland's housing and cost of living crisis; believes that protections for tenants, and proposed changes to the Home Owners' Support Fund Mortgage to Shared Equity scheme, which would reduce equity requirements and increase price thresholds to reflect true house values, are vital interventions to support people to stay in their homes during a cost of living crisis made worse by the UK Conservative administration; believes that urgent interventions are required to unlock the 67,152 empty and second homes across Scotland and return them to their primary purpose as residential dwellings; is disappointed that the Scottish Government missed its housebuilding target deadline by a year; is dismayed by the cuts to the housing budget in the Scottish Government's proposed Budget 2023-24; notes with concern further declines in affordable housing approvals and starts in the year to September 2022, and calls on the Scottish Government to urgently prioritise the delivery of new homes, particularly for the social rent sector and in rural and remote areas."

16:32

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I apologise for not being in the chamber for the conclusion of the previous debate. I got stuck in a very detailed discussion with Murdo Fraser about whisky of all issues.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not think that we need any more details, Mr Rennie.

Willie Rennie: I apologise for that.

I will start off where Mark Griffin finished. I agree with much of what Miles Briggs said in his opening speech, but he cannot ignore the direct impact on people's mortgages of Liz Truss's budget. A 10 per cent increase in payments has blown a hole in many people's finances. For those on a typical budget, that could mean paying an extra £1,800 a year. That is the context in which we are now living. It is right for Miles Briggs to reflect on that. I know that he was embarrassed by the budget, as many Conservatives were, but that is the current context and environment.

Young people in particular face a real challenge in raising enough money to put down a deposit to buy their own home. We have a massive intergenerational problem in housing. Many older people have access to property, but younger people cannot even think about that. I bought my first home when I was 25, but many people now do not see themselves ever getting their own home. Again, that is the context.

The cabinet secretary is right to identify the huge challenges relating to inflation and cost increases. However, other issues include a lack of skills in the sector and access to land—some house builders are finding it very difficult to access land. That ties into the debate on NPF4 that we had before Christmas. There is an emphasis on trying to utilise brownfield sites and properties above shops, but it is not cheap to do that. It is costly—otherwise they would have been developed by now—so the Government needs to look at incentives to make that happen. The more we put into that, the more challenging it will be to meet our other overall targets, so we need to get the balance right between brownfield sites and greenfield sites. There is great pressure to build more houses, so the Government needs to provide the right incentives.

However, I am concerned about the wider policy environment. We are in a state of massive flux. We have had a range of pieces of legislation in recent years with regard to short-term lets—the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016, the coronavirus acts, the emergency rent cap before Christmas. We have supported all those measures and, although we did not support the short-term let licensing, we supported the control areas.

On top of that, landlords have seen the UK Government's landlord tax relief changes have a direct impact on their investments. We are in a state of flux and we have many reports of landlords evacuating the sector.

Before we move to the next stage of proposed changes—perhaps around rent controls—I would like us to see the evidence of the impact of the current legislation on the housing sector. If young people cannot get into a property of their own, we

need to ensure that there is a healthy private rented sector. However, all the jungle drums are saying that it is not healthy just now and that good landlords, who are providing good homes for people, are finding it difficult to sustain their private properties and are leaving the sector.

We might be at a tipping point, and I want to ensure that the Government is listening, watching and reading all the evidence before we go further with any proposed rent controls. I have heard and seen the evidence from other countries about the impact that rent controls can have on investment in—and disinvestment from—the private rented sector. I want to ensure that we have the evidence before we take the next step.

My final plea is for the Government to put more emphasis on the Communities Housing Trust and the rural housing burden opportunity, which would be particularly beneficial to areas such as the east neuk of Fife, where working people find it very hard to have their own home close to their place of work. Although that might not be the whole answer, it might be part of it, so I hope that the Government can put greater emphasis on that in the future.

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

16:37

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): We do not debate housing often enough in this place—I do not know why; it is perhaps not seen as exciting enough—so to get two debates in one day is really good. A debate on housing targets will probably not grab any headlines—even very worthy things such as Alex Rowley's attempt to have all new homes built to Passivhaus standards do not really cut through. However, housing affects us all. We all need somewhere to live and there are wildly varying standards of accommodation in this country.

Solve the cold-homes problem with top-notch insulation and you help to solve the fuel poverty crisis. If our old folk can live in warm homes that cost very little to heat, they will have a better life—we all would. Solve the tenement maintenance problem—as some of us in Parliament are trying to do—and you solve the issue of people living in poor conditions in many of our towns and cities.

Housing matters to our mental and physical health and wellbeing, so delivering the homes that we need is one of the most important things that we can do. However, when you have 47,000 homeless people and 21,000 households in temporary accommodation but 67,000 unoccupied properties in Scotland, something is wrong. When that number of households in temporary accommodation has gone up since Nicola

Sturgeon came to power, you have to question her priorities.

I have to give the SNP some praise. It is consistent: it has repeatedly missed its house-building targets. It told us that 50,000 affordable homes would be built in the previous session, which were built, but a year late; it has missed its target to build homes in the social rented sector; and there was scant reference to housing targets in the recent national planning framework 4.

Homes for Scotland has said that we need 100,000 new homes after years of undersupply. It always says that we need more—it is its business to do that—but I do not hear anyone contesting the figures. We know this—we have known it for years—but we do not do anything about it.

We need a homes delivery agency tasked with the job of helping and cajoling councils to hit targets, with the right homes in the right places.

Right now, we are just tinkering around the edges. Not only that, we have a Government that actively damages the housing sector. Patrick Harvie's rent controls will lead to fewer homes being available for rent, less investment in those that remain and ultimately higher rents. You could not make it up. I just wish that I had, but it is true. We will see students struggling to find somewhere to live—we already are.

We should be encouraging firms—yes, private firms—to build more homes for rent, not putting barriers in their way. We should be dealing with the problem of empty homes through compulsory sales orders. That used to be SNP policy, but it has obviously ended up in that mountainous too-difficult pile.

I go back to where I started: housing matters. It affects us all, and it is too important to let ideologues loose on it. Sometime soon, reality is going to have to kick in. I support the motion in the name of Miles Briggs.

16:40

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I was surprised to see the Conservatives lodging the motion for this debate when it is their Government in Westminster that is directly impacting the Scottish Government's ability to build new homes and tackle inequality. It is the capital spending decisions of the Tory UK Government that have led to such difficult choices in this year's draft budget. The Scottish Government saw a 3.4 per cent real-terms reduction in its capital allocation for housing for 2023-24 as a result of the decisions that were taken in Westminster. Frustratingly, the falling capital grant allocation that Scotland has received, along with relentless inflation and cost pressures,

has reduced the buying power of the Scottish Government's ambitious housing investment.

In anticipation of difficult financial circumstances, a reduction has already been identified in the capital spending review. Without the full fiscal levers of an independent state, difficult decisions had to be made despite the challenge of UK Government austerity, Scotland's five-year £3.5 billion commitment in the affordable housing supply programme remains. The Scottish Government's £752 million investment for 2023-24 represents progress towards that £3.5 billion pledge. Additionally—and in the most challenging budget settlement since devolution—the Scottish Government is providing more than £13.2 billion to support councils and communities to meet their housing needs. Inflationary pressures and market conditions will continue to affect the capital investment programme, but the Scottish Government has been clear that that will be monitored.

A different approach to that of the Tory UK Government is possible. Unlike Westminster, the SNP-led Scottish Government is using all the levers at its disposal to maximise housing investment to the benefit of people and the economy. Our ministers have already set out how they are targeting public spending as effectively as possible. As affordable housing remains a key priority, the Scottish Government plans to mitigate the near £37 million reduction in its housing budget from Westminster with a £15 million in-year transfer from the heat and buildings strategy budget to help to fund zero-emissions heating systems with charitable bond donations, which will be directed towards investment in social rented homes, and with further financial transactions.

The Tory motion complains that this Government has not met its house-building targets. However, the Scottish Government remains fully committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032. More than 113,000 affordable homes have been delivered since 2007 by the SNP in government.

Since 2007, the annual average supply of affordable housing per head of population in Scotland has been 13.9 homes per 10,000 population. That is the highest level in the UK. It is higher than in England, which has delivered just 9.7 homes per 10,000 population; higher than in Wales, which has delivered eight homes per 10,000 population; and higher than in Northern Ireland, which has delivered 13 homes per 10,000 population.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

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

Jackie Dunbar: In relation to the new target of 110,000, 4,927 affordable homes have been delivered. Indeed, this SNP Scottish Government has a track record to be proud of. The previous 50,000 affordable homes target was met in March 2022—a year late, but we have had a pandemic. Those homes have been reducing inequality by providing more warm, safe, high-quality places to live, including in my Aberdeen Donside constituency.

In closing, Presiding Officer—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Dunbar, you will need to close.

Jackie Dunbar: —the SNP Scottish Government is acting to build homes, tackle inequality and better the lives of the people of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have no time in hand.

16:45

Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for the opportunity to speak on this important issue. My casework is inundated with constituents experiencing housing issues, whether caused by them being on lists waiting for permanent family homes to be offered, in unsuitable temporary accommodation, or suffering the effect of mould and damp in social housing.

I am very concerned that the allocation for housing in the Scottish Government's proposed 2023-24 budget will only make the housing crisis worse. We need to address the problems head on. If funding is not allocated to the housing budget for the building of new homes, the Scottish Government will be hard pushed to reach its own affordable housing targets. Further cuts to local government also mean that councils cannot attempt to tackle this housing crisis. The creation of new homes is crucial to solving the catastrophe that is currently unfolding in our housing sector.

The reduction in housing investment can be attributed directly to the UK Government's disastrous mini-budget, and the steep rise in interest rates that came as a result. Scottish Labour supports a rent freeze and eviction ban to help tenants during the cost of living crisis. We recognise that that is not a long-term solution to the housing crisis, but ending restrictions on rent and evictions would only exacerbate the crisis, with an estimated 14,250 households experiencing homelessness in 2021.

Shockingly, an estimated 13,000 children might not sleep in their own homes tonight. New housing

must be built to try and tackle this evolving problem, and the Scottish Government must increase funding to local authorities in its 2023-24 budget to deliver vital homelessness services.

City of Edinburgh Council alone is facing a £65 million bill to tackle homelessness. Local authorities across Scotland will also be buckling under the weight of the overflowing housing sector. New and existing homes must be brought up to standard to ensure that they are energy efficient and that tenants are protected from mould and damp. I recently raised that issue in a motion before Parliament, and I am very worried that, without action, housing across Scotland will be putting our constituents in danger.

Damp housing disproportionately affects those living in poverty, and the cost of living crisis has forced people to avoid heating their homes. That has simply made the problem worse. New homes need to be provided, and we need to ensure that they are energy efficient, insulated and, most importantly, affordable for those who need them most. That must be a priority for the Scottish Government—otherwise, the housing crisis cannot be resolved.

16:49

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): My colleague Graham Simpson rightly said that housing policy is extremely important—it certainly is. I will concentrate on the economic and geographical mobility aspect of the policy, which is absolutely critical when we are looking at the future. That is because there is extensive evidence in several quarters that the SNP's current housing policy is hindering the mobility that we so desperately need.

Indeed, the Deputy First Minister has, rightly, said on several occasions in the chamber that the biggest challenge for the Scottish budget in future years is Scotland's demographic profile, especially the diminishing size of the working population in relation to the total population, which will have knock-on effects on productivity and tax take. Therefore, it is surely important that the policy decisions that are taken on housing do everything possible to address those issues and the likely behavioural changes among the public.

I will give an example, which involves an issue that has been exercising the Finance and Public Administration Committee for some weeks. The Scottish Government has made it very clear that there are two intentions behind the proposal to increase the tax rate on the additional dwelling supplement from 4 per cent to 6 per cent—namely, to raise revenue and to protect first-time buyers. That is all well and good in principle but, as the Scottish Fiscal Commission, landlord

associations and local authorities have all said, the potential exists for significant behavioural change as a result of the policy.

I will explain why. In many parts of Scotland, the only people who are buying and modernising properties are private landlords. Those properties include empty houses that are being brought back into use. That is extremely important activity, especially in our rural communities, which are already at risk of depopulation and where we very much need farm and rural sector workers. There is also a need to promote the tourism market, which is a market that Scotland can ill afford to undermine. Landlord associations complain that 44 per cent of their members are already intending to reduce their portfolios. That is very serious indeed for Scotland.

The issue is not simply one that affects some landlords' income. From a general economic perspective, it matters in relation to ensuring that there is better housing stock and encouraging a more mobile workforce, which Scotland so desperately needs in order to improve productivity and geographical mobility. If Scotland is to be truly open for business, housing policy must play a critical role.

My colleagues have spoken about the recent rent freeze and have cited the reaction of several stakeholders, which was not surprising, given the Scottish Government's inability to justify the different approaches to the rent cap in the social housing and private rented sectors. Critics make the case about the inflexibility of the policy, whereby the rent control applies irrespective of the financial positions of the tenant and the landlord, which means that a relatively well-off tenant who rents in the private sector is provided with financial protection that is not afforded to someone who is less well off in the social sector. That does not make sense.

John Blackwood of the Scottish Association of Landlords has rightly made the point that the rent freeze and eviction policy means that it is unsurprising that many landlords are selling loss-making properties, which is further reducing the housing supply at a time when demand is increasing. He has pointed out that while local authorities and housing associations can put up rents in order to make repairs and improvements, the Government has failed to acknowledge that private landlords face exactly the same challenges.

A few months ago, we had the ridiculous situation in which the University of Glasgow told students that they would be best not to enrol for their courses until they had found accommodation, because of the difficulty of obtaining suitable rented property. That is hardly an acceptable situation.

I do not doubt that housing policy is complex, particularly when it comes to matching supply with demand, but neither do I doubt that the current SNP interferences in market forces are making things a whole lot worse. They are forcing detrimental behavioural change, with the result that stakeholders who have been relied on to help the housing market are now being forced out. That is not good for Scotland or for the ambitions to achieve long-term growth.

16:53

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): It is a basic human right to have a place to call home. It provides shelter, comfort, a sanctuary and identity. You have your own address: "This is where I live." Now, however, there are increased pressures on people keeping what home they have by meeting the mortgage payment when interest rates, along with energy and food bills, are soaring.

It is true that we need more social affordable homes, but a number of factors are impacting on the cost of constructing houses, one of which is inflation. The level of inflation—10 per cent—stems directly from the economic failures of the UK Government. That has reduced the actual value of the Scottish Government's budget, which was set when inflation was at 3 per cent, by some £1.4 billion. That means that, as the cabinet secretary said, the housing budget buys even less in the market.

Another factor is Brexit. After the night stagnation of construction in the two years of Covid, demand for construction materials is extremely high, but there is a supply chain issue. One reason for the shortage of construction materials is the fact that lorry drivers are in short supply, which means that it has become more expensive to deliver construction materials to different parts of the UK, and it is therefore more expensive to build. A large number of lorry drivers in the UK were from other EU countries, and many of them cannot come back here.

According to the Construction Leadership Council, 60 per cent of imported materials used in construction are from the European Union. The supply of timber has been particularly affected by Brexit, as 80 to 90 per cent of softwood is imported from European countries. Scarcity adds to construction costs.

Another factor is the skills shortage. It is estimated that close to a million construction workers are set to retire in the next 10 years, which will also significantly impact the industry. Before Brexit, about 40 per cent of all construction workers in the UK came from other EU countries. Now, such workers are unlikely to get visas to

work here, as the UK has introduced a points-based immigration system. The impact of the skills shortage in the UK is that employers will have to increase wages, as competition will be stiff among construction companies, and that will put up construction costs.

Then there is VAT. I quote Rishi Sunak, for the first and possibly last time:

“Green belt land is extremely precious in the UK. We’ve seen too many examples of local councils circumventing the views of residents by taking land out of the green belt for development, but I will put a stop to it.”

Yet VAT for construction on brownfield sites remains at 17.5 or 20 per cent, depending on the circumstances, whereas it is zero per cent on greenfield sites. Perhaps Mr Sunak’s attention is occupied on other taxing matters because nothing has happened on VAT equity to date.

All of those—inflation, Brexit and VAT—add to the costs of construction of homes, especially in the social rented sector, where councils are already under pressure because inflation is attacking their budgets on all fronts. None of that is in the control of the Scottish Government. It is all reserved, so let us have some refreshing honesty from the Tory benches, starting perhaps with agreeing that VAT for construction on brownfield sites should be levied at zero per cent.

16:57

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The need for affordable energy-efficient homes continues to be a central topic in the Highlands and Islands, so I welcome this opportunity to highlight the progress that is being made.

Across Scotland, people struggle to find a home where they want to live and often face unaffordable rents and inadequate accommodation. That is why the Bute house agreement commits the Scottish Government to building, as we have heard, 110,000 further homes by 2032, with 11,000 in rural areas.

However, there is no point trying to fill the bath with the plug out. In 2016, Scotland was right to end the right to buy, which had led to the loss of 500,000 social homes—many of which are now being let out by private landlords, at two or three times the previous rent. The Tories would have us continue with the right to buy. In rural areas especially, we lose homes to the holiday and second homes market. The Scottish Government has been right to regulate and introduce stricter planning rules on short-term lets—again, opposed by the Tories. It is right to discuss with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities the reforms to council tax on second and empty homes, and to make changes to the additional

dwelling supplement, both of which have been—you guessed it—opposed by the Tories.

There are a range of practical challenges to the delivery of rural homes, including the lack of skilled tradespeople, a shortage of planning staff and the rising cost of materials. Last week, I visited Merchant house in Inverness, which is an example of what can be done to repurpose and retrofit older buildings to make them energy efficient and sustainable for the future. The renovation, which was supported by Scottish Government funding, has created high-quality affordable homes. The approach that was taken—making the most of the embodied energy in our existing housing stock—would be helped immensely if the Conservative UK Government revised its position on VAT in relation to retrofitting buildings.

We need to consider where well-placed affordable homes could create an opening for young people and families to stay or settle in our rural communities. To that end, I am working to ensure that there is support from the Scottish Government for rural housing enablers such as the Communities Housing Trust, which helps rural communities to build the housing that they desperately need. The trust is currently working on 600 projects across approximately 150 communities, predominantly in rural Scotland. However, a lack of certainty about funding for the Communities Housing Trust’s early-stage work to build confidence and capacity in communities—and for the work of other rural housing enablers—is hampering project development and putting much-needed new rural homes at risk.

Enabling our housing ambitions requires resources. Over this parliamentary session, we will deliver a mechanism for capturing, for public benefit, a share of the increase in land value that occurs when a development is supported through the planning system. It will take time for us to see the benefit of such actions, but all of them will increase the number of homes of the right type, in the right place, while making best use of the homes that we have.

It is vital that homes are affordable. That is why the Bute house agreement commits us to rent controls and it is why we consulted on that in the new deal—far ahead of anywhere else in the UK. In the short term, we have taken emergency action to limit rent rises during the cost of living crisis—again, far ahead of anywhere in the UK.

I challenge the assertion that regulation means declining supply and reduced investment. Neither is true in Germany, which has the largest rented sector in Europe but also one of the most regulated.

What Scotland's housing sector needs is long-term solutions and a culture change away from housing being seen as an investment to its being seen as a means of creating homes for people.

17:01

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): It is a pleasure to speak in this afternoon's debate. Four minutes is a short time in which to speak about an incredibly important subject. I was a councillor for 15 years—many other members have been councillors—and housing was the biggest issue that I had to deal with, whether the issue was new homes, homelessness or repairs.

The council housing sell-offs of the Thatcher era proved to be a disaster for Scottish social rented sector stock. East Lothian lost 8,000 houses—8,000—and has been in recovery since then. The Scottish Government was right to act on the right to buy in 2016.

Despite the challenge of the UK Government's austerity policy, Scotland's five-year £3.5 billion commitment on the affordable housing programme remains. This has been said, but I will repeat it: the Scottish Government is fully committed to delivering 110,000 affordable houses by 2032. As we heard, 70 per cent of those houses will be available for social rent and 10 per cent will be in rural and island communities.

The previous target of 50,000 affordable homes was met in March 2022, having been delayed due to Covid. It provided warm, safe, high-quality places in which to live.

The cabinet secretary mentioned the 3.4 per cent real-terms reduction in its capital allocation for housing between 2022-23 and 2023-24. Members should be in no doubt that that is the result of decisions that have been taken in Westminster after the disastrous Truss-Kwarteng economic experiment. I have just seen the figures: UK Government borrowing is at an all-time high, with national debt now at £2.5 trillion.

There will always be peaks and troughs in investment towards our goal. The Scottish Government has said that investment of £752 million for 2023 represents progress towards the £3.5 billion pledge.

We have heard that the market is slowing down. I spoke to Homes for Scotland last week, and I have spoken to other house builders. The biggest reason why the market is slowing down is interest rate rises due to Tory Government incompetence. People are not investing, because of the impact of interest rate rises.

Scotland has limited capital borrowing powers compared with small, independent countries that are similar to us in size. My colleagues on the

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee and the Social Justice and Social Security Committee know that I would like Scotland to be given more extensive borrowing powers in this area. That could be done within the current devolved set-up and the matter is being discussed in the context of the on-going fiscal framework discussions between the Scottish and UK Governments. I asked the cabinet secretary about that last week. However, Labour and Tory colleagues on those committees will not support the call for those additional borrowing powers. I urge the UK Government to be as flexible as it can be in that regard. Investment in housing will bolster economic growth and provide more jobs.

Another fall-out of the Truss economic disaster is high inflation rates. The UK has the highest rate after Italy among the G7 countries and one of the highest rates among the G20 countries. We have heard about inflationary pressures feeding through to construction costs. Inflation is at 10.5 per cent, but the Homes for Scotland briefing that we received today mentioned that the latest Scottish social housing tender price index puts inflation in construction costs at 22 per cent, not 10.5 per cent.

The Scottish Government remains fully committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, despite rampant inflation. Christine Grahame talked about the impact of Brexit on supply issues, and Mark Carney, former governor of the Bank of England, stated today that, due to Brexit,

“the UK is in the most difficult position of all the major world economies.”

That is a direct quote.

Over the 15 years between 2007-08 and 2021-22, the annual average supply of affordable housing per head of population in Scotland was 13.9 homes per 10,000 of population. I will not repeat Jackie Dunbar's point on that.

I am a member of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, and we have, like the wider Parliament, been discussing NPF4 and how it would support home building. We will monitor the target of 110,000 affordable homes and will look at the housing need and demand assessment process, the minimum all-tenure housing land requirement, empty homes and other funding models.

On planning, I know that Tom Arthur is engaging with the Royal Town Planning Institute to deliver the 700 planners that are required. The Scottish Government is delivering in extremely difficult circumstances and is working with partners such as Homes for Scotland and RTPI to build as many houses as it can across all tenures.

The Presiding Officer: We move to the winding-up speeches.

17:06

Mark Griffin: As I stated earlier, the causes of the lack of housing and homelessness crises have to be borne by both Governments. The disastrous mini-budget will have long-lasting effects on Scotland's housing market in the social and private sectors and beyond, which is unforgivable. That failed economic experiment will be made worse by continued Government inaction here.

A couple of weeks ago in the debate on NPF4, the Scottish Government again dismissed concerns that tens of thousands of households are actively excluded from the all-tenure housing land calculations on the number of houses that need to be built, and in the autumn, it voted down Labour proposals to help those struggling with mortgages with a revamped scheme with lower equity requirements and an increased threshold that reflects current prices.

I am frustrated that neither the Conservative motion nor the Government amendment offers a direction of travel. They offer no policy proposals that could be implemented and would support change.

We have had contributions from back-bench members. My regional colleague Graham Simpson highlighted compulsory sales orders and my Labour colleague Foysoyl Choudhury suggested a course of action on dampness. Christine Grahame and Ariane Burgess talked about the reform to VAT that should be introduced by the UK Government. Paul McLennan talked about changes that the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, of which we are both members, seeks on NPF4. However, there does not seem to be a direction of travel from the Conservatives or the Government to drive forward policy change.

That is why we see a clear and urgent need for a dedicated housing minister. This is nowhere near a criticism or a motion of no confidence, but the minister has parliamentary responsibilities, in the words of Robert Burns, "As lang's my arm". The cabinet secretary has an in-tray that includes local government and the devolution of a range of social security powers, and has no doubt had her time taken up by the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill. It is clear that there is a desire in the housing sector, among builders and the third sector, for a more focused Government housing policy, and they would like a dedicated housing minister to lead that.

I spoke in the previous debate about how grant guidance and rules require open-market acquisitions and therefore vacant possessions,

which means that sellers are required to make tenants homeless. In the context of the debate, that also means that purchases with a tenant in situ are all but ruled out by the supply programme. Councils and registered social landlords are limited to properties where a tenant may have been made homeless or threatened with homelessness. I would like the Government to urgently consider that area to see whether changes could be made to protect tenants from homelessness while allowing social sector acquisitions. The cabinet secretary made an attempt to intervene on me during a previous debate on that. I am happy to take an intervention on social sector acquisitions from the private sector with a tenant in situ, if the Government wants to make any announcements.

Shona Robison: I will not make any announcements, but I will update the member because he raises an important point. I have raised the issue with COSLA, and I hope to make progress on it.

Mark Griffin: There is a range of issues that I hope we can get our teeth into during a further housing debate—one that forms the start of a substantive discussion and debate on housing, rather than Labour making proposals that are either voted down or repackaged a couple of months later by the Government.

I thank members for their consideration and I ask them to support the amendment in my name.

17:10

The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie): I am not sure that I can quite express my relief at being told by Mark Griffin that he has not lodged a motion of no confidence.

Given the importance that we all attach to housing policy, I hope that members will stay focused on the policy that the Government is pursuing rather than on whose name is on which door, because I think that there is more common ground between us than is sometimes recognised. The importance of housing policy has been recognised by members across the spectrum, and I believe that its importance is written right through the "Housing to 2040" strategy—the long-term vision for housing in Scotland—as well as in the housing elements of the programme for government and the Bute house agreement, which build on that long-term vision.

I will not have time to address all the issues that have been raised today, but supply is, of course, critical—not only the extent of supply, but the nature of supply. Several members have raised issues such as rurality. The existing commitment to deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032

includes at least 10 per cent of those being for remote, rural and island communities, including through our demand-led rural housing fund as well as the remote, rural and island housing action plan, which will bolster that work. Like Ariane Burgess, I want to recognise the importance of community housing bodies in delivering that work.

The nature of supply is also about accessibility and the work that we are doing to streamline the adaptation system, as well as reviewing housing for varying needs, which will lead to changes to building standards.

Miles Briggs: The minister mentioned supply. Does he believe that there will be more or fewer private rented properties in Scotland this autumn?

Patrick Harvie: I was about to talk about the extent of supply after initially talking about the nature of it.

The extent of supply is critical. That issue has been raised by a number of members, and it is worth recognising something about the track record in that area. The 2,500-plus affordable homes that were completed in the latest quarter to September 2022 brings to 9,449 the total number of homes completed in the 12 months prior to that. That is an increase of only 2 per cent on the previous year, but against the backdrop of extraordinary inflation pressures—which we all recognise—as well as the lack of comparable action that we have seen from the UK Government, I think that any increase during the past year is significant.

However, I am not for a moment going to wish away or pretend that we do not face continual, on-going challenges—nor would the cabinet secretary. Some members do not like it when Scottish ministers compare our track record to that of the UK Government, but let us just recognise that, in the four years leading up to 2021-22, Scotland saw not only a marginal improvement on what was happening in England but 59 per cent more affordable homes and more than nine times as many social rented homes delivered per head of population than were delivered in England. Scotland has a strong track record, but we also face challenges as we continue to deliver on that track record.

Members have debated the budget and have different interpretations of it. The cabinet secretary has laid out very clearly how we will continue to strain every sinew to fund the long-term commitment of £3.5 billion being made available for the affordable housing programme during this parliamentary session. I would take criticisms from Conservative members a little bit more seriously if even one Conservative member had argued that the UK Government should inflation-proof the Scottish Government's block grant so that we are

protected from the harm that has been done by the ideological experiment that was the mini-budget from the Truss-Kwarteng temporary Government. During the debate, I have been accused—I think by Mr Simpson—of being an ideologue. The most ideological actions that we have seen that have impacted on our ability to deliver affordable housing have come from the UK Government, not from this one.

I will finish by saying that this is about more than just supply. There are those ideologues who think that the free market will deliver everything. I do not believe that a deregulated free market will deliver housing as a human right for people; I think that we need the action of Government.

I know that I am limited in what I can say about recent legislation, and I regret that I cannot respond directly to the points that were made by some members who chose not to respect those limits, which we were warned about at the start of the debate. However, we are clear on the need to protect people from high rents and to ensure that people have security of tenure.

What we are seeing in Scotland—

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Please conclude, minister.

Patrick Harvie: What we are seeing in Scotland is a continued commitment to ensuring that the housing system meets everybody's needs—our human right to adequate housing and security of tenure as well as affordability—

The Presiding Officer: You must conclude, minister.

Patrick Harvie: —and that is what we will continue to do.

The Presiding Officer: I call Murdo Fraser to wind up the debate.

17:16

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I remind people of my entry in the register of members' interests: I own a share in two properties that are let on the private rental market.

This afternoon, we have had two helpful debates that have exposed the dismal track record of this Government on housing. Let us look at the facts. Homelessness is on the increase. The number of children in temporary accommodation has doubled in the past eight years. Today, 100,000 children are on social housing waiting lists. At least 24,000 people with disabilities are on waiting lists. There has been a real-terms cut of £215 million in the housing budget. There has been a failure to meet the affordable homes target on time. And there is now a housing gap of

110,000 new homes, according to Homes for Scotland, as Miles Briggs reminded us.

The only excuse that we hear from the Government is that it is all down to inflation—*[Interruption.]* It seems to be completely ignoring the fact that inflation in the eurozone is pretty much equivalent to what we have in the UK. Indeed, back in November, inflation in the eurozone was higher than it was in the UK. How that could be down to Liz Truss is beyond me, but maybe Mr Harvie can explain.

Patrick Harvie: I am pleased that Mr Fraser is such a fan of the eurozone and of our European colleagues such as Germany, with a decades-long system of rent controls and a stronger and larger rented sector than we have in this country. Is that not evidence enough that we can do a great deal better than the deregulated free market approach that he advocates?

Murdo Fraser: I notice that Mr Harvie could not respond to the inflation point. On Germany, I would say to him gently that he should take a trip to Berlin and see what rent controls have done to destroy availability in the private rented sector there.

On the inflation point, even if there is an issue with inflation in the current year, that does not excuse the past 14 years of failure from this Government when it has been in charge of housing in Scotland. We believe that housing should be a priority for this Government, but the sad thing is that the interventions that it is introducing are making matters worse.

Shona Robison: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: Yes, I will, if the minister is brief.

Shona Robison: Can I ask how Murdo Fraser can describe the delivery of 115,550 affordable homes since 2007 as failure? Also, does he agree with the *Daily Express* that first-time buyers get the “biggest leg-up” in the Scottish market? Are those not things that he should be praising rather than criticising?

Murdo Fraser: The minister has not been listening to all the statistics in the debates about the rise in homelessness, the rise in the number of people on social housing waiting lists and the 110,000 homes gap that has been identified by Homes for Scotland. She needs to listen to what is actually happening out there.

We heard about the private rented sector from Graham Simpson and Liz Smith. It is important for social mobility. Not everybody can afford or wants to buy a house, and not everybody can get access to the social rented sector, so we need a vibrant private rented sector. However, the reality is that the choices made by this Government are

delivering a rapid reduction in supply. That is a direct consequence of the minister’s choices. It is interesting that Patrick Harvie did not respond to Miles Briggs’s intervention about the decline in supply in the private rented sector.

We hear that, since 2016, there has been a 29 per cent fall in the number of properties in the private rented sector, that £700 million of residential investment has been paused and that landlords are selling up, as every letting agent will tell you. In the city that Mr Harvie represents—Glasgow—that is having a real-life impact. In September, the university told students to give up their courses because they could not get accommodation. That is shameful, Mr Harvie.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: I am sorry, but I do not have time to take another intervention.

We have a minister who does not understand the sector. If he engaged with it, he would realise that his interventions are causing a greater problem. The international evidence tells us that rent controls, whether they have been introduced in Dublin, Berlin or Sweden, have caused a mismatch between supply and demand and have led to long waiting lists, a reduction in social mobility and illegal subletting. I say to Mr Harvie that that is what happens if a Government brings in rent controls. It is a huge error.

Let us look at the owner-occupied sector. We have a problem that Willie Rennie identified—and I forgive him for trying to blame me for his tardy rearrival at the previous debate. Mr Rennie and I—I think that we are of a similar vintage—bought our first homes in our 20s; now, the average age of a first-time buyer in Scotland is 37. Properties are increasingly unaffordable. We need more homes because we have a growing population. More people are living on their own, and there has been a population shift from west to east in Scotland. Places such as the Lothians, Fife, Aberdeenshire and Tayside need more properties, but we are not building enough homes.

We need to look at the excessive delays in securing planning permission. Three weeks ago, during the debate on national planning framework 4, Fergus Ewing—who, sadly, is not in the chamber—made an excellent speech about relaxing planning rules in order to allow farmers and estates more opportunities to build houses, which could provide economic benefits and drive the economy forward. That is the sort of intervention that we should be listening to.

On this side of the chamber, we have solutions: reform of the planning system; relaxing rules to allow the redevelopment of commercial properties into residential ones; the right-to-buy scheme,

which Miles Briggs talked about; the reform of LBTT; and action to bring empty homes into use. Those are things that the Scottish Government should be doing instead of continuing its dismal record on house building.

We have a crisis in housing: too much demand is chasing too little supply. The answer is to increase the supply in the owner-occupied sector, the private rented sector and the social rented sector. The Government's policy choices are going in the wrong direction and they are making the problem worse. That is why we need change, and we need to support the motion in the name of Miles Briggs.

Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-07615, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

17:22

The Minister for Environment and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan): I have spoken about the UK Government's Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill before in the chamber, and I am sure that I will do so again. As members will be aware, the bill proposes to remove plants and animals that are produced using modern biotechnologies and the food and feed that is derived from them from genetically modified organism regulations in England, if every feature of their genomes could have occurred naturally or could have been produced by traditional methods. However, we are not here to talk about the broader policy objectives of the bill; we are here to talk about a legislative consent memorandum that relates to its provisions that extend to Scotland. Although the bill's substantive provisions do not purport to extend to Scotland, clause 42 does.

Clause 42 enables the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to make

"supplementary, incidental or consequential provision in connection with any provision of or made under this Act."

That permits legislation, including devolved legislation, to be made or amended by the UK Government in areas that relate to so-called precision breeding—broadly, gene editing—techniques, and in related areas, including food, agriculture, animal welfare and more. Those are devolved policy areas.

As clause 42 permits the making of regulations that amend existing legislation in devolved areas, it is a provision that is within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament. However, as the clause is drafted, there is no requirement for the Scottish ministers to consent to regulations being made by the secretary of state, nor for the Scottish Parliament to scrutinise them. We have, therefore, lodged this legislative consent memorandum on that basis.

Clause 42 presents an erosion of devolved competence, and the Scottish Government therefore recommends that the Parliament vote to withhold its consent to it. I discussed these matters with the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee this morning, when it invited me and my officials to give evidence on the matter. I thank the committee for publishing its

report this afternoon and I note its conclusion that it agrees with the Scottish Government's position not to recommend consent to the bill. I also note and share the committee's stated disappointment that the UK legislation would give the secretary of state regulation-making powers without the oversight of the Scottish ministers.

I said at the beginning of my speech that this LCM and our consideration of it does not involve a question of whether the Scottish Parliament supports the policy purpose of the bill, nor, strictly, is it a question of the impacts of the bill and its interaction with the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020. However, there is no doubt in my mind that the pervasive attack on devolution that is represented by that act creates an extremely complex landscape, serves to erode policy divergence and fundamentally undermines devolution. The Scottish Government remains wholly opposed to that act which, of course, has been imposed against the stated will of this Parliament and contrary to the Sewel convention.

Of course, we have concerns about the interaction of the 2020 act with the bill, and how, together, they could see gene-edited products being sold in Scotland, unlabelled and unauthorised by the Scottish ministers and without consumers in Scotland having been properly informed or consulted on how they feel about that. However, crucial though those issues are, they are not part of today's LCM. That is because an LCM considers the four corners of the bill and its effect and does not extend to the impact that other acts might have on them, however undemocratic that might be. Today, we are seeking to ensure that Scotland's devolved competences are protected in relation to clause 42.

Before concluding, I want to highlight to members that we might have been in a different position with regard to today's LCM if the UK Government had engaged with us on the drafting of the bill. My officials first received sight of the UK bill only late in the afternoon the day before it was presented to the UK Parliament. That was despite multiple requests to see the content, and I understand that it was around the same time that the details were shared with the media. It is regrettable that no discussions on the bill were held with us or via the common frameworks that are supposed to manage this divergence.

Since then, my officials and I have sought to engage with the UK Government on potential amendments to clause 42 that might, if accepted, mean that we were able to ask that consent be recommended. However, that was not forthcoming, and I am still awaiting a response to my letter to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs minister Mark Spencer, which I wrote on 8 November.

A decision to disregard the stated view of the Scottish Parliament would represent another example of the UK Government's refusal to respect the devolution settlement. I, therefore, welcome the chamber's consideration of the LCM on the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the legislative consent memorandum lodged by the Scottish Government on 12 December 2022; agrees not to give consent to the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill, and calls on the UK Government to amend the Bill to restrict the geographical application of clause 42, or to otherwise make it a requirement for it to seek the consent of the Scottish Ministers when making provision within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, in order to properly respect devolved responsibilities.

17:28

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): This bill is about the UK Government taking a pragmatic approach to policy making that allows legislation to better keep up with the speed of scientific advancement, which a great deal of existing legislation fails to do. However, the Scottish Government's motion is symptomatic of the Scottish Government's continual desire to create difference between Scotland and the UK at any opportunity.

We have some sympathy with the desire to clarify the scope of clause 42, but the Scottish Government's approach to addressing that, by introducing an unnecessary LCM, seems to be more about posturing than principle, and we cannot support the motion as it is drafted.

The very first line of the motion has the Scottish Government demanding that Parliament not support the bill. There is no way that we can get past that, because the bill is a decent one that supports research, much of which happens here in Scotland, and which will ensure that our food producers are not put on an uneven playing field when supplying their biggest market—the rest of the United Kingdom. Is the Scottish Government really suggesting that we throw Scottish food producers under the bus because it questions a clause?

The Scottish Government has stated that it would back off if the bill is amended as it progresses through the UK Parliament. That is the correct route to developing good legislation, rather than scouring every piece of draft legislation to see whether there is a way to create further discord and division.

That brings me to clause 42, which enables the Secretary of State for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs to make

“supplementary, incidental or consequential provision in connection with any provision of or made under this Act.”

Powers to make consequential provision are common to most bills. Scottish Government officials proposed amending the wording of clause 42 to require Scottish ministerial consent for any consequential amendments, which the Scottish Parliament would also be competent to make.

The UK Government’s position is that clause 42 does not trigger an LCM and that an amendment to clause 42 is neither desirable nor necessary. That is because the convention to seek an LCM applies only when legislation makes provision specifically for a devolved purpose, not when legislation deals with devolved matters that are only incidental to, or consequential on, provisions that are made in relation to a reserved matter. The term “reserved” includes matters that apply substantively to England only.

The UK Government’s view is that clause 42 does not trigger the LCM process nor engage the Sewel convention. Devolution guidance is clear: consent need only be obtained for legislative provision that is specifically for devolved purposes, but the bill is for England only. The UK Government has updated the delegated powers memorandum and explanatory notes for the bill to reassure the devolved Administrations and to illustrate the intended use of, and limits to, clause 42.

I cannot rule out the possibility that the Scottish Government’s approach has, in part, been driven by the Scottish National Party’s wider opposition to gene editing. Despite the urging of farmers and researchers alike, the Scottish Government remains firmly on the fence, insisting that it will wait to see what the European Union does, instead of delivering the guidance that the sector in Scotland has been calling for. Aside from the fact that that approach is likely to put Scotland’s farmers at a competitive disadvantage to those in the rest of the UK, which is by far our largest market for agricultural goods, it is almost certain to mean that our life sciences sector will miss out on the opportunity to be ahead of the pack in the growing field of gene editing.

The SNP will ignore an opportunity for Scotland to lead the world and to take advantage of new technologies, but it will not ignore any opportunity for a constitutional spat. Progress is being sacrificed on the altar of process.

Setting aside the somewhat more controversial question of genetically modified organisms, any halfway balanced assessment of gene editing, which does not involve the introduction of new genetic material, would show that its potential benefits for Scottish agriculture and for the wider planet are substantial. The potential to increase

crop yields, enhance the nutritional qualities of food and reduce the use of agricultural chemicals should make gene editing an attractive prospect. All that comes before we consider the potential for gene editing to help us deal with climate change, both as a means of increasing the resilience of staple crops to climatic conditions and as a means of reducing CO₂ production in farming.

Had the Scottish Government written the motion more pragmatically, to look specifically at questioning or modifying clause 42 of the bill, we might have been more likely to help the Government seek a resolution to the issue, but why would the Scottish Government work to develop the optimum legislation to protect Scotland’s food producers and life sciences when it can manufacture a full-blown constitutional storm in a teacup to further its own narrow agenda? As I have often said, the SNP is acting less and less like a Government and more and more like a radical protest group.

17:33

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): The minister is correct to say that the legislative consent memorandum asks us to consider only one discrete aspect of the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill that is currently before the UK Parliament. As the minister said, clause 42 would provide the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with the power to make

“supplementary, incidental or consequential provision in connection with any provision of or made under this Act”,

should it become law. That would mean that there would be no requirement for Scottish ministers to consent to secondary legislation relating to Scotland under that power, and it would mean that there is unlikely to be any opportunity for this Parliament to properly scrutinise regulations that are made under the power, even if the regulations are on devolved matters.

That is not acceptable. I agree that allowing UK ministers to legislate in devolved areas without the consent of this Parliament infringes on the powers of this Parliament; therefore, Labour supports the position that was taken unanimously by the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee this morning and which is taken in the Government motion, which proposes that the Parliament not consent to the bill.

We also support the call on the UK Government either to amend the bill to restrict geographical application of clause 42 or to make it a requirement that the UK Government seeks the consent of Scottish ministers when making any provision on devolved matters.

I also share the minister's disappointment at the failure—once again—of the UK Government to properly consult the Scottish Government on the bill. That could have avoided the position in which we now find ourselves, through amendments to clause 42 of the bill.

We need a change of approach from the UK Government on such matters, and I am confident that we will get that change of approach when we get a change of UK Government—one that actually understands and supports devolution.

In the meantime, I know that my Labour colleagues in the UK Parliament are pursuing concerns from devolved Governments over the implications of the bill, including on the need for clear labelling.

It is not clear to me in what way the UK Government envisages using the power in clause 42, or even why it feels that it needs that power, but it is one that I do not believe it should have.

I understand that we are not here today to debate the policy aims of the bill that is before the UK Parliament or its interaction with the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020, which means that the Scottish Government will not have the power to limit the sale in Scotland of precision-bred products from the rest of the UK.

However, I will repeat a point that I made during Stephen Kerr's members' business debate in November on gene-editing technology: we need to debate in this Parliament our approach to whether we decouple gene editing and genetic modification.

I appreciate that the Scottish Government's position is to await the outcome of the European Commission's review of future regulation of gene editing before deciding how to proceed, and I am conscious of the implications for trade if we do not continue to align with the European Union position. Equally, there are challenges over the fact that the position in England might soon not align with that in Scotland. However, it is difficult to argue the importance of the scrutiny role of this Parliament in relation to provisions in the UK bill that impinge on devolution if we are not debating, beyond a members' business debate, our approach to gene editing in Scotland.

Labour is unashamedly pro-science and pro-innovation, so we do not shy away from exploring—

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): You would rather wait for Europe.

Colin Smyth: I do not know whether Mr Carson wants to make an intervention.

The Presiding Officer: I ask members to please ensure that when another member is

speaking, they give them the courtesy and respect of listening, Thank you.

Colin Smyth: I do not know whether Mr Carson is aware that Labour is supporting the bill in the UK Parliament, but we are proposing a number of sensible amendments, which I hope his colleagues there will support.

We do not shy away from exploring how we can find ways to maintain and improve the supply, security and safety of our food systems. We also believe in good regulation—that is the key to public safety and to public and investor confidence in any future changes.

We need to debate here in Scotland the opportunities, but also the risks, of gene editing. I hope that we have that debate sooner rather than later. In the meantime, Labour will support the Government's motion.

17:38

Màiri McAllan: I thank members for their contributions. It is important that, as a Parliament, we take the time to consider such matters. Of course, we are not the only national Parliament across the UK that is grappling with the issues, with the Welsh Senedd recently having agreed to withhold consent. In its comments, the Senedd also criticised the delays in proceedings.

I understand that an LCM should normally be lodged with the Scottish Parliament two working weeks after the introduction of the bill in Westminster. However, as I explained in committee this morning, that delay, although regrettable, has been unavoidable in this case. As I said, the Scottish Government received sight of this complex bill the afternoon before it was introduced in the UK Parliament, despite our repeated requests for a preview.

Equally, the UK Government's position remains that the bill does not require an LCM. Therefore, it took time for my officials to analyse the bill and to determine that it engages devolution guidance note 10. Furthermore, my officials spent time engaging with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the possibility of amending the bill to restrict the wording of clause 42 to reflect the devolution settlement and to seek a way forward.

Although DEFRA initially indicated its willingness to do that, when it was presented with proposals it informed us that no such amendment would be made. I regret the delay, which is why I am grateful for members' attention to the issues today, and why I hope that they will agree to refuse consent.

Some members took the opportunity to mention policy content. I understand why they did that.

Genetic modification is a complex and emotive issue and the speed with which the UK Government has sought to make changes has been alarming for many people. I said that the matters are for a discussion on another day; I will be glad to have that discussion.

I remind Brian Whittle that the LCM has been lodged in accordance with the Parliament's standing orders, not in accordance with something that, as he would characterise it, the Scottish Government has created. It is always astonishing to hear members, in the Parliament to which the people of Scotland elected them to serve in, happily seeing its powers being utterly eroded.

I will be clear: our concerns—about the UK Government's approach to genetic technology, to the bill and the issue generally; and about its haste to change regulations without regard for devolved competence or the impact on food supply chains and consumer choice—should never be mistaken for opposition to innovation and technology, particularly in our farming sector and in a climate emergency. Instead, I urge the UK Government to take a more considered approach, which involves engaging meaningfully across the UK, including—very importantly, from my perspective—with the public, as well as with our key international trading partners.

The views of stakeholders in Scotland—including the scientific community, industry interests and, crucially, consumers and the public as a whole—must be central to how regulations apply to new genetic technologies such as gene editing. So, too, must the integrity of the Scottish Parliament.

Public Order Bill

17:42

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of a legislative consent motion. I ask Keith Brown to move motion S6M-07617, on the Public Order Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant amendments of the Public Order Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 9 November 2022, relating to the extension of existing powers at Part II of the Public Order Act 1986 to the British Transport Police (BTP) in Scotland for policing public processions and assemblies on the railway, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*Keith Brown*]

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

UK Infrastructure Bank Bill

17:42

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of a legislative consent motion. I ask John Swinney to move motion S6M-07616, on the UK Infrastructure Bank Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the UK Infrastructure Bank Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 11 May 2022 and subsequently amended, relating to the investment activities of the UK Infrastructure Bank in Scotland so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament and alter the executive function of the Scottish Ministers, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*John Swinney*]

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

Business Motion

17:42

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-07643, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme. I call George Adam to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 31 January 2023

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Three Years On – Brexit and Workers' Rights

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 1 February 2023

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Constitution, External Affairs and
Culture;
Justice and Veterans

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Electoral
Reform Consultation

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 2 February 2023

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
Education and Skills

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Scottish Budget 2023-
24

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm	Decision Time
Tuesday 7	February 2023
2.00 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Topical Questions (if selected)
<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Government Business
<i>followed by</i>	Committee Announcements
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
Wednesday 8	February 2023
2.00 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.00 pm	Portfolio Questions: Covid Recovery and Parliamentary Business; Finance and the Economy
<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Liberal Democrats Business
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Approval of SSIs (if required)
5.10 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
Thursday 9	February 2023
11.40 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
11.40 am	General Questions
12.00 pm	First Minister's Questions
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business
2.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.30 pm	Portfolio Questions: Net Zero, Energy and Transport
<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Government Business
<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Income Tax Rate Resolution 2023-24
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 30 January 2023, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[*George Adam*]

The Presiding Officer: I call Neil Bibby to speak to and move amendment S6M-07643.1.

17:43

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): On behalf of the Scottish Labour group, I thank the parliamentary staff for all their hard work in supporting us and ensuring the smooth running of

our democracy. Their work is essential. It is a vital public service and we cannot thank them enough.

We also must recognise the decision by members of the Public and Commercial Services Union in the Parliament to take part in industrial action next Wednesday, as is their right. We should all respect their decision to do so.

In light of that industrial action, we propose to move parliamentary business next Wednesday. We propose to move the electoral reform consultation debate, members' business and portfolio questions to the Tuesday and Thursday. That business can all easily be done on different days and I am sure that there is a lot that members can work on in their constituencies and regions, including engaging with trade unions. That is the course of action being taken by the Welsh Parliament, as proposed by its Business Committee and agreed by all parties with the exception of the Welsh Conservatives. We should do the same here.

There are a number of reasons why it would not be appropriate to go ahead with parliamentary business—not least solidarity with our colleagues—but we should not meet in this Parliament when it is not safe for the public to be in the gallery. The idea of us sitting without the people who elected us having the opportunity to join us contradicts fundamental principles on which the Parliament was founded, as does the prospect of committees not hearing from witnesses in person.

We believe that the principles of openness and transparency should not be cast aside lightly. We do not believe that it would be right to suspend standing orders in this case, which would be proposed should the motion be agreed to. Public access to the Parliament is essential, and our staff's role in ensuring public access is essential. Any other course of action would send the message that they are not essential.

For those reasons, we will oppose the suspension of standing orders tomorrow.

I move amendment S6M-07643.1, to leave out from "Scottish Government Debate: Three Years On—Brexit and Workers' Rights" to "Tuesday 7 February" and insert:

"Scottish Government Debate: Three Years On – Brexit and Workers' Rights

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Electoral Reform Consultation

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

7.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 2 February 2023

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 1.40 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 1.40pm Portfolio Questions:
 Constitution, External Affairs and
 Culture;
 Justice and Veterans; Education and
 Skills
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Scottish Budget 2023-
 24
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Tuesday 7 February 2023".

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

17:45

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): I take on board the member's point of view and what he has said, but I propose that we agree to the business motion that was lodged earlier by the bureau.

The Presiding Officer: The first question is, that amendment S6M-07643.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend business motion S6M-07643, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:45

Meeting suspended.

17:50

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We move to the vote on amendment S6M-07643.1, in the name of Neil Bibby. Members should cast their votes now.

I call Kaukab Stewart to cast a proxy vote on behalf of Stuart McMillan.

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote no.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, we will ensure that that is recorded.

For

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

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)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Doney, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)

Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 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)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 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)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 21, Against 96, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that business motion S6M-07643, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now.

I call Kaukab Stewart.

Kaukab Stewart: On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, we will ensure that that is recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 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)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 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)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 101, Against 21, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 31 January 2023

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Three Years On – Brexit and Workers' Rights

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 1 February 2023

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Constitution, External Affairs and Culture;
 Justice and Veterans

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Electoral Reform Consultation

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 2 February 2023

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Education and Skills

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Scottish Budget 2023-24

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 7 February 2023

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 8 February 2023

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Covid Recovery and Parliamentary
 Business;
 Finance and the Economy
followed by Scottish Liberal Democrats Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)
 5.10 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 9 February 2023

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Net Zero, Energy and Transport
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish
 Income Tax Rate Resolution 2023-24
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 30 January 2023, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:53

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-07644, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (additional amount: transactions relating to second homes etc.) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2022 (SSI 2022/375) be approved.—[George Adam]

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. I call Daniel Johnson.

17:54

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I would like to make a brief comment about this SSI, which has to do with the increase in the additional dwelling supplement. Although Labour broadly supports the SSI, I would like to comment on the impact that it has on local authorities.

Ultimately, local authorities being liable to pay additional dwelling supplement runs contrary to our intention to increase the stock of housing available for social rent. Indeed, it is a case of one part of the public sector being levied and paying to another—it is not even that it has a cost to public finances. Those arguments were rehearsed when the matter came before the Finance and Public Administration Committee.

However, I ask the minister to reflect on that. The initiative has been consulted on, and I ask the Scottish Government to bring forward an exemption for local authorities so that they can maximise the funds that they have available for bringing housing into the social rented sector, which is particularly important for areas that have limited land for development. I ask the minister to bring forward proposals at the earliest opportunity.

17:55

The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur): This SSI increases the rate of the additional dwelling supplement from 4 per cent to 6 per cent with effect from 16 December 2022. That change is intended to further protect opportunities for first-time buyers and home movers by helping them to compete with buy-to-let investors and second home owners. It is also forecast to raise much-needed revenue at a time when public finances are under significant pressure.

The Scottish Fiscal Commission estimates that increasing the rate will result in an additional £34 million being raised from the ADS next financial year. Members have raised concerns about the potential impact of the measure on a range of issues, and I note the points that Daniel Johnson makes. I wish to reassure him, as I set out at the Finance and Public Administration Committee, that we are considering very carefully the evidence that was brought forward as part of our ADS review, including on the measures that pertain to local government, which he raised. We will publish the outcome of that review and the next steps shortly.

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

The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-07645, on approval of an SSI, and Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-07646, on designation of a lead committee.

I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motions.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Dentists, Dental Care Professionals, Nurses, Nursing Associates and Midwives (International Registrations) Order 2022 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Children and Young People Committee be designated as the lead committee, and that the Criminal Justice Committee be designated as a secondary committee, in consideration of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.—
[George Adam]

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

Decision Time

17:56

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are 11 questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-07613.2, in the name of Shona Robison, which seeks to amend motion S6M-07613, in the name of Miles Briggs, on the homelessness emergency, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now.

I call Kaukab Stewart to cast a proxy vote on behalf of Stuart McMillan.

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote yes.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

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

Against

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-07613.2, in the name of Shona Robison, is: For 69, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-07613.1, in the name of Mark Griffin, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now.

I call Kaukab Stewart to cast a proxy vote.

Kaukab Stewart: On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote no.

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

The vote is closed.

Mairi Gougeon (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app would not connect. I would have voted no.

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

I can confirm, Ms Webber, that your vote has been recorded.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I tried to change my vote, but my app froze and would not refresh. I should have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: All that I can say in response, Ms Webber, is that your comments are on the record.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysof (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 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, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 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, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 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, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-07613.1, in the name of Mark Griffin, is: For 53, Against 71, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-07613, in the name of Miles Briggs, on the homelessness emergency, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. Members should cast their votes now.

I call Kaukab Stewart to cast a proxy vote.

Kaukab Stewart: On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote yes.

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

The vote is closed.

Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. There was an error. I would have voted no.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 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, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-07613, in the name of Miles Briggs, on the homelessness emergency, as amended, is: For 69, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the large number of homeless people in Scotland, people in temporary accommodation and people on social housing waiting lists; shares concern at all people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, which is why tackling homelessness is a national priority through the joint Scottish Government/COSLA Ending Homelessness Together action plan; acknowledges that a Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group, co-chaired by Shelter Scotland and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers, has been established with the aim of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation; notes that the Scottish Government has delivered 115,558 affordable homes since 2007, of which, over 81,300 were for social rent, including 20,520 council homes; notes the Scottish Government's intention to legislate on both homelessness prevention and the right to housing in this parliamentary session; regrets that the UK Government's mismanagement of the economy has caused increased inflation and significant rises in energy and basic day-to-day living costs, which has led to a cost of living crisis affecting most households that has a disproportionate impact on those on the lowest incomes, and calls on the UK Government to use all the powers at its disposal to tackle the cost of living crisis on the scale required, remove the so-called bedroom tax and benefit cap, increase the Local Housing Allowance, which, as of 2023-24, has been frozen for the third year, and change the no recourse to public funds rules to allow all people, regardless of their nationality, to access homelessness support.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Shona Robison is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Mark Griffin will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S6M-07614.2, in the name of Shona Robison, which seeks to amend motion S6M-07614, in the name of Miles Briggs, on delivering the homes that Scotland needs, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

I call Kaukab Stewart to cast a proxy vote.

Kaukab Stewart: On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote yes.

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

The vote is closed.

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray): On a point of order,

Presiding Officer. I do not think that my app connected. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Gray. I can confirm that your vote was recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 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, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 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, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

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

Against

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment 07614.2, in the name of Shona Robison, is: For 69, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: As the amendment in the name of Shona Robison has been agreed to, the amendment in the name of Mark Griffin falls.

The next question is, that motion S6M-07614, in the name of Miles Briggs, on delivering the homes that Scotland needs, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

I call Kaukab Stewart to cast a proxy vote.

Kaukab Stewart: On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote yes.

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

The vote is closed.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I could not connect to the digital device. I would have voted yes.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 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, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

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

Against

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 66, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that everyone should have access to a warm and affordable home that meets their needs; notes that the previous 50,000 affordable homes target was met in March 2022 following delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; further notes that global supply issues, rising costs and the impact of Brexit have affected the delivery of homes; acknowledges that £752 million is being made available in 2023-24 as part of more than £3.5 billion in the current parliamentary session towards the delivery of the Scottish Government's commitment to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 70% will be for social rent and 10% in remote, rural and island communities, and agrees with the importance of giving tenants stability in their housing costs and housing security at a time of an unprecedented rise in the cost of living.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-07615, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

I call Kaukab Stewart to cast a proxy vote.

Kaukab Stewart: On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote yes.

The Presiding Officer: We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

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

Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 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, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherghlen) (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)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)
 (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-07615, in the name of Màiri McAllan, on the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, is: For 93, Against 30, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the legislative consent memorandum lodged by the Scottish Government on 12 December 2022; agrees not to give consent to the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Bill, and calls on the UK Government to amend the Bill to restrict the geographical application of clause 42, or to otherwise make it a requirement for it to seek the consent of the Scottish Ministers when making provision within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, in order to properly respect devolved responsibilities.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-07617, in the name of Keith Brown, on the Public Order Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant amendments of the Public Order Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 9 November 2022, relating to the extension of existing powers at Part II of the Public Order Act 1986 to the British Transport Police (BTP) in Scotland for policing public processions and assemblies on the railway, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-07616, in the name of John Swinney, on the UK Infrastructure Bank Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the UK Infrastructure Bank Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 11 May 2022 and subsequently amended, relating to the investment activities of the UK Infrastructure Bank in Scotland so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament and alter the executive function of the Scottish Ministers, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-07644, in the name of George Adam, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

I call Kaukab Stewart to cast a proxy vote.

Kaukab Stewart: On behalf of Stuart McMillan, I vote yes.

The Presiding Officer: We will ensure that that is recorded.

The vote is closed.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: We will ensure that that is recorded.

Sharon Dowe (South Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have abstained.

The Presiding Officer: We will ensure that that is recorded.

For

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

Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 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)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-07644, in the name of George Adam, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, is: For 87, Against 0, Abstentions 34.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (additional amount: transactions relating to second homes etc.) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2022 (SSI 2022/375) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: If no member objects, I propose to ask a single question on two Parliamentary Bureau motions.

The final question is, that motions S6M-07645, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, and S6M-07646, on designation of a lead committee, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Dentists, Dental Care Professionals, Nurses, Nursing Associates and Midwives (International Registrations) Order 2022 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Children and Young People Committee be designated as the lead committee, and that the Criminal Justice Committee be designated as a secondary committee, in consideration of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Childcare

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-07412, in the name of Meghan Gallacher, on the future of childcare. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes what it considers the serious concerns reportedly raised by stakeholders in the Central Scotland region and throughout the country regarding the roll-out of the 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare programme; understands that the issues raised by nursery owners in the private, voluntary and independent sector relate to the fairness of the 1,140 hours roll-out and their ability to run a successful business while providing first-class childcare; notes the reported comments by the National Day Nurseries Association that what it considers the emerging "crisis" in the early learning and childcare sector is attributed to the growth of the local authority sector and the COVID-19 pandemic; believes that the Scottish Government has failed to address embedded issues such as staffing, childminders leaving the profession and private nursery pay, which have led to this reported crisis; considers that the Scottish Government has a responsibility to ensure that this programme is a success, and notes the calls on the Scottish Government to address these issues as a matter of urgency to secure the future of the 1,140 hours programme, in order to give children the best possible start in life.

18:16

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con): Good early years education is fundamental for developing vital skills that will help children to succeed in life. Promoting, developing and nurturing those skills, along with strengthening families, are important ways of improving long-term outcomes for children. Research shows that the development of important emotional, cognitive and behavioural skills takes place early in life. Those foundational skills are important not only for a successful transition to primary school, but for later academic achievement and social adjustment.

Giving our children the best start in life should be a priority for every member of the Scottish Parliament. I am passionate about early years education and it is one of the many reasons why I got involved in politics. I want Scotland to be the leader in early years by supporting parents and giving our young people the tools that they need to achieve.

The reality in Scotland today, however, is that the 1,140 hours policy is failing our children, parents and the private, voluntary and independent sectors. The Scottish Government is facing a crisis on top of a crisis: parents not being able to choose which nursery their child attends, PVI nurseries closing their doors, staffing

shortages, a reduction in the number of childminders, out-of-date systems, relationship breakdowns, and nursery owners not knowing whether they can afford to stay in the childcare sector. All of that is happening on the watch of this Scottish Government.

Since returning from maternity leave, I have been in contact with nurseries, charities and organisations that have raised concerns about the Government's handling of the childcare crisis. The Scottish National Party has a responsibility to make sure that its policy works for parents and their children. If free childcare cannot be delivered, it will result in a worse start in early years for education. Parents will be unable to work because they cannot get the childcare that this SNP Government promised them.

I had hoped that things would improve during my maternity leave and that the Government would finally get to grips with the problems that I and others have been raising for years, but nothing has changed. A former nursery owner in Aberdeen told me that she just could not take it any longer. She has now sold her nursery and left the sector completely. Modern apprentices in South Lanarkshire are being paid more than fully-qualified childcare practitioners, but the private, voluntary and independent sector is still being expected to train and not retain.

In North Lanarkshire, a legal dispute has delayed parents' access to childcare. Those parents are now in limbo because they do not know when they can book nursery places for later this year.

In another council, the PVI sector was told that it is no longer a partner but a contractor. The sector is at the end of its tether, and the silence coming from the Government about 1,140 hours is deafening. We have been told that reviews are under way, but no statement on early years education has been made to the Parliament recently. Reviews should lead to action and action should result in change. Where is that change?

The disparity in rates between local authorities and the PVI sector has existed for as long as the 1,140 hours policy. It is widely known that local authorities determine what proportion of early years funding the PVI sector receives, and we know that local authorities get more money per child than their competitors. Parents have a right to know why a child who attends a PVI nursery is apparently worth less than a child in a local authority setting.

The Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey): Does Meghan Gallacher recognise that not only are local authorities service providers but that they have a legal duty to ensure that every eligible child is able to access the

statutory entitlement to funded ELC, including when it is not commercially viable for PVI providers? Is she aware that funding is also provided for additional support needs, the provision of equity and excellence leads, meals in early learning settings, and crisis support, including for families from Ukraine?

Meghan Gallacher: As a rebuttal to the minister, I would like to ask her how a local authority can be a banker and a competitor at the same time. That is the fundamental flaw in the 1,140 hours policy. The Government has effectively created a policy that allows councils to mark their own homework and set their own rates. As we know, they are not setting sustainable rates. Disparity of rates across the country is having a huge financial impact on the PVI sector, and it flies in the face of the Government's 1,140 hours policy, which states that sustainable rates should include the ability to generate a surplus. However, because of the policy, PVI nurseries cannot generate any surplus because the Government has removed the competition from the market.

It is not just the inequity of rates that has led to the current crisis. There has been a complete breakdown in the relationship between councils and nursery owners. That is played out in council chambers, where the state of early years education has been raised time and again. Parents have contacted councillors to say that they cannot access their first, second or third nursery choice. The whole point of the policy is to give parents choice.

Then we have seen councillors refuse to meet nurseries because there has been tension around the delivery of the policy and, instead of trying to resolve the issue, the Government has sat back and let it happen. I have had countless conversations with the PVI sector about the lack of partnership working from councils, and I mentioned earlier how the sector has been treated and how that treatment has led to it feeling completely disillusioned.

In July 2022, I submitted a written question about the Ipsos MORI survey. In her response, the minister stated:

"The guidance is clear that the findings of the cost collection exercise are only a part of the rate setting process, and local authorities will also consider local ELC market conditions and ongoing consultation with providers."—[*Written Answers*, 29 July 2022; S6W-09554.]

However, we know that many nurseries did not fill in the survey. We also know that local authorities determine around 70 per cent of PVI finances, so there is little room for nurseries to grow their business.

Clare Haughey: Will the member take an intervention?

Meghan Gallacher: No. I am in my final minute and I have got more to say.

The 1,140 hours policy is a mess. The SNP Government has reviewed it time and again with no meaningful change. While it chooses not to act, childminders leave the profession and nurseries close. Parents have been promised 1,140 hours of free childcare and they expect the Government to deliver that.

Should the minister ignore the concerns that MSPs will raise today, this vital policy will fail. My debate is about the future of childcare, and it is time that the Government gets to grips with the crisis in our childcare sector before it is too late.

I finish by welcoming the minister's contribution and I look forward to hearing how the Government intends to fix the mess that it has created.

18:23

Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I thank Megan Gallacher for bringing the debate to the chamber.

We can all agree that the first few years of a child's life are instrumental for their development and in shaping their potential. Parents and caregivers therefore need to be supported in creating a nurturing environment in the home and through access to high quality, affordable childcare.

The Scottish Government continues to demonstrate its commitment to achieving those aims, not least through deferral, the successful baby box scheme, free school meals for all primary school pupils, and the expansion of funded early learning and childcare.

It was not mentioned earlier, but the SNP Government inherited a system that delivered just 412 hours of childcare. Now more than 83,000 children in Scotland are accessing 1,140 hours of high-quality funded ELC. My understanding is that that represents 87 per cent of children. That is not to be complacent, but it provides a bit of context for what has gone before in this debate. However, it is vital that we continue to work towards creating a society where all parents have a genuine choice about how their families will balance employment and caring duties. As well as benefiting families, our wider economy will reap the rewards.

A recent study in Quebec found that, for every \$1 invested in childcare infrastructure there, the economy benefited by up to \$2.80 in increased employment. That is why the Scottish Government's commitment to continuing to expand funded early learning and childcare is so

vital for Scotland's long-term prosperity. It is right that we are ambitious in our vision for Scotland's childcare, and all types of providers have key roles to play.

The motion for today's debate rightly highlights the damaging impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the childcare sector, but it also cites the

"growth of the local authority sector",

which, in the view of the National Day Nurseries Association, is the reason for what it calls a childcare "crisis". However, the growth of the local authority sector has been instrumental in expanding access to childcare for all eligible preschool children, irrespective of their circumstances. Again, that has to be acknowledged.

Meghan Gallacher: Does the member not realise that local authority control of the sustainable rates for the PVI sector creates a fundamental flaw in the policy, because the PVI sector cannot compete against the local authorities? Does the member agree that the funding formula that is used to set the rates needs to be reviewed?

Alasdair Allan: I certainly do not claim that the system that we have at the moment is perfection, but I think that we should celebrate the fact that local authorities are paying attractive rates and running effective childcare across the country. The funding agreement between the Scottish Government and COSLA allows local authorities to pay sustainable rates at a level that enables private and third sector services to pay at least the real living wage to staff who are delivering funded ELC. That should be noted in its own right.

The Scottish Government investment has resulted in childcare staffing numbers rising from 33,000 to 38,000 over the past five years. I acknowledge that, as is the case in many sectors, recruitment and retention of staff continue to pose a challenge—not least partly as a result of Brexit, it must be said. However, I acknowledge examples in my own constituency of problems created by staffing shortages. For instance, I can think of a private nursery provider that had to abruptly close one of its rooms just before Christmas. The local authority has worked hard to find spaces for all the displaced three to five-year-olds at short notice. However, parents there—I accept that the same is true in other places—have understandable concerns about the situation, not least because there is no alternative provision for children under 2 in the area.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Dr Allan, I must ask you to conclude, as you are over your time.

Alasdair Allan: I will conclude there, Presiding Officer.

18:28

Roz McCall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): When the First Minister announced the scheme for 1,140 hours she was at Fallin nursery in Stirling. She said:

"All children deserve the best start in life. Providing access to free, high-quality early learning and childcare enriches children's early years and provides them with skills and confidence for starting school and beyond. It also supports parents' ability to work, train or study."

The then COSLA children and young people spokesperson, Councillor Stephen McCabe, said of the programme:

"These additional hours will be transformative for families, ensuring children have more time to play and learn while parents and carers will have more opportunities to work, study or volunteer."

I mention that because the ethos behind the programme was not only to provide Government-funded childcare for under-fives but to allow parents and caregivers to have time for themselves, which in most cases they use to return to work. I would go so far as to say that for the 1,140 hours scheme to work properly, it has to meet the needs of working parents and allow them to do just that.

Most working parents commute to work. Fallin nursery, which is the one that the First Minister visited, opens at 8 o'clock in the morning. If someone lives in the Stirling area and works in Edinburgh, they need to catch the 7.29 train to guarantee that they will get to work for 9. Coming home, they need to catch the 5.33 from Waverley, which arrives in Stirling well after 6, which is when the nursery closes. That assumes that the trains are actually running or are on time.

A simple blend of having a childminder to top and tail the nursery offer would be perfect, but that blend is proving problematic. We have heard from my colleague Meghan Gallacher about the issues that are faced by the private nurseries, but the childminding offer is in sharp decline and under threat too.

The Scottish Government's 2022 report, "Childminding workforce trends: qualitative research report" comes up with the following points:

"The childminding workforce has declined by 28% in Scotland between 2014 and 2020";

the annual decreases of childminders have been accelerating since 2017; the proportion of childminders over the age of 55 has steadily increased, from 11 per cent in 2010 to 24 per cent in 2020;

"a quarter of respondents to the Scottish Childminding Association ... 2020 members' survey said they were unlikely to still be childminding in five years' time";

and

“the process of becoming a childminder was generally viewed ... as time consuming and overly bureaucratic”.

On pay, the report states:

“The amount of administration required was seen as exacerbating the low pay issue because of the longer hours it requires of childminders”.

I could go on, but I have only four minutes. Nevertheless, that is quite a damning list. What is the point of the follow the child funding programme when blended childcare is becoming limited at best? The current level of funding is insufficient to work in this situation, but that is for an entirely different debate.

I look at the decline that has been highlighted by both the National Day Nurseries Association and the Scottish Childminding Association: nursery staffing in crisis, childminding in crisis, the wage disparity, the on-costs and the administration and bureaucracy. We are rapidly heading towards having no offer at all. Let us be honest: that cannot help but reduce the 87 per cent that has already been mentioned here today.

A mix of childminder, public and private offers is imperative to fit in with the needs of the family as well as for the children whom it is meant to provide for. Setting up a nuanced mix of what is available so that a child becomes settled, safe and secure in the time away from their parents is fundamental.

If we do not sort this out, the objective of the 1,140 hours will fail. It will fail to provide for working parents, for rural nurseries, for childminders and, most of all, for all children, which cannot be allowed to happen.

18:33

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow Roz McCall in this debate. I also extend my thanks to Meghan Gallacher for securing this important debate.

When we discuss the future of childcare, it is important to acknowledge that it is an issue that disproportionately affects women. The lack of childcare, specifically affordable and flexible childcare, prevents many women from working, studying and training. It is also inherently a women’s issue in that 95 per cent of the ELC workforce are women. If we want to support women back into work, and support the women in our workforce, we must address the issue of childcare.

Like many members across the chamber, I welcomed the introduction of the 1,140 hours of funded childcare. However, as the Poverty Alliance has pointed out,

“this entitlement must be viewed as the starting point, rather than the end point, of reform.”

I take the opportunity to thank the minister for a meeting that we had recently on a number of matters regarding ELC, and I will touch on a couple of them, in the hope that the minister will put on the record some of the responses that were received. The first has already been mentioned, which is the relationship between our local authority and private sector nurseries. It is true that there is a tension across many local authorities between those two services. Work needs to be done to facilitate a meeting of minds and understanding, so that our young people can be properly served through the early years service. The Scottish Government can make a more positive contribution to facilitating those discussions.

Clare Haughey: The Scottish Government has worked closely with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities because we would not have been able to roll out the 1,140 hours without working with it and the PVI sector. What does Martin Whitfield suggest that the Scottish Government do over and above what we have done already?

Martin Whitfield: It is to the credit of the Scottish Government and COSLA that work has gone on between the two over the roll-out of the 1,140 hours, but the issue is also about the relationship with private sector organisations, many of which rightly feel that they are excluded from committees, work parties and, sometimes, contributing to the debate about early years provision. The simple answer to how that can better be achieved is to invite them into the circle and ensure that they are at the table when decisions are considered and made.

I will make some comments about another specific area that the minister may find useful: the challenge that the private sector—when I talk about the private sector, I am also talking particularly about parents groups and charity groups—faces in gaining access to local authority properties, particularly primary schools, to provide wraparound care. There seem to be great challenges about getting access to those buildings, where some of our early years children are during the day anyway, to enable them to stay later into the evening to counter the travel challenges that we have already heard about.

I realise that time is short, but I wonder whether the minister would also be able to comment on concerns that constituents have raised with me about catchment areas. There is a challenge in understanding the fact that there is no catchment area for the purpose of nursery provision but there is for primary 1. Is the Government looking at that? Parents fail to understand why their child cannot

go to the nursery that is attached to the primary school that they will go to. That, in turn, causes transition problems because, sometimes, the private sector nurseries on which parents rely are too far away to hand the children on.

Ninety per cent of lone parents are women. As long as we fail to fix early years provision, we are failing women up and down the country who would, can be and should be an invaluable asset. They are a huge loss to our economy, but we are also failing our young people at their most vulnerable time, when they need support to transition into a successful education.

The future of childcare needs to remain a priority for the Parliament. We cannot assume that providing the 1,140 hours has fixed it. We must not forget that women and children sit at the centre of the debate.

18:37

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I thank Meghan Gallacher for bringing the debate to the chamber. I hope that we manage to persuade the minister that there is an issue, at least.

The expansion to 1,140 hours is great. I am delighted that it has worked relatively smoothly in many areas, that it has given some flexibility and that it has certainly increased the hours that are available.

Early years provision is good. It is the best start in life for young people. We know that it can transform their opportunities. It sets them on a good course for life. It also gives parents the opportunity to get back to work. I remember all too well the real challenges of juggling the children from childminders into the nursery, so I know that having fully comprehensive wraparound support is important.

Therefore, I give credit to the Government for moving forward on the 1,140 hours but there is a real problem with the disparity of pay levels between the private and voluntary sectors on one hand and the public sector on the other. It is built into the system. We have a host of examples of people who are doing exactly the same job but are paid dramatically different rates of pay. In Falkirk, a local authority head of centre is paid 71 per cent more than their private nursery manager equivalent. In Glasgow, a deputy head of a nursery is paid 87 per cent more than the equivalent in the private sector. In North Lanarkshire, it is exactly the same.

I understand that their responsibilities are different—the minister made that point—but they are not that different. The pay differentials are massive and it is no wonder, therefore, that we have a significant movement of staff away from

the private sector, sometimes to other jobs altogether, not to council nurseries. The pay rates are not sufficient.

Clare Haughey: We must recognise that the childcare industry is a mixed economy and that employers in the private and third sectors are responsible for the business decisions that they make. Public funding accounts for only 33 to 45 per cent of the overall income of private childcare services.

Willie Rennie: I accept that point. In the past, that cross-subsidy was acceptable because the proportion that the state was contributing to nursery businesses was relatively small, but it is now huge. There is a debate about how much the state is contributing to private nurseries: some people say that it is 55 per cent, and we could have a discussion about that, but it has certainly increased, so the ability to cross-subsidise is not there to the extent that it used to be. Why should private clients—parents—pay for the state's inability to pay the staff properly, at the same rate that it is paying similar staff in the public sector? I do not think that there should be cross-subsidy to that extent. Putting all the pressure on private clients is unacceptable.

We need to fix this. Matthew Sweeney revealed it all to the Education, Children and Young People Committee back in May, when he said:

“We are being told by the Scottish Government that the funding that it has given us is to allow private and partner providers to pay the real living wage. At the same time, funding for local authorities must be able to meet the nationally set rates—through collective bargaining—for our workforce.”—[*Official Report, Education, Children and Young People Committee*, 25 May 2022; c 34.]

That quote encapsulates the problem. The Government has accepted and has baked into the system the fact that private nurseries pay up to the national living wage while council nurseries have nationally negotiated rates of pay. That is the problem that we are building into the system.

I understand how that has happened. Private nurseries used to get private income, so they set their own pay rates, but the Government is now paying the majority of those private nurseries' income, which builds in that disparity. It is no wonder that there is an exodus of staff from the private sector. I understand how we got there, but the minister must at least accept that we have a problem and must try to fix it. I accept that we cannot do that overnight, because it will require a massive amount of money, but we must at least have a plan to close that gap and to stop the exodus.

18:42

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I thank my colleague Meghan Gallacher for bringing this debate to the chamber and thank all the PVI sector nurseries for their continued updates and briefings on the roll-out of the 1,140 hours of childcare.

I usually look forward to speaking in these debates, but this is not the first time that we have had to bring the crisis in the PVI sector to the chamber. I find myself frustrated and bewildered that, after several years of debating the issue, we are still here and still bringing the same fears and concerns from the industry to the Scottish Government.

That is strange, because we all support the premise of 1,140 hours of free childcare and the many opportunities that that can bring. This debate is not about policy: it is about the roll-out and implementation of the policy. The debate is about the Scottish Government's continued refusal to accept that there is a serious imbalance between public nurseries and those in the PVI sector. We cannot hide from those facts any longer.

I accept that the pandemic has been a major inhibitor of the roll-out free childcare. I am sure that we all agree on that. However, that should have given the Scottish Government time to consider the issues that had been raised on many occasions on behalf of the sector by members from across the chamber. Willie Rennie talked about the huge disparity across the country in council treatment of private nurseries, which is far from ideal. It is clear from speaking to a number of owners of private nurseries that there is serious concern about how those nurseries are treated and whether they can sustainably be part of the scheme. Those issues remain.

I know that the minister will have examples of local councils whose attitude and approach are collaborative and reflect the way in which the Scottish Government's delivery plan is set out, but there seems to have been little progress towards ensuring a uniform picture across the country. I have heard stories of local authorities openly stating that they do not believe in private nursery childcare and that they intend to bring all childcare in-house and have no intention of partnering with private nurseries.

Clare Haughey: What Mr Whittle alleges is very concerning. If he has evidence of that happening, I would be happy to receive correspondence from him on the matter.

Brian Whittle: Those concerns were raised with the previous minister, so I will forward them on to Clare Haughey.

Unfortunately, the view that I described is still pervasive in certain council areas. As I said, those local authorities have no intention of partnering with private childcare nurseries, which have delivered decades of top-quality care and have become an integral part of their communities. Every nursery whose view was represented highlighted the issue of local authorities recruiting directly from partnership nurseries into local authority nurseries. The private nurseries are losing so many highly trained, qualified staff that the Care Inspectorate is downgrading them because of an increasing turnover of staff.

Local authorities are able to pay a higher rate for apprentices than the partnership nurseries can pay for qualified staff, yet local authorities are asking the partnership nurseries to train their apprentices. We therefore have a ludicrous situation in which apprentices are being paid more than those who are training them. That is not a partnership.

There are huge discrepancies between what the minister has asked local authorities to deliver and what some of them are delivering. There are local authorities that consult partnership nurseries and treat them as a crucial part of the scaling up of childcare in Scotland. However, as I have highlighted, a significant number of local authorities are treating those nurseries as anything but partners, to the point at which many are under threat.

The fact is that, in many cases, local authorities are, in essence, setting themselves up in competition with their partnership nurseries, according to those nurseries. In order for the minister to deliver this crucial policy, she will need all those partnership nurseries, but the truth is that she is in danger of losing them and all their years of experience in dedicated care in the communities. Once they are lost, it will be next to impossible to get them back again.

18:47

Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): I thank Meghan Gallacher for bringing the debate to the chamber.

In November, I met Graeme McAlister, the chief executive officer of the Scottish Childminding Association, who raised some very important issues surrounding the future and welfare of childminders in Scotland.

The childminder workforce in Scotland has now declined by 30 per cent, and with that we have seen the loss of more than 10,000 childminding places for families. As the number of places drops and the cost of childcare rises, many families find themselves unable either to afford childcare or to find it. We cannot allow that situation to continue.

There is currently not enough support offered to the childminding workforce in Scotland, and the sector is under pressure, with a lack of trained professionals available to fill much-needed positions. Childminding is a vital and valuable industry, but the childminding workforce requires significant support to carry it through the current decline.

Many in the workforce are reporting that delivering the funded early learning and childcare hours has caused a significant increase in paperwork. That has resulted in many childminders undertaking an additional, and unpaid, five-plus hours of paperwork each week, resulting in a loss of focus on the child.

Childminders who were previously providing funded childcare hours are no longer choosing to do so because of an unsustainable amount of paperwork. The provision of funded childcare hours must continue, but the Scottish Government needs to ensure that it is supporting the workforce to do that.

Even more alarmingly, 60 per cent of childminders who were surveyed believed that they would have to reduce their heating settings this winter, when children are present in their homes. It is shocking that some are considering switching off their heating when their own families are present, let alone when their home is open for their childminding business during the day. Only 13 per cent of childminders said that they believe that they can pay themselves the living wage and almost all respondents reported that they worked extra unpaid hours every week. That statistic is deeply concerning.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis is putting this vital industry at risk. It is time for the Scottish Government to recognise the pressures on the childminding workforce in Scotland. Underpaying and overworking this integral sector will never allow it to flourish. The Scottish Government must take measures to encourage and support the much-needed recruitment of childminders and demonstrate that it values Scotland's children and the dedicated workers who care for them.

18:50

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Initially, it had not been my intention to speak in the debate, so thank you for allowing me to do so, Presiding Officer. I am sure that you will be glad to hear that I might not take up four whole minutes.

I thank Meghan Gallacher for bringing the debate to the chamber. As the minister will know, I have had some input into the issue and I have been contacted by PVI nurseries in my

constituency, some of which also reached out to Meghan Gallacher. They have expressed concerns about the current situation and the provision of 1,140 hours. As Meghan Gallacher said, some of those concerns relate to pay but, as we discussed earlier today, there are other concerns about the cost of living crisis. That is all coming together.

One of the private nurseries in Coatbridge is Kirktonholme nursery. I should declare an interest, because my daughter goes there one day a week. It is an absolutely fantastic nursery. If the minister were so inclined, I am sure that the nursery would love to have her come to visit its forest school. I have visited as well as having been there with the wee one—it is really good. Parkview nursery, which is also in my constituency, is also really good. Some really good work is going on there.

I agree with other members that we are in a difficult position if workers in the PVI nurseries are paid significantly less than workers in local authority nurseries. Those PVI nurseries are doing a fantastic job. That might not be the case across the board, but it seems to be the case in North Lanarkshire. Do not get me wrong, in North Lanarkshire there are some excellent local authority nurseries, such as Stepping Stones and Sgoil Àraich Tollbrae, which is the fantastic Gaelic nursery where my middle child went.

Overall, the provision of 1,140 hours is a major success. However, when I have dealt with the private nurseries who have come to me for a bit of support—more or less all the nurseries in my constituency have approached me at one time or another, either collectively or individually—I have felt that there is a bit of a stand-off. The local authority nurseries are really moving forward with pay and have been able to pay their staff really good wages. We should be proud of that, and I am sure that the minister is really proud of it. However, the current system means that the PVI sector is falling behind and, as we have heard, staff are leaving. Is there some way that we can have both?

As I said, I had not prepared a speech but just decided to speak during the debate. I will end with a couple of asks. The first is for Meghan Gallacher—I know that she will be up for this. In North Lanarkshire, before the legal dispute, or whatever we call it, there was going to be a meeting between MSPs of all parties and the private nursery sector. The lead person, Ms Leggat, contacted us to say that, because of a letter that they had received from the local authority, they were no longer able to have that meeting. When the time is right and any proceedings, whatever they may be, have finished, I wonder whether we could have that meeting. I see that Meghan Gallacher is nodding. I

would be happy to attend a local meeting on a cross-party basis.

The second ask is for the minister and is just what Willie Rennie and others have asked. Will she take another look at the provision of 1,140 hours? It is an excellent policy that is working really well but, as a constituency MSP, I have picked up that something is not going completely right with the PVI sector. I hope that she can look at that, either nationally or for specific areas across the country, to see whether there are solutions. I heard the point that reviewing the funding formula might be one way to address that. I am not sure about that, but I ask the minister to respond to that in her summing up.

18:55

The Minister for Children and Young People (Clare Haughey): This has been an important debate. It is critical that we put on record the significant collective achievement of delivering 1,140 hours and again thank our partners in local government, as well as the private, third and childminding sectors for all their hard work in making such a success of the expansion so far. I am particularly proud that the offer is available to all eligible children, regardless of their parents' working status, meaning that Scotland has the most generous childcare offer in the United Kingdom today. I will continue to make the case that children's needs must always come first.

It is testament to the efforts of everyone in the sector that we now have near-universal uptake among three and four-year-olds: 99 per cent in the latest published statistics. It is also good news that the number of two-year-olds who are registering for funded ELC is at the highest-ever level. I am pleased that we have secured a legal gateway with the UK Government that finally means that local authorities in Scotland will be able to access the information that they need to contact eligible households later this year. That will make a real difference to levels of uptake, and my officials are working closely with councils to support them to reach as many families as possible.

I am also delighted to read about the positive experiences that families are having with funded ELC. Quality and flexibility are at the heart of our 1,140 hours offer, and survey results that were published in December show that we are delivering for families. As many as 97 per cent of parents are satisfied with the quality of the funded hours that their children access, and more than 88 per cent of parents are satisfied that they have the flexibility to use their funded hours in a way that works for them.

There has been discussion about the rates that are paid to providers. I reiterate that, throughout

the expansion to 1,140 hours, we have used the significant public investment that we have made in funded ELC—it will be almost £1 billion in 2023-24—to seek to support and improve conditions across the private, voluntary and childminding workforce that delivers this vital service.

Meghan Gallacher: We all agree on the principle of 1,140 hours—it is universally accepted across all political parties. However, will the minister agree to fix the rates system for the PVI sector? That is a huge ask, and it will make a big difference to that sector as we continue to roll out 1,140 hours.

Clare Haughey: I hear what the member says, but I do not accept the premise that ELC is failing or that it is in crisis in the way that she describes.

Scotland is the only part of the UK to have made a commitment to paying staff the real living wage for the delivery of funded ELC, and we have made real progress. Before the expansion, approximately 80 per cent of staff who were delivering funded ELC in the private and third sectors were paid less than the living wage. In contrast, our 2021 health check indicated that 88 per cent of private providers intended to pay the real living wage to all their staff from August 2021.

Our investment in sustainable rates is also critical to enabling employers to pay the real living wage to professionals who are delivering funded ELC, and to ensuring the quality and sustainability of provision.

Willie Rennie: Will the minister give way?

Clare Haughey: As a result of the ELC expansion, the average rates that are paid to providers to deliver funded ELC to three to four-year-olds have increased by 57 per cent since 2017. The average rate that is paid for three to four-year-olds by Scottish local authorities is the highest in the UK in 2023-24, at £5.77 per hour, compared to £5 per hour in Wales and £5.15 per hour in England.

Brian Whittle: Will the member give way on that point?

Clare Haughey: I think that Mr Rennie wanted to intervene.

Willie Rennie: I accept that the rates in Scotland are higher than those in England, and that the real living wage is an advance on what was being done before. However, the disparity is causing a problem, and I hope that the minister will accept that—I have heard her talk about that in committee. Nurseries and rooms are closing, and we need the PVI sector for the flexibility that parents desperately need. I understand all the arguments that the minister is making, but she has to accept that there is a problem.

Clare Haughey: We have debated the issue in committee. I cannot remember whether, when Mr Rennie raised it there, I referenced the most recent ELC census that was published in December. He mentioned a reduction in the services that provide funded ELC. The census found that there has been a reduction of 1 per cent, so there has not been the mass closure that some people might have heralded. I am not accusing Mr Rennie of that.

I appreciate that, for providers, conditions are challenging, particularly as a result of the pandemic and the cost crisis. That is why we are continuing with the nursery rates relief scheme, which provides 100 per cent relief on non-domestic rates to eligible day nurseries beyond 30 June this year. It is worth noting that the temporary discount on rates for nurseries in England ended on 1 April 2022.

We are also developing a programme of tailored support to enable childcare providers to access specialist advice on strengthening and diversifying their businesses. I would like to take a moment to recognise the unique and invaluable role that childminders play in delivering high-quality funded ELC, which Mr Choudhury spoke about. Recent years have been challenging for childminders, but we continue to work closely with our partners, including the Scottish Childminding Association, to increase the number of childminders in Scotland through the implementation of the Scottish Government report entitled “Our Commitment to Childminding in Scotland”.

Roz McCall: The number of childminders in Scotland fell from 6,752 in 2012 to 4,829 in 2021. Does the minister accept that if the number continues to decline in that way there will be no childminding sector left?

Clare Haughey: I was about to come on to the work that we are doing to promote and increase recruitment to childminding. I accept that there has been a drop in the number of childminders in Scotland—that is a fact. However, the decline is replicated across the UK and is not unique to Scotland.

We are working with the Scottish Childminding Association to support the delivery of targeted recruitment models such as the one established by the innovative Scottish rural childminding partnership, which aims to recruit and train 100 new childminders in remote and rural areas. We are funding an extension of the recruitment pilot to urban areas. We have also recently committed to funding a new pilot to provide targeted support to childminders to help them to streamline the administrative burdens associated with their practice.

In response to Martin Whitfield’s point about engagement with the sector, I advise that, tomorrow, the childcare sector working group will meet representatives from across the PVI sector, local authorities and the Scottish Childminding Association. We are establishing a new national childcare providers forum that will be a space for strategic policy discussion. We are keen to have as wide a representation of the sector as possible there. We are also providing up to £500,000 over the next two years for the Scottish childcare sector representation and sustainability fund to support eligible childcare sector representative bodies to deliver their representative functions, which are key. We need to hear their voices and strengthen their long-term sustainability.

Those are strong foundations for us to build on. I look forward to continuing to work closely with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and our partners in the sector to deliver the new legislation on deferrals from August and on other priorities, including continuing to deliver progress on sustainable rates and the uptake of the offer for two-year-olds. I also look forward to continuing our work on building a new system of childcare for school-age children and developing the evidence around expanding ELC for one and two-year-olds, which will deliver on our ambitious commitment for Scotland’s children and families.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate.

Meeting closed at 19:04.

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

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