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Wednesday 1 March 2023

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 1 March 2023

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

Portfolio Question Time

Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Good afternoon, colleagues. The first item of business is portfolio question time. The first portfolio is constitution, external affairs and culture. As ever, if members wish to ask a supplementary question, I invite them to press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question.

There is a fair bit of interest in the questions, so I make my usual plea for brevity in questions and responses.

Heritage Sites (Inspection)

1. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when the nationwide programme of inspection to assess the condition of, and the impact of climate change on, some of Scotland's most significant heritage sites, being undertaken by Historic Environment Scotland, is expected to be completed. (S6O-01932)

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray): The inspection programme continues to progress well. Tactile inspections have been carried out at 30 sites across Scotland since last May. Historic Environment Scotland has been able to reopen a number of sites in Claire Baker's region, including Doune castle, Burleigh castle, and Inchcolm abbey. There is full or partial access to more than 80 per cent of the properties in care, and Historic Environment Scotland continues to assess the potential to reopen sites as soon as it is safe to do so. I will continue to urge it to do so as quickly as possible.

Claire Baker: Although the safety of sites is paramount, it is unfortunate that progress is not being made more quickly. The inspection programme has now moved on to level 2 sites, which include Aberdour castle, in my region. I was pleased to visit it recently, and I met HES when I was there.

In 2019, the castle had more than 20,000 visitors, and I know that the minister recognises

the impact of that on local visitors. Aberdour has much to offer, but part of its attraction, particularly for international visitors, is the castle. Has the Government made any assessment of what additional support towns and villages such as Aberdour will need during such prolonged periods of closure?

Neil Gray: I can attest to my family's relationship with Aberdour—my children love Aberdour beach.

The Aberdour castle site is partially open. The walled gardens and driveway were made accessible last October, the inspection was completed in November and work is going on to reopen the internal areas, with some restrictions—the date for that is yet to be confirmed.

I am happy to either meet Claire Baker or ensure that HES can meet her, because she is right to say that such sites are important anchors for local communities—that is well known—and I want to make sure that she is aware of the progress that has been made.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): Last week, Historic Environment Scotland's chief executive informed a packed meeting that was organised by Linlithgow Civic Trust that Linlithgow palace is to partially reopen in May, following necessary works, which is welcome news. However, bearing in mind the damage to the north range of Linlithgow palace and, indeed, the many other properties that still face significant and continuing damage from the elements, will the minister consider a new and comprehensive ruins management strategy to ensure that our much-loved and valued ruined heritage can be managed into the future?

Neil Gray: I am pleased that Fiona Hyslop was able to have such a successful meeting with the local community and that HES was able to give good news. Like her, I welcome the partial reopening of Linlithgow palace in May and the work that is being undertaken by HES to inspect and repair other properties in care.

The properties in care include some of Scotland's most iconic and culturally significant assets, including Linlithgow palace, and we recently consulted more broadly on a refreshed strategy for Scotland's historic environment, which seeks to prioritise activity such as that suggested by Fiona Hyslop, which supports economic recovery and renewal. That strategy focuses on creating a more resilient and sustainable historic environment and helps to communicate the contribution that the historic environment makes to our nation.

Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con): The core conservation costs for properties in care in 2021-22 were £7.7 million. That represents a 14

per cent reduction from 2017-18. The decline in the provision has been a consistent trend over the past five years. Given the impact of closed heritage sites on tourism and the local economy, can the minister tell me what discussions he has had with HES to ensure that funding for conservation and maintenance is maintained, if not increased, so that no more sites close and those that are closed reopen as quickly as possible?

Neil Gray: Obviously, Historic Environment Scotland has its own decisions to make, but I have regular meetings with HES's representatives about its strategic priorities, as I have outlined to previous questioners. The Scottish Government has substantially increased resource to Historic Environment Scotland in recognition of not just the impact of the pandemic on HES's commercial income but the need to ensure that our properties in care are maintained. Over 2022-23, we will support Historic Environment Scotland with £60.6 million to maintain Scotland's heritage and historic environment, which is an 80 per cent increase on pre-pandemic levels of funding. HES is working hard to reopen our heritage sites as soon as it is safe to do so, and we continue to support that endeavour.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 2 was withdrawn.

Northern Ireland Protocol Bill

3. Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on any engagement it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the potential impact on Scotland of the on-going negotiations over the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill. (S6O-01934)

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): I welcome the progress, which was announced this week, on the Northern Ireland protocol. The Scottish Government consistently called for the UK Government to withdraw its irresponsible Northern Ireland Protocol Bill and to seek a sustainable, negotiated solution to that entirely avoidable and deeply damaging dispute with our European neighbours.

However, Scotland is still left with Brexit and all of the damage that comes with it. I urge the UK Government now to seize the opportunity to start the overdue work of repairing relations with our European Union partners more widely and rebuilding closer co-operation and partnership across the many areas in which Scotland's interests have been harmed by Brexit.

In addition, the UK Government must now clarify the policy on Northern Ireland to Great Britain

trade. That will be crucial to understanding the impact on devolved responsibilities, including physical checks on food safety and animal and plant health, as well as required associated infrastructure such as the border control post at Cairnryan.

Clare Adamson: If all is well and that goes through, we look forward to a return to horizon funding. However, can it be right that Scotland, which voted overwhelmingly to remain within the EU, has been ignored and is feeling the full force of a hard Brexit while Mr Sunak shamelessly boasts about the huge economic benefits that access to the EU single market will bring for Northern Ireland?

Angus Robertson: We have repeatedly called for the UK Government to find a negotiated solution to that entirely avoidable dispute with the European Union. The Scottish Government unequivocally supports the Good Friday agreement and we welcome the new agreement that has been announced on the Northern Ireland protocol. Scotland did not vote for Brexit, yet we continue to suffer from its consequences, including the exacerbation of the current cost of living crisis. While Northern Ireland has been given preferential access to the huge European single market, Scotland, which voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, has been ignored by the UK Government and subjected to the full damage of a disastrous hard Brexit. The Scottish Government is now carefully considering the deal and what it means for Scotland. Brexit has brought nothing but harm to people, communities and businesses in Scotland, and the Scottish Government remains committed to realising Scotland's potential as an independent nation within the European Union.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): For decades, the troubles in Ireland have cost lives, ruined families and destroyed communities, and the situation has required delicate, pragmatic, exhausting engagement and diplomacy by great leaders over many years. Therefore, forgive me if I get a bit exasperated by politicians here who seek to exploit the developments in Northern Ireland in order to advance their own narrow agenda. Will the First Minister—and the minister here—think again about drawing parallels between Northern Ireland and Scotland?

Angus Robertson: I do not think that we have enough time to do that question justice. As we have learned from the developments this week, it would have been perfectly possible to reach an agreement in principle before now, but that was impossible given the confrontational approach of the previous UK Prime Minister—notwithstanding his claim that he had an oven-ready deal. It behoves all of us to understand that Northern Ireland remaining in the single European market

means that Northern Ireland will have a competitive advantage relative to Scotland and Scottish businesses. [*Interruption.*] That is a statement of fact; I do not know whether Willie Rennie disagrees with that.

Regardless of where stand on the question of whether Scotland should be a sovereign member state of the European Union, it is going to become ever more apparent that Northern Ireland is in an exceptionally privileged position—the Prime Minister himself described it as such—and that Scotland is at a disadvantage.

I hope that the Liberal Democrats and their fellow parties that, at one stage, supported membership of the European Union but now support Brexit will think again and stand up for Scotland's social, economic and political interests, at least for this.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): The cabinet secretary has mentioned harm. Does he agree that the renegotiated NI protocol could have a harmful impact on Scottish businesses that no longer have access to the EU market, as has been mentioned, while Northern Ireland businesses enjoy those benefits?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As briefly as possible, cabinet secretary.

Angus Robertson: I have already put on record that I think that it is a good thing that Northern Ireland is able to remain in the single European market. It is something that the Scottish Government has supported while, at the same time, saying that Scotland voted to remain in the European Union and that, if it is possible to find an arrangement for part of the United Kingdom to remain in the single European market, surely it must be possible to find that for another, namely Scotland.

Unfortunately, the UK Government chose to ignore that, although it would have been entirely possible. Therefore, we find ourselves in a situation in which, notwithstanding the fact that we think that it is a good thing that a solution has been found for Northern Ireland, we recognise that Scotland not having that status in the single European market puts Scotland at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to inward investment and our exporting industries. Surely, that should be obvious to everybody in the chamber.

No doubt, we will come back to the issue over the months and years ahead.

Sistema Scotland

4. Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to

support the work of Sistema Scotland. (S6O-01935)

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray): Sistema Scotland is a brilliant example of how lives can be changed and enriched through culture. Its work contributes to many Scottish Government policy outcomes—in particular, our ambitions to tackle child poverty.

The Scottish Government has supported Sistema Scotland with annual funding since 2012, providing £1.1 million in 2022-23. In addition, we have established a cross-portfolio reference group for Sistema Scotland to understand where its excellent work aligns with priorities across Government. The group's next meeting is due to take place in the spring.

Michael Marra: I thank the minister for that answer and for his support for this vital organisation.

Last week, the Scottish National Party councillors on Dundee City Council cut all financial support for Sistema Scotland's Big Noise Douglas and, right now, the SNP council in Aberdeen city is cutting all funding. Vital and effective support—which is proven by research from the Glasgow Centre for Population Health—for 1,250 of the most disadvantaged children in Scotland has been swept away. Yesterday, the world-renowned Gustavo Dudamel of the Los Angeles Philharmonic said that those programmes in Scotland have been an

"inspiration to the world and planted seeds with millions of children everywhere."

What will the Government do now? Will it be true to its own words or will culture be only for the privileged few? We know that the programme works. Will the minister step forward where other SNP members have failed?

Neil Gray: We are already engaging with Sistema Scotland. The Deputy First Minister met the organisation only a few weeks ago around how we can continue to support the work that it does. We are aware of the decisions that have been taken at a local authority level, which are concerning given the value of the work that Sistema Scotland does in local authorities across Scotland, and we are working closely with the organisation to showcase the impact of its work.

I must emphasise that local authorities are accountable to the public that elects them, and they have the financial freedom to operate independently, taking account of local needs. As a former councillor, I know that Michael Marra will understand and agree with that.

We will continue to work with Sistema and with our local authority partners, to which we are providing nearly £13.5 billion through the local government settlement in 2023-24. However, councils are autonomous and it is their responsibility to agree budgets, considering their statutory duties and local and national priorities.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): I share the minister's views on Sistema and the good work that it does in our communities, which is why I am absolutely disgusted with the SNP-Liberal Democrat administration at Aberdeen City Council for axing the budget for Big Noise Torry, which was a budget that I protected while I was council leader for four years.

Will the minister now intervene to find a way to save Big Noise Torry?

Neil Gray: This is an issue for our local authorities to determine; it is not for MSPs or Government ministers to intervene in local government decisions. That is a general principle to which most of us normally subscribe.

We will continue to work with Sistema Scotland and our local government partners to provide services that allow people to carry on enjoying cultural experiences and to ensure that children, in particular, can enjoy the types of offerings that organisations such as Sistema Scotland provide to lift them out of poverty and to ensure that they have the aspiration to continue to contribute through culture.

I will ensure that those issues continue to be reported in the work that we do.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 5 was not lodged.

Gender-specific Risk and Safety Planning (Ukrainian Refugees)

6. Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what gender-specific risk and safety planning is carried out to support Ukrainian refugees at the point of their arrival in Scotland, as well as in the medium and long term. (S6O-01937)

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray): Ruth Maguire can be assured that ensuring the wellbeing and safety of Ukrainian people through early identification of risk and need is central to our response, as it has been from the very outset of our programme.

Our welcome hubs conduct trauma-informed initial assessments to identify any immediate welfare or protection concerns. That includes gender-specific risks. On-going support is tailored on the basis of the needs of the individual and is

delivered locally. The Scottish Government is working with various safeguarding partners to inform our approach. That is linked to equally safe, which is our strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls.

Ruth Maguire: We know that, once trafficking happens, it is very difficult to recover victims of trafficking. Last week, the cross-party group on human trafficking heard from experts that the risks that increase people's vulnerability include insecure accommodation, relationship breakdown and complacency from authorities. In saying that, it was putting a challenge to all of us. Does the minister agree not only that there is the opportunity to be awake to the threat and to work together to prevent that heinous crime before it happens, but that it is imperative on us all to do so?

Neil Gray: I agree—100 per cent—with Ruth Maguire. Guidance for practitioners involved in safeguarding people arriving from Ukraine, to identify and respond to risk and need, has been published and is regularly reviewed. In 2022-23, we are providing £622,000 to the Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance to support adult females trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. That is in addition to more than £2.5 million that was provided to the Migrant Help charity during this financial year to support all the adult victims of human trafficking and exploitation in Scotland.

Given her clear interest and long-standing work in the area, I would be more than happy to meet Ruth Maguire to talk about the issue in more detail.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Foysoil Choudhury has a brief supplementary.

Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): The SEREDA—sexual and gender-based violence against refugees: from displacement to arrival—project in Scotland recently launched its report on sexual and gender-based violence among refugees in Scotland. The report highlights the urgent need for services in Scotland to focus on forced migrant survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, including a dedicated working group to address the specific needs of survivors. Given the continued influx of refugees into Scotland from Ukraine, what action is the Scottish Government taking to consider the report's recommendations?

Neil Gray: I would be more than happy to consider that. In addition to the £622,000 funding for trafficking awareness and more than £2.5 million provided to Migrant Help that I mentioned in response to Ruth Maguire's question, we are also funding and working directly with the Scottish Refugee Council. It provides initial support and it is

also helping us to ensure that, from a policy perspective, we are responding in the most effective way.

As I said, I would be more than happy to consider what Foysol Choudhury has raised, and I thank him for his support and work in this area.

European Policy Alignment

7. Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is ensuring that Scotland keeps as aligned as possible with European policy developments. (S6O-01938)

The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): The Scottish Government is committed to remaining close to the European Union and to building the strongest possible relationship between the EU and Scotland. Our alignment policy protects the wellbeing of the people of Scotland by maintaining and advancing the standards that we share with the EU, wherever it is practical and possible to do that under the current constitutional settlement. That policy was approved by this Parliament in June 2022 and it is being delivered through evidence-based policy making and stakeholder engagement.

Our alignment policy helps to realise the vision that we share for the continent's future and its part in the world, from ensuring our people's prosperity to tackling the climate emergency and supporting the people Ukraine, and it helps to pave the way for an independent Scotland's return to the EU in the future.

Fiona Hyslop: Can the cabinet secretary confirm that that work is properly resourced, in order that Scotland, given the opportunity, can join the European Union as seamlessly as possible? Can he also confirm that, with all the United Kingdom's political parties—Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat—embracing Brexit and having no intention of rejoining the EU, the only road to Scotland joining the EU is through independence?

Angus Robertson: Yes, and the Scottish Government's approach focuses on maintaining and advancing the high standards that we share with the European Union, where that is possible. Consideration of that is integral to our approach to evidence-based policy making across the full range of devolved policy areas. At the same time, the UK Government's Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill threatens those high standards and undermines devolution, which is why this Parliament has agreed not to give consent to that bill.

The member also references other parties' policies in relation to the EU. Labour, of course, does not just now support Brexit; it supports the

hard Brexit that was negotiated by Boris Johnson, which keeps Scotland and the UK out of the huge European single market and customs union, despite all the economic damage that that is causing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will take a brief supplementary from Sarah Boyack, who joins us online.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): It will come as no surprise to the cabinet secretary that I am going to raise the issue of transparency; I have raised it before. My question is about the ability of MSPs to scrutinise where the Scottish Government decides to keep pace with EU legislation and where it does not. That transparency is severely constrained due to a lack of information.

Will the cabinet secretary confirm whether the Scottish Government is still considering the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee's proposal for a memorandum of understanding between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament, on providing information on and scrutiny of the Government's approach to keeping pace with key pieces of EU legislation?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As briefly as possible, cabinet secretary.

Angus Robertson: I am happy to confirm to Sarah Boyack that our officials are continuing to work with parliamentary officials on the question of European Union alignment. That is about not just the historical issues, but the forthcoming challenge of the retained European Union law process that we will have to go through. I am absolutely seized of that matter. It will, no doubt, be a subject that Sarah Boyack and others in Parliament will wish to be reassured on. I am happy to give the commitment to her that I want us to have the best transparency in place as we go forward and to make sure that members understand the ways in which the Scottish Government intends for us to remain aligned with European Union law.

Malawi Development Programme

8. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of its contributions to development in Malawi through its Malawi development programme 2018-23. (S6O-01939)

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray): The Scottish Government has committed £11.4 million to the current programme for projects that contribute to the achievement of the United Nations sustainable

development goals. An example is our project that has established Malawi's first dental school, which now has more students enrolled than there are registered dentists in Malawi, 50 per cent of whose latest intake is female.

We require six-monthly progress reports before any grant payments are made, which allows for on-going assessment of each project's contribution to development in Malawi. Grant-holders are also required to provide an end-project report with details of the project's achievements and any lessons learned.

Christine Grahame: I think that we would all agree that the partnership between Malawi and Scotland remains important—perhaps now more than ever, as both countries face immense global challenges. How is the Scottish Government ensuring continued support for Malawi and other partner countries such as Rwanda and Zambia beyond March 2023?

Neil Gray: Christine Grahame's question allows me to re-emphasise the importance of, and how proud I am of, the incredible and durable relationship between Scotland and Malawi and the incredible work that is done by our partners, including the Scotland Malawi Partnership and the Malawi Scotland Partnership, to ensure that that relationship can be continued and sustained.

We are working on the design of our new programmes to implement the outcomes of our international development review. While that programming is under way, I have taken the decision to extend our existing cohort of projects until March 2024. The additional spend on those programmes will help to ensure that the Scottish Government continues to support our partner countries and that we utilise our international development fund in an efficient and effective manner.

Across our whole programme, the Scottish Government remains in close contact with our partners in Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia. We are aware of the immense challenges in those countries and continue to respond to them as we can.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will have a very brief supplementary from Alexander Stewart.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): NHS Tayside developed the Scottish emergency medicine-Malawi project, with the aim of delivering in Malawi a national emergency and trauma network. What progress has been made on that project to date?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, briefly.

Neil Gray: I hope that the correspondence that I have sent to Mr Stewart will be of assistance in that regard. As I have said, we are in the process

of reviewing and restarting some of our programmes, where there is an opportunity for groups and bids to be brought forward. I would be happy to continue to work with Mr Stewart and others who are looking to be part of that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes portfolio questions on constitution, external affairs and culture. There will be a brief pause before we move to the next portfolio.

Justice and Veterans

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The next portfolio is justice and veterans. Again, if members wish to ask a supplementary, I invite them to press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question. We again have quite a bit of interest, so I ask for brief questions and responses, please.

Domestic Abuse Legislation

1. **Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the progress being made to ensure that domestic abuse legislation better reflects victims' experiences. (S6O-01940)

The Minister for Community Safety (Elena Whitham): We must treat domestic abuse survivors with compassion and make available services that acknowledge the significant trauma that they have experienced. Our victim-centred approach fund has awarded £48 million to provide support to victims, including £18.5 million for specialist advocacy support for survivors of gender-based violence. Research on the operation of our groundbreaking domestic abuse legislation found that it better reflects victims' experiences. However, I am acutely aware that more needs to be done, and I am committed to working with our partners across the justice system to do that, including through legislative reform and rolling out trauma-informed practice.

Jackie Dunbar: I, too, welcome the findings of the recent interim report on the groundbreaking domestic abuse legislation, which highlights the beneficial impact of including emotional and psychological abuse in that area of the law. Will the minister outline how the measures in the 2023-24 budget will support the on-going work to ensure that victims' rights and needs are at the centre of Scotland's criminal justice system?

Elena Whitham: We are strengthening how justice services and wider public services support victims through our budget. That includes continuation of support to more than 20 organisations through the victim-centred approach fund and support to victims of violent crime in Scotland through the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

As part of our vision for justice and the commitment to support victims on their journey to healing and recovery, we must offer approaches in justice that place victims at their heart. A victims advisory board has been established by the victims task force to ensure that victims' experiences are directly informing our action and the actions of our justice partners. I know that Jackie Dunbar will welcome the establishment of the women's justice leadership panel, which I chair, and which is looking at how we address gender inequality and improve women's experiences in the justice system.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): One way that we can crack down on domestic abuse is to legislate to crack down on forced marriages involving young people. The minister will be aware of the steps taken in England and Wales to raise the age of consent for marriage to 18. Does the Scottish Government plan to do the same?

Elena Whitham: That is something that the Scottish Government is actively looking at.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): A report published by the Scottish Government this month looked into the experience of families who have fallen victim to domestic abuse. Female victims of domestic abuse told interviewers of their harrowing experiences in the courtroom, with their abusers exhibiting intimidating and threatening behaviour towards them before and during the trial. In one case that I know of, a complainer of rape alleges that her abuser's solicitor turned to the galleries and pointed at her during sentencing. Does the minister believe that there should be clear protocols for behaviour in courtrooms that should be enforced, and clear ways to complain about any incidents?

Elena Whitham: In 2021, in consultation with the victims task force, we commissioned NHS Education for Scotland to create a knowledge and skills framework specifically to support the development of a trauma-informed workforce in the justice sector. The framework was endorsed by the victims task force at a meeting on 7 December 2022. We are acutely aware of that issue.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): A number of my constituents have advised me that their abusive ex-partners were able to continue to abuse them in ways that were difficult to evidence in court, despite the robust legislation that is in place. For example, ex-partners have used child contact arrangements to exert control. What action can be taken to increase understanding across the justice system of the often insidious nature of abuse—we have just heard an example of that—to ensure that even less obvious examples of abuse are recognised as such?

Elena Whitham: I fully appreciate the need to ensure that abuse is recognised across the justice system, in both criminal and civil cases. In relation to child contact cases, the legislation requires the court to have regard to abuse and the risk of abuse. The Scottish Government is committed to preparing a discussion paper on the interaction between criminal and civil cases. A key part of that will involve considering how all forms of abuse can be tackled in order to prevent the situations that were clearly narrated by Fiona Hyslop.

Cybercrime

2. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to tackle cybercrime. (S6O-01941)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): The Scottish Government works closely with national and United Kingdom partners—including Police Scotland, the National Cyber Security Centre and the Cyber and Fraud Centre Scotland—to tackle fraud and cybercrime and to reduce the harm that they inflict on communities in Scotland.

A range of advice to help people to improve their online safety can be found at cyberscotland.com, as well as on the National Cyber Security Centre, Cyber Aware, Take Five and Get Safe Online websites. Victims of any crime should phone Police Scotland.

I highlight that it is currently cyber Scotland week, which I opened at the FutureScot cybersecurity conference on Monday. More than 100 events are taking place across the country to raise awareness of being safe and secure online, and to promote cybersecurity careers.

Kenneth Gibson: I thank the cabinet secretary for that full response.

In recent years, there has been a huge shift in small firms moving their business online. However, BT research shows that thousands of Scotland's small firms could be open to cyberattack because they have little or no business-grade cybersecurity in place. Almost half of those businesses suffered cyberbreaches last year.

What specific measures are in place to help our small businesses? Are there plans to step up the share of police resources that are dedicated to tackling cybercrime?

Keith Brown: Kenny Gibson has raised a very important point, not least because it has been shown that smaller companies are now being attacked through cybercrimes—particularly ransomware and so on—whereas, in the past, it tended to be larger companies that were affected.

The Scottish Government has funded Cyber Scotland to partner ScotlandIS to engage with and support the information technology managed services sector, as many small businesses rely on it for their security. We also support another partner, the Cyber and Fraud Centre Scotland—which was previously the Scottish Business Resilience Centre—in hosting a cyberincident response helpline, which aims to offer first-line incident support to small businesses.

The allocation of other resources is a matter for Police Scotland. However, despite UK Government austerity, the Scottish Government has increased police funding year on year since 2016-17. In 2023-24, the service will receive additional resource funding of £80 million, which represents a 6.3 per cent increase.

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): The National Crime Agency has estimated that up to 850,000 people in the UK pose a sexual threat to children. That is a truly horrifying and terrifying statistic. Two years ago, Police Scotland's award-winning get help or get caught campaign targeted people who might seek to groom children online or in real life. Given the constant online threat to children, will the Government be introducing any similar measures or initiatives?

Keith Brown: We work very closely with the UK Government in that general area. We have done so in relation to its Online Safety Bill, a number of provisions of which relate to exactly the kind of crimes that Russell Findlay is talking about. It is best that we work together with the UK Government, as we do, on issues that have no borders—there are no borders online. If we did not do so, that would not be an effective mechanism to stop such crimes, so we work in conjunction with the UK Government and other partners.

The Scottish Police Authority, through the serious organised crime group, looks at a number of ways in which children can be victims through online activity. That includes human trafficking as well as sexual abuse.

A great deal of work is on-going. I am happy to provide Russell Findlay with further information on other initiatives in writing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 3 was not lodged.

Question 4 is from Natalie Don, who joins us online.

Victim Surcharge Fund

4. **Natalie Don (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how the victim surcharge fund is aiming to support women who are victims of domestic abuse. (S6O-01943)

The Minister for Community Safety (Elena Whitham): The victim surcharge fund has opened three times to applications from organisations that provide support to victims of crime. So far, 11 organisations—including Victim Support Scotland, Dumbarton District Women's Aid, Edinburgh Women's Aid and Angus Women's Aid—have shared more than £917,000 of grant funding to provide practical help directly to victims, including victims of domestic abuse.

Examples of support that has been provided by the fund include the meeting of clothing and other essential expenses for those escaping domestic abuse and the installation of alarm and video systems to help victims to feel safe.

Natalie Don: The trauma and fear that victims of domestic abuse suffer is incomprehensible for many people, and the support that is required can vary. A whole range of organisations in Scotland—a few of which the minister has named—play a vital role in supporting women through the most difficult of circumstances.

Renfrewshire Women's Aid, which operates in my constituency, offers tailored support to women experiencing domestic abuse. However, I note that it did not receive funding from the victim surcharge fund. I ask the minister if and when there will be a fourth round of the funding. What other funding opportunities are there for organisations that provide support for victims of domestic abuse?

Elena Whitham: The victim surcharge fund will open to more applications once sufficient money has been collected, which we anticipate will be towards the end of this year. So far, all organisations that offer support to domestic abuse survivors which have applied have received funding. In the meantime, organisations that support victims of domestic abuse which have not applied to the victim surcharge fund can approach Victim Support Scotland for help on behalf of those whom they are supporting, as Victim Support Scotland manages an emergency assistance fund, which is partly funded through the victim support surcharge fund. I encourage Natalie Don—and, indeed, all MSPs—to ensure that that is well known.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): Given the context of increasing anti-immigrant sentiment in some parts of Scotland, what signposting and support are available to women survivors of domestic abuse who have no recourse to public funds?

Elena Whitham: I know that, like me, Maggie Chapman has a keen interest in that area.

The Scottish Government is clear that women with no recourse to public funds should be offered the same level of support that other women in Scotland are and that they should not face

disadvantage. We continue to urge the United Kingdom Government to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse are afforded the same protections and support. Our ending destitution together strategy presses the UK Government to extend the destitution domestic violence concession to make it available to anyone who is in the UK as a dependant on someone else's visa or protection status, regardless of the timescales of that status. We will continue to make the case in the strongest of terms.

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): To ensure that the fund is fully utilised, will the Scottish Government ensure that it is available and well communicated across rural Scotland and island areas for the benefit of all women who are victims of domestic abuse?

Elena Whitham: Absolutely. I can give Beatrice Wishart the assurance that we will seek to ensure that it is communicated effectively.

Victims of Crime (Notice of Court Cases)

5. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether all victims of crime are given notice in advance of their case going to court. (S6O-01944)

The Lord Advocate (Dorothy Bain KC): The Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014 provides all victims of crime with the right to request and obtain information about their case. That includes information on the stage that any criminal proceedings have reached.

In relation to victims in our most serious cases, including sexual, domestic abuse, stalking and hate crimes, and in relation to bereaved relatives who have lost a loved one through crime, the Crown provides notice without any request, so long as the individual victim or bereaved relative so wishes.

I should make the point that the provision of information to victims was considered by the Parliament during the passage of the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill, which became the 2014 act, and the enacted legislation reflects the decision of Parliament to enable victims to receive that information should they wish it.

Edward Mountain: I am aware of examples in the Highlands where victims have not been notified in advance of when the trial is going to court, and they have sometimes read the outcome in the press. Can the Lord Advocate confirm whether that issue is widespread throughout Scotland and, if so, how many victims have not received advance notification of trials in the past year?

The Lord Advocate: I should say to Mr Mountain that, before today, an inquiry was made

of his office to ascertain whether the question was prompted by any specific prosecution or complaint, and I was advised that the question was simply a generic one.

I would request that Mr Mountain contact the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service with examples of the cases to which he has referred. I will look at them and follow up the specific cases that he wishes to raise. That is the response that I am able to give today, only as a follow-up to the question posed.

If there are specific cases where there has been no notification or where some difficulty has been communicated to Mr Mountain and his office, I am more than happy to hear about that and to respond in specific detail.

Court Buildings (Maintenance)

6. Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the potential impact of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service capital budget for 2023-24 on the amount of maintenance work required in court buildings across the country. (S6O-01945)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): Prioritisation of maintenance work in Scotland's courts and tribunals is an operational matter for the SCTS. Essential capital works are carried out on a priority basis, informed by an on-going programme of condition surveys. The capital position is particularly challenging across a number of portfolios, including justice. Despite that, we have been able to increase the capital allocation to the SCTS in 2023-24 by £4.7 million towards known capital pressures, on top of the baseline £8 million annual capital allocation. Current levels of Scottish Government capital funding should ensure that the programme of maintenance will continue.

Liam Kerr: I think the cabinet secretary for the answer, but the last time that the SCTS faced such difficult financial circumstances, it closed 10 sheriff courts, including Arbroath and Stonehaven in my region. There is a £7.3 million maintenance backlog in our courts, and the spectre of 2013 is never far from the minds of those in local justice. Will the cabinet secretary provide them with the certainty that they need and say that there will be no more court closures in the lifetime of this session of Parliament?

Keith Brown: It is important to provide some context for what the member mentions with regard to the 10 sheriff courts that were closed in 2015. It is worth pointing out that that context necessarily includes what we receive from the United Kingdom Government and what it spends on justice. The two are inextricably linked, as I am sure that the

member will acknowledge. In England and Wales, for example, there were 239 court—

Liam Kerr: Can you answer the question, Keith? Come on.

Keith Brown: I do not know whether this is uncomfortable to hear, but please do me the courtesy of listening to the answer to the question that you asked, if that is possible—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, please resume your seat. We have had a good session so far in which questions have been asked and responses have been provided. Can we continue in a similar vein, Mr Kerr?

Keith Brown: There have been 239 court closures in England and Wales since 2010. With reference to the courts, the following is a quotation from the Bar Council:

“Crumbling court buildings that are not fit-for-purpose, including leaks, infestations, and a lack of basic facilities”.

The obvious link is that what they spend on justice in England and Wales has a direct consequence for what is spent in Scotland. Despite that, and in response to Mr Kerr’s point, we have no current plans to initiate further court closures in Scotland—that is also despite the appalling funding from England and Wales and the UK Government.

Suicide Prevention (Prison Population)

7. Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking, in partnership with the Scottish Prison Service, national health service boards and others to support the health and wellbeing of people in prison and prevent deaths by suicide. (S6O-01946)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): We recognise that people in prison often present with higher levels of risk and vulnerability than the general population as a whole. We are committed to ensuring that they can access healthcare that is, as a minimum, equal to that offered in the community. We are working with the Scottish Prison Service and national health service boards to improve health outcomes for people living in our prisons, including preventing deaths by suicide. The work is informed by the Scottish Government’s prison healthcare needs assessments, the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland’s report on prisoner mental health support and the “Independent Review of the Response to Deaths in Prison Custody”.

Across that work, we will embed the principles of “Time, Space, Compassion”, to ensure that people are able to access high-quality,

compassionate, appropriate and timely support that supports wellbeing and recovery.

Mark Ruskell: I thank the cabinet secretary for that response. According to a University of Glasgow report, there has been a 42 per cent rise in lives lost to suicide in Scottish prisons since 2016. Last year’s progress report on the “Independent Review of the Response to Deaths in Prison Custody” showed that uptake of the review’s recommendations has been disappointingly slow. Therefore, can the cabinet secretary provide reassurances that progress is being accelerated towards implementing all the recommendations in the review?

Keith Brown: My thoughts are, first and foremost, with anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide in prison custody. Every death by suicide is a tragedy. We are committed to working with partners to implement the recommendations of the independent review of deaths in custody. Although the progress report in December recognised that some of the issues are complex and will take some time to resolve and implement, as the member suggests, greater pace is needed.

Following the publication of the progress report, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and I jointly wrote to chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service and to all NHS Scotland chief executives and integration authority chief officers to request that greater priority be given to timely implementation of the recommendations.

Gillian Imery, the former chief inspector of constabulary for Scotland, will continue in her role as the external chair of the review into late 2023, providing support and leadership to implement the recommendations. A further update on progress will be published later this year.

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): I understand that the SPS suicide prevention in prison strategy is currently under review, and I welcome the commitment to improve provisions for people who live in our prisons, but will the cabinet secretary outline what steps are being taken ahead of the publication of the review to improve prisoner mental wellbeing?

Keith Brown: In partnership with its stakeholders, the Government commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment of the prison population in relation to social care, substance use, mental health and physical health. We are working with senior leaders from across the Scottish Government, the Prison Service and national health service boards to provide additional oversight and to drive forward priority improvements.

We are fully engaged with the SPS in the development of the Scottish Government’s new mental health and wellbeing strategy. The Scottish

Government also sits on the SPS mental health and wellbeing steering group. That close working is informing our collective approach to improving wellbeing and suicide prevention in all our prisons.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The minister will have heard deep concern from all sides of the chamber today about the high rates of suicide and also other deaths. Will he give us an indication of how quickly we are going to get the situation turned around? I have heard the detail of the answers that he has provided, but when will we see some returns on that investment?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As briefly as possible, cabinet secretary.

Keith Brown: I mentioned in my original substantive answer that we expect a further update from the chair of the review later this year, but a lot of the actions are already being implemented. For example, simply making sure that the family are told immediately was not done routinely previously, but is now being done by governors and their associates. Such actions are being implemented now, but, as I said, a further update will take place this year to give more information to Willie Rennie and the chamber.

Reconviction Statistics (2019-20 Cohort)

8. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the outcome of its investigation into the provision of reconviction statistics for the 2019-20 offender cohort. (S6O-01947)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): As noted in the response to a previous parliamentary question, S6W-13874, the heavy impact of the pandemic and subsequent court closures on reconvictions data means that user needs for information must be balanced against

“the provision of meaningful and informative statistics that carry minimal risk of misinterpretation.”

The investigation into what information we could helpfully provide to users in respect of reconvictions statistics is still on-going. We plan to communicate the outcome of that investigation by the end of March.

Brian Whittle: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer, but I am sure that he will agree that third sector-run programmes offering pre and post-discharge support to prisoners can play a hugely important role in reducing reoffending and improving outcomes more generally. Given that the funding for such projects relies on their being able to demonstrate their effectiveness with empirical data, does he agree that it is vital that data such as reconviction statistics is gathered,

validated and published in a reasonable timeframe?

Keith Brown: That is absolutely the case, as the member said. As he will appreciate, if we were to publish the data that we have, it would show a very substantial drop in the year after 2019-20, which saw the first of the lockdowns, for example. The data would probably show quite a dramatic reduction, but it would not be an accurate picture. There is more to it than that.

Furthermore, in order to give meaningful information, we have to do the investigation that I referred to, and we also have to make sure that the statistics provided meet a certain standard. They are gold standard. They are now accredited, vindicated and validated, and we want to make sure that that remains the case. There is no reason for not providing that information other than making sure that it is as accurate as possible, which is what we intend to do.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will take a brief supplementary question from Audrey Nicoll.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I welcome the crime statistics that were released this week, which show a fall in the number of crimes recorded by police last year. The Scottish Government’s vision for justice aims to shift the balance from short-term sentences to community-based interventions, which we know are more effective in reducing reoffending. How will the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill help to reduce reoffending, crime and future victimisation?

Keith Brown: That is a really important question. As convener of the Criminal Justice Committee, Audrey Nicoll will know that the bill will help to reduce reoffending and future victimisation by ensuring that public safety and victim protection are at the heart of bail decision making and by improving support for people leaving prison custody.

The bill recognises the negative impact that short periods of imprisonment can have, particularly on those who have not been convicted of a crime, and the evidence that community-based interventions can be more effective at supporting rehabilitation. The bill supports the principle that those who do not pose a risk to public safety or, in certain circumstances, a risk to the delivery of justice should be admitted to bail.

The provision of effective support for people who leave prison reduces their risk of reoffending, which is something that we all want to see. That is why the bill includes reforms to improve pre-release planning and the support that is provided to individuals on release. The bill should be seen alongside our on-going investment in community-based alternatives to custody, as well as our

continuing investment in third sector voluntary throughcare services across Scotland.

Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2023

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-08007, in the name of Tom Arthur, on the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2023.

14:51

The Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth (Tom Arthur): Today's debate on the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2023 seeks Parliament's approval for the guaranteed allocations of revenue funding to individual local authorities for 2023-24. It also seeks agreement to the allocation of additional funding for 2022-23 that has been identified since the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2022 was approved on 2 March last year.

We cannot ignore the hugely challenging circumstances in which we have had to agree the Scottish budget this year. Inflation is still running at double digits; in January, it had gone down to 10.1 per cent. At the start of February, the Bank of England raised interest rates to 4 per cent, which is the highest level in 14 years.

Brexit, too, is continuing, and will continue, to cause harm and have an adverse impact on our economy. The International Monetary Fund has forecast that the United Kingdom economy will be the only major economy to shrink in 2023—it expects the UK economy to fall by 0.6 per cent.

Despite that, within the limitations of the devolution settlement, we have used the powers that we have to protect public services, invest in the transition to net zero and take decisive steps towards eradicating child poverty.

The Scottish budget strengthens our social contract with every citizen of Scotland for the wider benefit of society. That means that people in Scotland continue to enjoy many benefits that are not available throughout the UK, including free prescriptions, free access to higher education and the child payment. That also applies at council level. People can access more local services than can be accessed elsewhere in the UK—for example, they can access more fully funded early learning and childcare for all three and four-year-olds; a welfare fund that is delivered locally; and free bus travel for nearly 2 million people, including every child and young person under 22.

The Scottish Government is providing nearly £13.5 billion in the 2023-24 local government finance settlement. That funding includes revenue

support of almost £12.6 billion and support for capital expenditure of more than £0.8 billion.

Following the flat cash position that was set out in the resource spending review, we listened to councils and are increasing the resources that will be available next year by £793 million. The 2023-24 local government finance settlement now provides an additional 6.3 per cent, or a real-terms increase of 3 per cent, compared with 2022-23.

As we do every year, to reach that number, we have compared the proposed budget with the allocations that Parliament approved in the previous year. That provides the best like-for-like comparison of available funding.

In addition, individual local authorities will have full flexibility over local council tax rates and the newly devolved empty property relief. The Scottish Government also intends to introduce a local visitor levy bill in Parliament this year, which will, in time, give local authorities a discretionary power to apply a levy on overnight visitor stays in their areas and to utilise that additional funding locally.

It is important to note that the total funding package has already been finalised, following the passing of the Budget (Scotland) (No 2) Bill. Today's debate seeks Parliament's approval for the distribution of that approved total funding to individual local authorities.

The order seeks approval for the distribution and payment of almost £11.6 billion of the revenue total of £12.6 billion, with the balance mainly made up of specific grant funding, which is administered separately. The £11.6 billion is a combination of general revenue grant of more than £8.5 billion and the distributable amount of non-domestic rates income, which has been set at just over £3 billion.

The settlement provides continued fiscal certainty through our policy of guaranteeing the combined general revenue grant plus non-domestic rates funding set out in the order. That means that any loss of non-domestic rates income resulting from the impact of Brexit or Covid-19 will be compensated for by increased general revenue grant, unlike the position for councils in, for example, England. That effectively underwrites that critically important revenue stream.

As approved as part of the Scottish budget, the overall funding package for 2023-24 includes £360 million of support for local government pay deals, a £72.5 million increase to the general revenue grant, £105 million to give effect to the devolution of non-domestic rates empty property relief, an extra £50 million capital to help with the expansion of the free school meals policy, additional funding of £100 million to deliver a £10.90 minimum pay settlement for adult social care workers in commissioned services, and consolidation of

£30.5 million for the homelessness prevention fund.

There remains a further £330 million of revenue funding that will be notified to local authorities once the distribution has been discussed and agreed with COSLA. That will be included for approval in the 2024 order.

There is specific revenue funding that is paid directly by the relevant policy areas under separate legislation, which amounts to almost £776 million.

The 2023 order seeks approval for almost £371 million of changes to funding allocations for 2022-23. The full list of changes can be found in the report to the 2023 order.

This Government recognises the financial challenges that local authorities across Scotland—and, indeed, the whole public sector—are facing. We acknowledge the importance of providing more fiscal flexibility and more revenue-raising powers for local government.

The fiscal constraints that we share emphasise the need to focus urgently on improving delivery of sustainable public services, designed around the needs and interests of the people and communities of Scotland. We must also continue to press the UK Government for additional funding for our shared priorities and pressures, and I would welcome support from across the Parliament in that respect.

The Budget (Scotland) (No 2) Bill, which Parliament passed last week, ensured that total funding from the Scottish Government to local government next year increased not only in cash terms but in real terms. The order confirms the distribution to individual councils and the proposals reflect the crucial role that local authorities and their employees continue to play in our communities.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2023 [draft] be approved.

14:57

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Across the world, Governments are meeting, as we are today, to discuss and approve budgets. I was disappointed that the minister did not touch on what has destabilised the whole process, which is President Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Ministers across the Scottish Government need to start recognising that and including it in their considerations of where we are. It is not just Brexit or Covid-19 but illegal war that is having a real impact on driving up prices and the inflation rate.

I thank all those who work in our local authorities across Scotland for their hard work and commitment to our communities, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. I also thank them for the work that they are undertaking to deliver recovery for our communities—that is something that we should very much recognise. The work that my council in Edinburgh and the council in Glasgow are doing to support Ukrainians and Ukrainian families in Scotland is tremendous. My council has highlighted to ministers pressures around education and housing support that have not been addressed in the budget. We need to make sure that ministers recognise councils' lasting and on-going support.

The order before us allocates funding for each of Scotland's 32 local authorities. We do not intend to oppose it, but we continue to raise serious concerns about the overall allocation of resources to local authorities across Scotland and the need for reform of how they are delivered. Council finance chiefs have warned Scottish National Party and Green ministers that Scotland's local authorities are now facing unprecedented financial pressures. Let us not forget that the Scottish Government's budget is the largest in devolution history, thanks to additional UK Government funding being allocated during and after the budget process.

The exercise of tracking funding allocations over the past decade points to SNP ministers not passing on to local government the additional resources that they have received. I hope to highlight that today, because, although we have this debate annually, we are not finding the solutions that local government needs. Councils have been left having to find savings and cut local services at the same time. This year, we are witnessing councils taking those difficult decisions and coming together, through COSLA, to condemn, again, their financial settlement.

It is clear that we need a new approach and a new conversation about how we take forward the budget process. The acting finance secretary, John Swinney, in his speech in last week's stage 3 budget debate, said that the Scottish Government wants a new deal with local government. I agree that there should be a new deal, but it should not be set by just the Scottish Government; the Parliament and all local authorities should be part of the conversation. Ministers need to consider how finances will be properly delivered in the future. I hope that SNP and Green ministers are genuinely able, following this year's budget process, to pause and reflect on the difficulties that councils say that a similar budget would present them with in the future.

We need the financial relationship between the Scottish Government and local government to be

reset. We need a new partnership to be developed that accords respect to our local authorities and gives them the powers and funding that they need to deliver the vital public services on which we all rely.

The minister pointed towards a potential additional tax, which I think that only two councils are considering taking forward.

Wider discussion of local government reform is needed. We need a new fiscal framework for councils, and we need the powers that local authorities currently have to be respected. In that regard, debates about, for example, the national care service, also need to consider reform. To date there has been little scope for reform or discussion of reform, but I hope that an opportunity for that will be presented outside this budget process. Our having a new First Minister, a new finance secretary and new local government ministers will present an opportunity to build a new relationship and have positive discussions about a new funding settlement. Currently, there seems to be a stalemate when it comes to opening up discussions about that important issue, but reform is critical if we are to protect and enhance our local councils and communities.

I do not doubt that councils will continue to face difficult decisions in the coming weeks, months and years. From meeting and speaking to councillors across Scotland, not just from my party but from all parties, I cannot see where councils can find flexibility. In many areas, they have used the sticking plasters that they had to get this budget across the line; there is nothing else for them to cut without resorting to delivering core services and nothing else.

I hope that we can consider that backdrop and the financial pressures, which we all recognise, ahead of next year's budget. I hope that SNP and Green ministers will reset their approach to how local councils are funded and to the local priorities of each local authority, whether it is rural or urban. I hope that all members of this Parliament will play a role in that. More important, we must ensure that our local authorities are able to deliver for our local communities.

15:03

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): We will not oppose the order today, because we know that it is necessary to get funding allocated to councils. However, as we indicated during stages 1 and 3 of the budget process, we do not support the 2023-24 budget because it is laced with yet more cuts and could lead to rocketing council tax bills and up to 7,000 jobs going from local government.

Councillors in all 32 local authorities and from every political party, including the SNP, are having

to make heartbreaking decisions—decisions that are of this Government's making. Some £6 billion has been cut from services since 2013, but the Government seems to look the other way.

Roads are crumbling, libraries are closing and bins are overflowing. Staff have been left with no option but to strike, which has left schools closed across the country. Now, it is left to councillors to take tough decisions to balance the books. There have been council tax increases of 5 per cent, 6 per cent, 7 per cent and up to 10 per cent across the country.

Not only has the Government passed the buck during a cost of living crisis when food, utility and housing bills are soaring, but the public will have to pay for worse services and foot the bill for the SNP's neglect of local councils and communities.

In my region, SNP-led Falkirk Council asked its executive to green light a plan to put 133 buildings up for sale. School pools, Grangemouth stadium, sports halls, gyms, park buildings and village and community halls were all flogged to fill a deficit, and with them went 200 jobs. SNP-led Aberdeen City Council's review could result in swathes of its services, including social work, its welfare fund, council tax collection, health and safety enforcement and free school meals being put up as options for outsourcing.

The smoke and mirrors, political spin and, at times, what verges on dishonest presentation of the budget figures and their impact meant that there was no real debate about the budget; there was only game playing and spin that defied and denied reality. At the time, ministers complained about changes to their budget in real terms, but they talked in the same breath about changes to local government budgets in cash terms.

We spent hours in the chamber, demanding an honest discussion about where we would spend additional funding and where we would cut, but the truth is that, with no honest starting point, we never had a conversation. When the Government claimed during the initial allocation in the budget process that there would be an uplift of £570 million to local government, where was the honest conversation? How could we possibly have an honest starting point when that was the Government claim? Even if that was true and realistic, it was still only half of what the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities had asked for to protect essential services. Even that figure did not make it to the end of the day, because the true number was £71 million once existing policy commitments were taken into account.

The Fraser of Allander Institute set the record straight, making it clear that the Government's funding proposal would represent a real-terms cut

to local government budgets. Even the £223 million that was announced at stage 3 was committed spend; it was not additional funding for councils to spend on protecting services. Councils have been left to continue to make cuts. Like every other year, the SNP said that there was no more money, and then we got to stage 3 and it allocated additional funding at the very last minute.

At that point, some councils had already had their budget meetings and some had already set their budgets. When the Government comes to the chamber on the final day of the stage 3 process to announce additional funding, it shows absolute contempt for its so-called partners in local government.

Tom Arthur: Will Mark Griffin give way?

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

Tom Arthur: I recognise that the timing can sometimes be suboptimal, to put it mildly, but does Mark Griffin recognise that, ultimately, we have to operate in the wider fiscal UK framework and under Treasury rules? That includes late notification of supplementary estimates within financial years, which can have a cascading and knock-on effect.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be winding up now, Mr Griffin.

Mark Griffin: I appreciate the impact of the timing of the allocation from the UK Government, but this is a recurring theme. It is a pattern every year in local government budgets: the Government comes to the chamber, tells members that there is no more money left, asks us to identify cuts and, at the very last minute, announces extra money from the back of the sofa or out of a hat. That is treating local council colleagues with contempt.

We will vote for the order to allow councils to get the money that has been allocated to them, but it is clear that it will result in more pain and misery for local communities.

15:09

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I apologise to members for my late arrival. I was caught up in a broadcast interview that overran.

The tone of Tom Arthur's remarks is striking. It is completely at odds with what I am hearing from Liberal Democrat councillors who are at the sharp end of the situation. Members on the Government benches must hear it, too, so I am surprised that Green and SNP members are happy to go along with it.

I am relieved that, in Edinburgh—thanks to the Liberal Democrats—more than £5 million-worth of

school cuts have been prevented. We promised to stop the assault on education and we have delivered on that. However, that is not to say that putting Edinburgh's budget together was not incredibly difficult, because the Scottish Government is still cutting that budget by a staggering £76 million. It is figures of that sort that mean that, elsewhere, there are cuts in the numbers of school librarians, community wardens and early years staff and to the provision of music tuition and outreach in some of the most deprived communities in the country.

I have listened to members on the Government benches during the past few weeks, and it is clear that they have disengaged with the fact that local government is in crisis. Local government budgets have been eroded—squeezed until the pips squeak—year after year by SNP and Green ministers. The consequences of that can be seen from the failure to close the poverty-related attainment gap to the pot-holes in our road.

Tom Arthur: What I am inferring—and what I think the member is implying—is that there has to be strategic realignment of funding priorities in Government to give local government more money. That would necessitate significant reductions elsewhere. We have a budget process to go through next year and in subsequent years, so does Mr Cole-Hamilton have a place from which he wants to take that money?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I told you exactly where I would take that money from; for a start, I would get rid of the vast and unnecessary bureaucracy that is the ministerial takeover of social care.

I point the Government to its own words. In its local elections manifesto, it said that it would

“improve and protect your local services”

and give local councils

“greater control and influence over decisions”.

The SNP promised those things last May, and the Greens were at it, too. They promised

“fair funding for public services”

and

“devolved decision-making”.

Those were the words of the Greens.

It took only 26 days after making big promises at those council elections last May for Kate Forbes and her Green colleagues to unveil their plans for more savage cuts in the spending review.

Last month, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills introduced a fresh sanctions regime for local government. If it did not do what the SNP-Green Government ordered, it would face penalties. The education secretary is treating councils like an enemy that is determined to cut

teacher numbers. That is nobody's wish; nobody is talking about that as a way forward. The way to protect teacher numbers is to adequately fund our local authorities.

The pattern goes back to 2007, which we can see from a recently released cabinet paper showing that John Swinney threatened to

“centralise the delivery of school education ... to play hardball with Cosla”.

None of that demonstrates the collaboration and partnership that we were promised. It puts local government and education in a headlock.

The Greens should listen to Andy Wightman—their former, respected member—who wrote in *Holyrood* magazine last month:

“The Scottish Government's enfeebling of local councils is an attack on democracy.”

He also, rightly, suggested that we imagine that the boot were on the other foot and that the UK Government threatened financial penalties if Scottish ministers did not follow the Tory Government's manifesto.

Local authorities need a fair deal from the Government and a power surge that recognises the importance of the work that they do. That means giving them more powers over economic development, planning and transport and ending the SNP power grabs that I have defined. They need new hope and not another ministerial takeover of social care, with a vast and unnecessary bureaucracy that would asset strip and trample over services once again.

Let me turn to council tax reform. Tom Arthur said that that is a key priority, but we know what that means. Like other key priorities before it, the SNP will make no reforms throughout the entirety of this parliamentary session; it has made it explicit that nothing will be rolled out before 2026. The Greens still cannot see that they have gone into Government on the promise of talks about talks—a working group, then a citizens' assembly—and that, at the end of all that, we are being promised options. Tom Arthur says that those options could be anything from relatively minor to significant and fundamental—talk about kicking something into the long grass. Members do not have to take my word for it; Robin Harper, the former leader of the Greens, agrees.

There is no escaping the harm that this local government settlement will deliver to communities in every corner of Scotland, and the Liberal Democrats will oppose it this evening.

15:14

Tom Arthur: I thank colleagues for their contributions. On Alex Cole-Hamilton's final

remark, I appreciate that he might disagree with the distribution and the allocation but, if he wants to distribute money to local authorities, he needs to vote for the order, or at least not oppose it.

Secondly, if I recall correctly—I will check the *Official Report*—he said that I had been explicit or made clear that there would be no changes to council tax by the end of this parliamentary session. That is not what I said. I gave a specific commitment that was misrepresented—or, at least, reported with a particular tone that suggested that my intention was other than what it was. I want to be clear about this: my intention is that the pace with which we move on council tax reform will be determined by the outcome of engagement with COSLA and through a deliberative process. I think that members will recognise that, in the spirit of working in partnership with local authorities and respecting them, we should not seek to impose a form of local taxation on them but should, instead, seek to reach agreement and consensus in partnership.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: If I have misrepresented the minister, I apologise. Will he clarify for the chamber—I will correct the record if this is the case—whether council tax will be reformed by the end of this session of Parliament? Yes or no?

Tom Arthur: If the member had listened to what I was saying before he intervened, he would understand that the pace of council tax reform is not a matter for Government or this Parliament alone; it is about reaching consensus and agreement with local government and communities, through a deliberative process. Mr Cole-Hamilton might think that the job of the Parliament is to impose a form of local taxation on local government, but we respect local government and will work with it in partnership to ensure that we deliver a kind of reform for which there is consensus.

Mr Briggs touched on the issue of Ukraine. I agree whole-heartedly with him that Russia's illegal and barbaric invasion has had a significant impact on not only the Scottish and UK economy but the global economy. I recognise that other members take that view, too. However, I note that, when my colleague Jenny Gilruth was highlighting the need for the reconsideration of timetables around the dualling of the arterial trunk roads—clearly a major capital project—and cited the war in Ukraine as one of a range of reasons for that, one of Mr Briggs's colleagues said that she had a nerve to blame Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. It is important that, if we are going to be adducing the invasion of Ukraine and the impact that it has had on the global economy as a consideration in relation to the UK Government's funding of the Scottish Government, which has knock-on effects for our capacity to fund public

services in Scotland, we have to apply that approach with some consistency.

We are in straitened financial circumstances. We have seen inflation at rates that are certainly unprecedented in my lifetime. This is not an ideal circumstance in which to be delivering a budget, but we have set out key priorities around the just transition to net zero, sustainable public services and the eradication of child poverty. What this local government finance settlement does is provide a real-terms increase to local government for the next financial year. However, I reiterate the point that I have made to Alex Cole-Hamilton and others: if there is a desire for a significant and strategic shift in the Scottish budget to significantly increase the resources that are available to local government, it is incumbent on members to identify where that resource should come from. We can go round in circles every year in these debates, but unless there is a willingness to engage—

Miles Briggs: Will the member take an intervention?

Tom Arthur: I am afraid that I am out of time, Mr Briggs.

I am happy to have those conversations, but they have to be serious, grown-up conversations. If we are talking about a strategic shift in how the budget is deployed, it is incumbent on members to engage with that seriously.

Again, in the interests of local government and the provision of fiscal stability, I urge members to support the resolution this evening.

Deposit Return Scheme

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a statement by Lorna Slater on an update on Scotland's deposit return scheme. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:19

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): I welcome the opportunity to update the chamber on Scotland's deposit return scheme.

There was a time, not that long ago, when I could have said that every party in this chamber backed a deposit return scheme. There was a time when we were all united in our determination to tackle the litter that blights our streets, parks and beaches. DRS will increase recycling rates from 50 per cent to 90 per cent and cut litter by a third, and there was a time when that was the clinching argument. In 2020, this Parliament—with cross-party support—backed Scotland's deposit return scheme. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me, minister.

At the beginning of this item of business, I said that there should be no interventions or interruptions. There will be an opportunity to put questions to the minister at the end her statement. Until that point, I would be grateful if we could conduct our business in a courteous manner.

Lorna Slater: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I wish that I were able to say that the scheme that we will launch in August is innovative, groundbreaking and world leading, but the truth is that Scotland is following the example of other countries such as Germany and Denmark, as well as regional schemes such as the ones in Canada. That means that we can look abroad and see that the concept works. The lack of uniqueness is the reassurance that it works, and the fact we are not first tells us that we are not taking unnecessary risks.

I am delighted to say that, as of this morning, 664 drink producers—representing more than 90 per cent of the total volume of drinks containers sold in Scotland each year—have completed registration with Circularity Scotland for Scotland's deposit return scheme. The Scottish Parliament set industry a challenge to take responsibility for the waste that it produces and to play its part in tackling the climate emergency. I am delighted that so many producers have already risen to that challenge.

I understand that there are still concerns among producers, particularly the smallest companies that are affected by the scheme. We understand those concerns, and I have consistently said that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency will take a flexible approach where possible. It is important that the producers that have not yet registered know that SEPA will be pragmatic in its approach. That means that producers can continue to register even now, after yesterday's deadline.

Today, we move to the next stage of registration, with Circularity Scotland's announcement of the launch of registration for return-point operators—the corner shops, supermarkets and other outlets where customers can return empty containers and reclaim their deposits. As Parliament knows, in response to industry feedback, we previously updated guidance and support to make it clearer, easier and quicker for retailers who wish to apply for an exemption to operating a return point.

I know that concerns remain about the scheme, particularly from smaller businesses, and we have been systematically working to resolve those real concerns. For example, in a package of help that is worth £22 million, Circularity Scotland has removed the day 1 and month 1 charges for all producers, up to a threshold of 3 million units per year. Above the 3 million unit threshold, the day 1 payments for producers that are using United Kingdom-wide barcodes has previously been reduced by two thirds. In addition, Circularity Scotland is providing two-month credit terms on deposits and fees, up to the same volume threshold, to reduce the working-capital impact on all producers.

I pledge today that we will continue to listen, which is why I confirm that my officials will work at pace to explore any further feasible, fair and legal options that are available to support all producers to comply with the scheme, including the potential to have a grace period if needed.

Introducing any form of grace period raises questions, which must be fully explored, about how it would work operationally, fairly and legally for businesses and communities. There are questions about definitions, registration and enforcement, which must all be worked through. While that consideration is being given, it is still essential that all producers register for the scheme, if they have not already done so.

I turn to the exclusion in relation to the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020. For weeks, we have been addressing legitimate concerns that producers and retailers have raised with us. Many good-faith critiques, suggestions and proposals have been made, including by some parties in this chamber.

However, others have not acted in good faith. Some have sought to exploit the real concerns among producers, and some have sought—unfortunately, with some success—to turn the scheme into a political wedge issue, using misinformation and deception.

With that in mind, I turn to the claim that the Scottish Government has not sought an exemption from the internal market act. Alister Jack, the Secretary of State for Scotland, told the House of Commons on 22 February—just one week ago today—that

“we have not been asked for an exemption for this under the rules of the UK Internal Market Act 2020 by the Scottish Government—no request for an exemption has come.”—*[Official Report, House of Commons, 22 February 2023; Vol 728; c 215.]*

That is not true; the Scottish Government has sought that exemption since July 2021. It was discussed in the November 2022 interministerial group meeting, in official-level meetings and at a ministerial meeting in January 2023.

Despite that, so serious was the continued failure of the UK Government to come to a decision on the IMA exemption, the issue was escalated to the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, in January. He wrote to the UK Government in the clearest terms. He said:

“I am seeking your assurance now that UK Ministers will expedite a rapid solution, including an exclusion to the IMA if that is required”.

I have to be straight with the chamber: for the Secretary of State for Scotland to now claim that no such request has been made is not true. Indeed, the reply to John Swinney from the Treasury is explicit in saying that the UK Government is working on that very question. Therefore, Alister Jack has to answer a simple question: if we had never asked for an exclusion, why did the UK Treasury say that work was already under way?

His claims are simply not true; his story is shifting and changing with every telling. First, we had not asked; then we had not “formally” asked; and then it was not a “ministerial request”. It is all nonsense.

The scheme will go live in August, and I can say that with confidence because people have voted with their feet. Producers have registered, and I am both grateful to them for doing so and proud that Scottish businesses are rising to the challenge. They saw their legitimate concerns addressed by the Scottish Government and they decided whether to take part in the scheme. They have done so because the overwhelming majority recognise their responsibility. They do not want litter on our streets, parks and beaches either, and

they recognise that the DRS is the way to end that blight.

However, their decision poses a challenge for those in this chamber who have joined the Alister Jacks of this world in their misinformation. I hear them say that they are pro-business. Well, business is on board. I hear them say that they are worried about jobs. Well, the scheme will create more than 500 jobs. I hear them say that they are concerned about investment. The DRS will see £300 million invested by the private sector in ending the blight of litter on our streets. I say to those members that, if they want to prove that they are in favour of business, investment and jobs, they should get behind the scheme now.

The choice is stark: on the one hand, we have this Scottish Parliament using its devolved powers to tackle the scourge of litter on our streets; on the other, we have Alister Jack attempting to sabotage the scheme as part of his effort to undermine devolution and Scottish democracy. It is time for them to choose where they stand. I can tell members where this Government stands. The question for the other parties is, where do they stand now?

I invite members to welcome the work by Circularity Scotland and producers, who have given an overwhelming vote of confidence in the scheme, and to recognise the work the we have undertaken in relation to the UK Internal Market Act 2020; the confirmation that SEPA will continue to work pragmatically with Circularity Scotland and producers beyond the 1 March to support businesses with compliance before the go-live date; and the commitment to look at further options that are available to support all producers to comply with the scheme, including the potential to have a grace period if needed.

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

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): Presiding Officer, I wonder whether you would accept a motion without notice under rule 8.14.3 of standing orders to extend the period for questions under this item of business to allow all members who wish to question the minister on the statement to take part.

The Presiding Officer: I thank Mr Golden for his request. Parliament agreed yesterday to include the statement. I am not minded to accept a motion without notice, but I will do my very best to ensure that we take as many members’ questions as possible.

Maurice Golden: Thank you, Presiding Officer, and I thank the minister for advance sight of her statement.

The scheme has been falling apart for months. Even the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy says that it will cause “economic carnage”. Now, the Scottish Government is trying to pick a fight with the UK Government, which has confirmed to me in the past hour that no official request for an internal market act exemption has been received. This is a desperate attempt to shift blame for a home-made shambles.

Small producers are appalled by the scheme’s roll-out and have not registered, which is why the Scottish Government has been forced to consider introducing a grace period. It is too late to make such fundamental changes to the scheme without creating even more complexity, confusion and cost. Now, registration is to remain open. So much for the deadline that effectively forced some producers to sign up, feeling as though a gun was at their head because they would be unable to trade otherwise.

The bottom line is that producer registration has been a disaster. The minister is desperately spinning the sign-up numbers, but in reality it works out that barely 16 per cent of the total number of producers have signed up. That is 664 out of the 4,000 producers that are operating in Scotland. It is no wonder: the legal advice that a number of companies took said that they should not do so. Why sign a blank cheque to Circularity Scotland at this point?

I have a simple question. Does the minister accept that more than 80 per cent of producers have not signed up to the scheme?

Lorna Slater: As of today, producers that are responsible for more than 2 billion drinks containers have signed up with Circularity Scotland. That represents the full range of drinks producers from global brands to small craft breweries and distilleries. That means that more than 90 per cent of the total volume of products annually—that is, 90 per cent of what we see on our shelves—is included in the scheme. The scheme has momentum towards the launch on 16 August.

As I have said already, and as I am very happy to say again, SEPA will continue to work pragmatically with Circularity Scotland and those producers that have not registered beyond today’s date to bring them into compliance. I want all those businesses to be able to continue to supply their excellent products into the Scottish market.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): We want there to be a viable deposit return scheme, but today’s statement leaves more questions than answers. The minister said that producers

representing more than 90 per cent of the volume of products have signed up. Big producers were always going to sign up. Will she confirm that less than 20 per cent of the total number of producers in Scotland have registered? For the many thousands that have not, because they simply do not know what they are signing up to, up until what point will they be able to register so that they can still sell in Scotland?

The minister, having voted down Labour’s call last week for a delay for small producers, now says that her officials are working at pace to come up with a delay. When will she be able to tell producers whether and when that delay will happen?

The minister said that the Deputy First Minister escalated the call for an opt-out from the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 in January. The Government first set a date for the scheme four years ago, so I hardly think that that is an escalation; it certainly does not show any urgency. What if that opt-out is not granted by August? What is plan B?

Lorna Slater: There were several points in that, and I will try to address them all.

On the question of small businesses and those that have not yet registered with Circularity Scotland and SEPA, as I have already said, SEPA will continue to be pragmatic and support those businesses to join the scheme.

I know that every business is different and that each needs its concerns to be addressed specifically to match its business. I encourage every producer that has not yet registered with the scheme to contact Circularity Scotland and SEPA to get the correct advice for its business, so that it can sign up to the scheme and register, and continue to provide its products into the Scottish market from 16 August.

The member asked about the IMA. I will repeat what I have said already: we have sought an exemption since July 2021. This is not new news. The issue was discussed in November 2022 at the interministerial group, at official-level meetings and at a ministerial meeting in January 2023. This is very serious. It was as a result of the UK Government’s continued failure to address this that, as I said before, the matter was escalated to the Deputy First Minister to make sure that a decision is taken in time.

I share the member’s frustration. There is a lack of clarity, which businesses in Scotland really need. However, even without that, businesses that produce 90 per cent of the total volume of products have sufficient confidence in the scheme to sign on the dotted line. Therefore, we have the momentum that we need to meet the launch on 16

August, and that is what we are continuing to work towards.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): Last week in the chamber, I called for the minister to be prepared, with the support of Parliament, to have the space to be pragmatic and flexible, and I appreciate the contents of the announcement today.

Can the minister comment on the significant investment that many businesses have made to date with the full expectation of a go-live date in August? Can she confirm that she informed the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee some weeks ago that there has been long-existing engagement with the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs regarding an exclusion from the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 for Scotland's deposit return scheme? Does she have any idea why claims that contact with the UK Government is only recent and late are being made? Does she agree that not only is that inaccurate, but it smacks of last-minute political interference from the Scotland Office?

Lorna Slater: With regard to the investment, it is estimated that £300 million has been invested by the private sector in Scotland to end the blight of litter on our streets as we have moved towards the scheme. That is a substantial investment, and the scheme will create over 500 jobs. That is a significant contribution to our circular economy.

As I set out in my statement, there is an agreed and published process between the UK Government and devolved Governments for excluding certain areas from the internal market act. We have been following that process for excluding the deposit return scheme regulations from the act, and that has been the subject of discussions with the UK Government for many months. It is disappointing that some UK Government ministers are trying to portray this as recent and late, given the level of productive engagement that we have had with DEFRA and other UK departments on this subject. Yesterday, we took the unusual step of publishing the correspondence with the UK Government, as well as a detailed timeline, to confirm what I have been saying in this chamber. That process is the same one that we went through to protect from the internal market act Scotland's ban on many single-use plastics, which we passed last year.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The DRS scheme will add up to 40p per container at the point of sale. Can the minister tell the chamber of any investigations that have been done, and any conclusions that have been reached, on the impact that that will have on both inflation and consumer purchase behaviours?

Lorna Slater: The member will know that, during the committee sessions—way back before 2020 and before these regulations were passed—all the evidence for the business case for the deposit return scheme was looked at in great detail by the committee. I recommend that the member goes back and looks through the record for the detail that he is interested around the business case.

The deposit return scheme, as I set out in my statement, is similar to other schemes around the world. There is precedent for how such a scheme works and is implemented. I am looking forward to Scotland's scheme going live. When people pay their extra 20p to buy their juice, return their bottle and get that 20p back, they will be doing the right thing not only for the environment but for their communities.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): As the minister said, regulations for a deposit return scheme received cross-party support in 2020. According to research by Zero Waste Scotland, 70 per cent of the Scottish public supported the introduction of a DRS. Given the context of the ongoing climate crisis, does the minister think that the case for the scheme remains as strong now as it was then?

Lorna Slater: Absolutely. The benefits of a DRS are clear to see. I walk along the streets in Edinburgh all the time and see cans and bottles on the ground and think to myself, "scheme article, scheme article". That litter will not happen once our scheme is in place. That is why so many countries around the world have operated similar schemes for years and why the European Union is requiring all its members to have one in place by 2029.

The facts remain clear. Our scheme will reduce littering by a third and increase recycling rates of single-use drinks containers towards 90 per cent. It will reduce CO₂ emissions by 4 million tonnes over 25 years, which is the equivalent of taking 83,000 cars off the roads.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): There are two important questions that the minister has not answered. The scheme has registration not by litre but by company. What proportion of all drinks producers, or drinks companies, does the figure of 664 represent, not by output volume but in terms of the total number of producers?

Secondly, although I appreciate that a grace period is being considered, if I were a small drinks producer, I would not know whether this scheme applied to me. When will they know that? When will that work conclude?

Presiding Officer, can I also ask you for one point of guidance? In her statement, the minister

referred to parties in the chamber giving descriptions of the scheme that she characterised as being based on “misinformation and deception”. Can you provide guidance on whether you think that that language is parliamentary or not?

The Presiding Officer: Before I pass over to the minister, I will say that the content of contributions is generally a matter for the member concerned, but I remind all members of the need to treat one another with courtesy and respect at all times, including in the language that we use in the chamber.

Lorna Slater: On the member’s point about the grace period, I will repeat what I said earlier. Introducing any form of grace period raises questions that must be fully explored about how that would work operationally, fairly and legally for businesses and communities. There are questions about definitions, registration and enforcement, which must all be worked through. Therefore, while that consideration is being done, it is still essential that producers register for the scheme.

As I have already set out, as of today, producers that are responsible for more than 2 billion drinks containers, which is 90 per cent of the volume of products on the market, have registered. Ninety per cent of what we can see on the shelves today is covered, and we are working pragmatically and practically to bring all the remaining products on board with the scheme, so that they can continue to be sold in Scotland from 16 August, which, of course, is what we all want.

Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Retailers in my island constituency are generally supportive of the scheme, but they want to know who will uplift items and how regularly that will be done. Questions have been put to me about the fact that, in very rural areas, although small shops sell only a relatively small proportion of items in the community compared with supermarkets and online orders, they will end up having to process and store the bulk of all items locally. What more can the Government do to engage with small rural retailers on those points?

Lorna Slater: Circularity Scotland Ltd, the scheme’s administrator, has, after an extensive tender process, contracted Biffa to manage the collection of DRS material. Biffa, along with Circularity Scotland, is responsible for identifying the needs of individual businesses that will operate as return points in order to ensure that collections are appropriately tailored to each individual business’s needs, no matter where it is in Scotland.

Regarding small retailers, we are continually engaging with businesses of all sizes to ensure that their concerns are addressed. For example, in January, Circularity Scotland announced an

increase of 19 per cent in the return handling fees for retailers, following consultation with industry.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): After a torrid few weeks, it is a bold strategy for the minister to come out swinging and to condemn MSPs from across the parties and companies from across the country for raising legitimate concerns. Last night, I was contacted by two producers in Orkney. One is desperately seeking advice on what to do, and the other made it clear that it would not be registering. Given the minister’s and the Government’s recent track record of positing dubious statistics, can the minister please clarify that it is not 90 per cent but less than 20 per cent of producers that have registered?

Lorna Slater: Again, I will try to touch on all the questions that the member raised. I take the legitimate concerns of small businesses very seriously. That is exactly why we have been working with them on pragmatic measures to ensure that they can fully participate in the scheme. In relation to the businesses that contacted the member, looking for advice, as I said, each business needs advice that is specific to its needs and business model, so I would advise them to contact Circularity Scotland and SEPA directly to get the right advice.

In what I have said, I have been clear that what we have registered with the scheme right now is businesses that represent more than 90 per cent of the annual volume of products. On the shelves in shops around Scotland, 90 per cent of the items are now incorporated into the scheme. That builds significant momentum for the 16 August launch date—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the minister, please.

Lorna Slater: We are committing from today to work to bring in the remaining businesses so that all businesses in Scotland can participate.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Can the minister clarify the arrangements for returning cans and bottles for people who have to do their weekly shop online from home, by reason of infirmity or disability that prevents them from returning their recycling materials in person?

Lorna Slater: That is an important question. We will shortly bring forward amendments to the DRS regulations so that only the largest grocery retailers will initially be obliged to provide an online take-back service and all other businesses will be exempt. That is in response to industry concerns about those matters—we have listened to industry. We also plan to phase in the take-back obligations on the largest retailers. Therefore, before amending regulations are introduced, further work will be undertaken to identify how elderly and disabled people who may not be able to get to a

physical return point will be protected during the phasing in of take-back. That is to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by the scheme.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The revelations that we have heard this afternoon about the secretary of state are truly shocking. His comments are misleading and he should resign. [*Laughter.*]

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the member, please.

Mark Ruskell: Thank you, Presiding Officer. I have more to say.

Three years after the Scottish Parliament approved our deposit return scheme, the UK Government has, in recent months, made tentative suggestions that there will be a separate scheme for England from 2025. Some members immediately called for the Scottish scheme to be dropped so that we could align with a non-existent UK Government scheme. Does the minister agree that that path would have been disastrous for the environment and businesses?

Lorna Slater: I absolutely agree. The UK Government's announcement, although welcome, came just seven months before our launch date. To have hit the brakes at that point would have been devastating, given how far we have come and the significant investment that has been made.

In fact, it is positive for the rest of the UK that we are going first in Scotland and developing the solutions. That will facilitate the development of a deposit return scheme for the rest of the UK.

It is also important to understand that the English scheme, unlike our own, the scheme in Wales and many other deposit return schemes around the world will exclude glass. Including glass will deliver significant environmental benefits, so the UK Government's decision will result in a narrower scheme in England that will be at odds with our scheme and the one that is being developed in Wales.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): Today, I was given sight of a letter from a well-known Scottish drinks producer to Circularity Scotland, which highlights the producer's concerns about the continued lack of clarity on advance payments, particularly given the comments from Scottish National Party leadership candidates, whose views on the scheme all seem to be different from that of the minister. The letter states:

"The methodology is not clear and has not been shared with us, so we do not know how our potential exposure can be calculated".

The letter goes on to make it clear that the company has signed the producer agreement only

because it has been left with no alternative if it wants to still have a Scottish business after 16 August.

Does the minister consider it acceptable that producers are so frustrated by the lack of detail about the scheme that they are prepared to sign up to it only at economic gunpoint?

Lorna Slater: As the member will know from a letter that he will have received from Circularity Scotland, Circularity Scotland is a not-for-profit organisation that was established by 27 producers, retailers, wholesalers and trade associations. Circularity Scotland exists to help Scottish businesses to comply with the regulations that were passed by the Parliament.

I am delighted that the business that the member mentioned was able to contact Circularity Scotland to ask for information, and I encourage it to continue to work with Circularity Scotland to get that information and implement the scheme in a way that works for its business.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): My constituents and I are frustrated at the amount of litter that we see around us in the end east of Glasgow. Glasgow City Council workers cannot possibly pick it all up. A week past Saturday, I took part in a litter pick. Within an hour, I had picked up 17 glass bottles, not to mention a number of cans and plastic bottles. Can the minister give me an absolute assurance that she will tackle the litter problem through the deposit return scheme?

Lorna Slater: I can, absolutely, assure the member of that. I share his concerns when I walk down streets and see cans, bottles and broken glass. Such litter is a blight on our streets. From 16 August this year, we will be able to reduce the amount of litter significantly, because those items will no longer be waste—they will be a scheme article that will be worth 20p—so it will be worth picking up such items and returning them to a return point.

Scotland's deposit return scheme will account for a reduction in litter of about a third, and it will increase recycling rates of cans and bottles from 90 per cent.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The minister has told us that 664 drinks producers have signed up to the scheme. What is the total number of drinks producers in Scotland?

Lorna Slater: So far, 664 producers have signed up to the scheme, which, as I said, represents more than 90 per cent of the total volume of businesses.

Members: No!

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the minister.

Lorna Slater: What we need to be clear on is that the volume of materials and the significant number of producers that have signed up mean that we now have a viable scheme, with momentum to our 16 August start date, because businesses have committed and signed on the dotted line.

We will continue to work with businesses that have not yet signed up to bring them online—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, members.

Lorna Slater: —because we want all Scottish producers to participate in the scheme. As we move towards 16 August, we will work towards getting the figure to 100 per cent of the volume.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): Is the minister aware, and is the permanent secretary aware, of the huge extra costs that must necessarily be incurred by businesses between now and mid-April—being when a new First Minister and Cabinet could halt the scheme?

Businesses have told me today and yesterday that, between now and April, those extra costs will amount to £15 million for convenience stores and between £10 million and £20 million for hospitality. A leading craft beer and wine online retailer based in Scotland has stated that it will cost it comfortably a six-figure sum in the next six weeks, which will all be wasted if the scheme is halted in April.

Will the minister therefore avoid that wasted expense by calling a halt now, saving massive costs by doing so? If not, is she trying to protect the interests of Biffa, a company with a dubious environmental record according to a report in *Scotland on Sunday* last Sunday, and those of other large companies? Is she the great friend of the biggest business and the enemy of Scotland's small businesses?

Lorna Slater: The position of the Scottish Government is that the scheme will launch on 16 August. The member has outlined why that must be so: because businesses in Scotland have invested about £300 million toward its launch. Those businesses that have made that investment will get the return on that investment—their return handling fees—when the 20 pences start flowing. No one with any credibility speaking for industry would be considering a delay. We need those 20 pences to start flowing so that the investment is well made.

We know that businesses are on board with the scheme, and a critical mass of businesses have signed up to the scheme to deliver it. Those producers are taking responsibility and are responding to the challenge that the Parliament has set them. Will they step up and play their part

in responding to the climate emergency? They have signed on the dotted line and have said that they will. The scheme will create more than 500 jobs. Those who are concerned about investment in jobs need to back the scheme and back its launch on 16 August.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): Is the number that the minister is not prepared to give Parliament 84 per cent—84 per cent of producers have not signed up to her disastrous scheme?

Lorna Slater: The member is misunderstanding what makes the scheme viable and what builds momentum. *[Laughter.]*

The Presiding Officer: Members, can we please conduct ourselves in a courteous manner?

Lorna Slater: Who contributes to the deposit return scheme is based on proportionality; therefore, the largest producers contribute most to the scheme. Having the largest producers on board builds the momentum that we need towards the 16 August deadline. That is why today's announcement is excellent news.

We will continue to work to bring on board all those small businesses. We all agree that we want those small businesses to be fully on board with the scheme so that they can continue to trade from 16 August. I have said it over and over again, and members may not be hearing it, but we are working with those small businesses to bring them on board.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I will quote a business in my constituency. It has said:

"We have not signed the contract with Circularity Scotland. Our solicitors said we would be at risk of being derelict in our duties as directors as we would be signing a contract without due care. We have not been given terms and conditions and have not been given any costs from SEPA or Circularity Scotland."

Would the minister comment, please?

Lorna Slater: Yes—I am happy to comment.

As of today, 664 businesses have signed up. That represents the full range of drinks producers, from global brands to small craft breweries and distilleries. Those 664 businesses have confidence in the scheme and confidence in the agreement. I would absolutely recommend that any producer that has questions about the agreement work through them with Circularity Scotland, which is more than happy to answer any questions and to go through the detail with them.

The Presiding Officer: There are three members remaining who wish to ask a question. If questions and responses can be brief, we will have time.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I am interested in what we have learned from other countries. My understanding is that 45 other countries have taken forward a DRS.

Lorna Slater: I thank Emma Harper very much for that question.

The Scottish Government and other organisations engaged with countries that operate deposit return schemes through the design, business case development and consultation processes for Scotland's DRS, including Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Germany. It also engaged with organisations that have broad expertise in international deposit return schemes, such as Reloop. Circularity Scotland is maintaining engagement with other schemes around the world.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I hope that the minister will reflect on her performance today, because the fact is that more than 80 per cent of companies have not signed up to her scheme. I have met many of them—they include our constituents here, in Lothian, who have been desperate to get meetings with the minister but have been ignored. They are small businesses. They are people who are having sleepless nights over the scheme, and they are people who believe that it could drive their business to the wall. Therefore, will the minister reflect on that, and will she also apologise to those businesses?

Lorna Slater: I very much hope that businesses will actually be reassured by today's announcement that the scheme has the confidence of their colleagues and competitors, and that they will, if they wish to continue to trade in Scotland, engage with the Circularity Scotland and SEPA in order to participate fully. As I have said—I hope that this will prevent sleepless nights—we will allow producers to continue to register with the scheme. I encourage them to do so, so that they can continue to trade in Scotland.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The minister might not want to listen to the Opposition parties or to candidates for the SNP leadership, but she needs to listen to the voices of Scottish business. In response to her statement, Scottish Chambers of Commerce has just said:

"The Ministerial Statement on the Deposit Return Scheme has completely ignored concerns from Scottish firms. Our call was to pause the scheme and redesign it with the business community and that call has been rejected by the Minister.

It's been clear to the business community for some time that operating this poorly designed scheme in its current form is impossible and is adding unnecessary cost pressures on businesses."

Why is the minister not listening?

Lorna Slater: Today's announcement that 90 per cent of the volume of products are registered

with the scheme is a significant milestone for the scheme. It means that the scheme is viable to go live on 16 August this year.

I speak to business all the time. Yesterday, when I was speaking to producers that are looking at finishing their registration with the scheme, they were saying to me, "The one thing we need from you, minister, is to make sure this scheme goes live on 16 August. That is what we need from you—a commitment to that date—so that, when we sign on the bottom line, we know what we're signing up to." That is absolutely what I am committing to—what businesses have asked of me, which is to go live on 16 August.

Fergus Ewing: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I will raise a point of order, of which notice was given to your office.

With regard to standing orders as a whole, particularly under chapter 14, on laying and publication of documents, and also having regard to the clearly defined duties that are incumbent on the permanent secretary as the accountable officer as prescribed in the "Scottish Public Finance Manual", annex 1, paragraph 2, may I ask whether there are any means by which the permanent secretary can be called here to make a statement and to answer questions from MSPs from all parties who have serious concerns with regard to the duties? As the accountable officer, the permanent secretary has a specific duty. Where any one of the four tests of regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility are breached, he must—he must—seek from Scottish Government ministers a ministerial direction.

On 15 February, my MSP colleagues Maurice Golden, Claire Baker and Liam McArthur and I wrote to the permanent secretary, asking that he seek a ministerial direction in respect of the Scottish Government's deposit return scheme and the plan to implement it in August. A fortnight ago, out of courtesy, we provided him with that letter in private, with a fair opportunity to reply to our request for a meeting to discuss the matter. I have had no such reply. This morning, as is only courteous, I notified the Presiding Officer that I would make a point of order regarding the permanent secretary today.

The scheme might decimate small producers; hike beverage costs—as even the chief of CSL admits; damage the environment with millions of extra car miles and a reduction in the amount of glass that is recycled for bottles, which will go to landfill instead; penalise local authorities; and cause massive job losses in small businesses, whose life's work will be ruined.

Therefore, I ask this. Is the Permanent Secretary, who, it is reported, earns a starting salary of up to £180,000 a year, going to come

here to explain whether he has sought such a direction? If not, why not? If there is no way, in procedural terms, that he can appear—willingly or otherwise—before a plenary session, can he, in fact, be called the “accountable officer”? In that circumstance, he would, by definition, be unaccountable.

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The Presiding Officer: I thank Fergus Ewing for advance notice of his point of order.

The Parliament may require a person to give evidence concerning any subject for which a member of the Scottish Government has general responsibility, but it would be for a relevant committee to consider whether it would seek to use those powers.

In terms of plenary sessions, the terms of the Scotland Act 1998 mean that only members of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish law officers may participate in proceedings.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

Repeatedly, the minister failed to answer the same, or a similar, question from across the chamber about the total number of producers in Scotland who could sign up to the scheme. We know that 664 have done so. Either the minister and the Scottish Government do not know that figure, or the minister has repeatedly refused to give that figure in the chamber this afternoon.

I therefore ask whether the Presiding Officer will investigate whether the Scottish Government knows what the figure is? If it does, will the Presiding Officer recall the minister to answer the questions that she has refused to answer this afternoon?

The Presiding Officer: I reiterate that the content of members’ contributions is a matter for the member unless it contravenes standing orders.

Scrutiny is a matter for all members of the chamber, and they may employ all the various mechanisms that are available to them.

At this point, I conclude the item of business. I will allow a moment for members to reorganise themselves before we move on to the next item of business.

Dementia Strategy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-08053, in the name of Kevin Stewart, on dementia strategy. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons.

I call on Kevin Stewart to speak to and move the motion for up to 11 minutes.

16:02

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care (Kevin Stewart): I am very grateful for the opportunity to lead today’s debate on the progress that we have made in developing a new dementia strategy for Scotland. That includes the running of our national conversation late last year, where we reached hundreds of individuals, communities and organisations.

We are now able to publish a summary of what people told us and to outline how we are working with our national dementia lived experience panel to develop a new story for dementia policy in Scotland. The story will be one that builds on our world-leading commitments, such as to a minimum of one-year post-diagnostic support and to a policy that is person-centred and has our communities at its heart.

I know that members across the chamber will be keen to hear the progress that we have made and to contribute their own views on what we as a country should aspire to do to ensure that everyone living with dementia, and those who provide them with care and support, are enabled to live fulfilling lives and access their choice of care and support where and when they need it.

There are approximately 90,000 people living with dementia in Scotland. We know, based on predicted demographic changes and trends, that that number is likely only to grow, with one in three people born now likely to go on to develop dementia. It is a neurological condition that is degenerative and that affects cognitive functions, and for which there is currently no cure. Although it is a condition most likely to affect older people, that is not exclusive, and more people under the age of 65 are being diagnosed with younger onset dementia.

We know that the effects of this brain disease, as it advances, can be traumatic for people living with the condition, their families and those who provide care and support. That came through strongly in our national conversation. However, it was also emphasised to us that dementia is a condition with which people can live for decades and that they can continue to live well at home as

active citizens who contribute to their communities. As a Government, we hope that the debate reflects on the range and diversity of experience of those contributions.

Improving care and support for people living with dementia and those who care for them has been a major ambition of the Scottish Government since 2007. Since then, dementia services have been transformed, thanks to excellent contributions from staff who work across health and social care and the public, third and independent sectors. Those developments have been driven by our three previous dementia strategies and a subsequent Covid-19 action plan, each of which prioritised a continuous journey towards more integrated, person-centred care, as well as the maintenance of a good quality of life for longer for people living with dementia. In addition, we have had a focus on modernising specialist dementia national health service care and, more recently, on supporting the brain health agenda.

Our estimate shows that integration joint boards spent £2.6 billion on dementia in this financial year. That is an increase of around 13 per cent since 2014. In addition, we have provided additional national investment in dementia post-diagnostic support this year and last year, and we have written to local service partners to indicate that additional investment will continue in 2023-24 and beyond, subject to parliamentary approval being received for overall budgets. That allows us to deliver on our world-leading commitment to provide everyone who is diagnosed with dementia in Scotland with a minimum of a year's post-diagnostic support.

Alongside that, we have invested £1 million over two years, via Age Scotland, to boost and sustain community-led support, such as the support that is provided by the excellent Kirrie Connections meeting centre, which I recently had the pleasure of visiting. We will continue to do vital strategic national work on reforming the health and social care system to make sure that joined-up, person-centred care is available to enable people to live well, in the place that they choose, for as long as possible.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): It is now almost four years exactly since my mother passed away with dementia. The minister has mentioned this point once, and perhaps he will go on to elaborate. Obviously, it is very important that the individual who has dementia is given appropriate care—that is mentioned in the feedback summary that we have received today—but my sister and I did not really know how to deal with my mother's dementia. In effect, she faded away in front of us; it was a hollowing-out of our much-loved mother.

What I am asking the minister to bear in mind is the fact that families who have family members with dementia need proper professional support, too. I hope that that will be baked into the future strategy.

Kevin Stewart: I said at the beginning that every one of us in the chamber has probably been touched by a family member or friend who has had to live with dementia, which is not easy. In all that we do, we must look not only at those folks who are living with dementia, but at the families and others who care for them. I cannot be clearer than that. I have already said that, and I am sure that that will come out again and again in this afternoon's debate.

This year, there will be continued investment in social care of £1.7 billion, to address the unprecedented pressures on our health and social care system. That will be used to provide interim care places and to continue to invest in the development of the primary care workforce. All those efforts will benefit people living with dementia and those who provide them with care and support.

However, the Government has the ambition to go further, and we know that that ambition is shared across the chamber and right across Scotland. There was a clear appetite from a broad range of dementia stakeholders for a new strategy that is clear on priorities and expectations, and which demonstrates that we have learned lessons from the pandemic and beyond.

We wanted to attempt a new kind of strategy development, building on the years of dedicated work by lived experience-led groups, such as the Scottish dementia working group, the national dementia carers action network, STAND—striving towards a new day—and Deepness Dementia Media, which have worked to share their experiences and improve policy and practice.

We recognise that people living with dementia, their families and those who provide them with care are experts by experience. That is why the strategy is being co-produced with a national dementia lived experience panel. That panel, which is made up of 11 people living with dementia and 11 care partners, broadens even further the opportunities for the voices of lived experience to be heard in the strategy from its outset and throughout its implementation.

I was delighted to listen to the group's deliberations at its meeting last week, at which a draft of the strategy was considered. Having witnessed the meaningful co-production taking place between the group and Government, I am confident that the group's contributions will move us towards a strategy that truly reflects its ambitions.

The initial draft that the group was considering is based on the responses to our national conversation, which ran from September to December last year. Our Government listened to people who told us what their good and bad experiences were and what they wanted to see in a new strategy. Much of that is reflected in today's publication on what people told us.

I do not have time to reflect on everything that we heard, but I want to mention some things. People told us about the things that mattered to them and kept them well. Positive experiences of receiving support and care, centred around post-diagnostic support and continuity of care, were detailed. That last aspect—continuity—was seen as a key principle that enables trusting relationships to be built between people living with dementia, their families and carers, and professionals.

Communities in all their guises were an incredibly positive aspect of people's experience of living with dementia. From local music groups to more formal meeting centres and dementia resource centres, community is the foundation stone of good, positive support and helps people to maintain a sense of connection, dignity and control beyond their diagnosis or carer status.

However, we must recognise that, for many, things did not always go the way that they should have. In relation to access to early diagnosis and support, people found that there can be a lack of awareness from professionals of what dementia is and its impacts on people and their families. People's experiences were often of a healthcare system that was unable to meet their or their family member's individual needs and preferences.

There is an urgent need to change societal attitudes towards people living with dementia and those who provide them with care and support. Dementia must no longer be seen as purely a death sentence, or something for people to suffer through. We heard that such attitudes make people who are living with dementia feel that they are no longer valued members of their community and that they cannot aspire to live fulfilling lives.

I will provide more detail on how we will go forward in my closing speech, but we are clear that delivering on the ambition that has been set out in our engagement will require a long-term vision and shared responsibility for delivery, which will be set out in a new strategy. That will be supplemented by clear, short-term deliverables that will be set out in subsequent delivery plans that will be agreed by the end of this year.

I look forward to a considered debate that will be personal to a number of folks in the chamber, on a topic that matters a great deal to so many and that

includes the question of how we get the balance right between making the long-term change that our communities believe is needed and continuing to do right by people in the here and now.

If I may, Presiding Officer, I will end my speech with a voice of lived experience—in this case, that of a member of our national dementia lived experience panel, who said:

"Dementia is an unexpected crossroads in the highway of life. It doesn't necessarily mean the end."

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the holding of a National Conversation to inform a New Dementia Strategy for Scotland in late 2022; recognises the key themes that have emerged from this National Conversation, including the need to change how dementia is talked about; supports the Scottish Government's commitment to challenge stigma and promote and protect the rights of people with dementia as valued citizens of Scotland, to value the importance of grassroots community projects to individuals, families and local communities, and to build on Scotland's world-leading commitment to post-diagnostic support to ensure that all people with dementia have the opportunity to benefit from it; supports the need for a long-term vision and set of priorities to improve the experiences and quality of support and services for people living with dementia and those who provide them with care and support; recognises the value of established lived experience groups, and welcomes action by the Scottish Government to build on this and work with the National Dementia Lived Experience Panel and other key stakeholders to develop a new Dementia Strategy for Scotland.

16:14

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): Dementia is the on-going decline of brain functioning, typically presenting as memory loss, the slowing of thinking speed, the loss of mental sharpness and the mixing up of words. Dementia often leads to trouble with speech, low mood, anger and difficulty with carrying out basic daily activities.

The most common type of dementia is Alzheimer's disease, which is progressive, with symptoms developing gradually over many years until eventually they become severe. Symptoms include: personality changes, such as someone becoming aggressive, demanding and suspicious of others; hallucinations and delusions; and low mood and anxiety. Partners, family and friends can all become strangers.

All too often, close family members sacrifice their own wellbeing to ensure that a loved one gets the best care that they can give. As a general practitioner, I often hear about changing roles in relationships, such as children having to become the parents and take responsibility for financial matters, or a partner having to be the main carer. It can all be quite overwhelming, as Stephen Kerr highlighted when he talked about his mother.

As we get older and our health changes, it is really worth considering setting up continuing and welfare powers of attorney. That involves having a conversation with loved ones about their needs and wishes, because it can be difficult to do that once there is a diagnosis of dementia.

According to Public Health Scotland, as of 2015, up to 90,000 people in Scotland were affected by dementia, of whom around 3,000 were under the age of 65. The number of people dying with dementia is rising. Fifteen years ago, there were 3,200 deaths but the number has doubled in just a decade. Marie Curie expects that, by 2040, dementia will be the main underlying cause of death, with 19,200 deaths per annum—a threefold increase in 17 years.

I think that all members can agree that we need a more robust dementia strategy in place, with actions and measurable outcomes, and that that should be a priority for Government. Dementia policy cannot be tinkered with.

I also think that we can all support the principle that people who are living with dementia must be supported to live their lives as they want to live them, for as long as they can do so, and that, when they approach the end of life, they should have access to the most appropriate care, advice and support. Access to palliative and end-of-life support should be a significant component of our dementia strategy.

A key priority of the Scottish National Party Scottish Government's previous dementia strategy was the extension of access to post-diagnostic support. However, delivery was poor. Fewer than half the people who were newly diagnosed with dementia were offered post-diagnosis support. The Western Isles had the worst rate, at 28.5 per cent.

The SNP Government also announced that the management of an individual's care and support would sit in primary care and be led by a dementia link worker, so that people would receive timely aid. Then it cut £65 million from the primary care budget. The SNP has been in charge of primary care services for 15 years, but 42 per cent of GP practices report that demand substantially exceeds capacity, and 34 per cent of practices have at least one GP vacancy. The British Medical Association estimates that Scotland is short of 312 full-time-equivalent GPs, and, according to the Auditor General for Scotland, the SNP is nowhere near on track to increase the GP headcount by 800 by 2027.

That is the SNP in action: big on announcements, light on delivery. The SNP-Green Government has cut £70 million from social care—services that offer crucial support to those suffering from dementia.

Whoever is health secretary or in the minister's chair after 27 March must get real. Failures in the context of primary care, delayed discharge and social care have all had severe consequences for the quality of the care on which people with dementia and their families rely.

We need to find solutions. That entails political decisions about policy and resources. Platitudes will not wash, and nor will self-congratulatory statements from those on the Government benches.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I hope that Sandesh Gulhane appreciates that all politicians in this Parliament will get real. We have just concluded a budget process in which lots of parties made demands. Dementia is a personal issue for me, as it is for Stephen Kerr. It is not enough to express platitudes from the Opposition benches about how things should be better on a substantial matter that is personal to all of us, without saying where one penny would come from. I find that profoundly disrespectful to people who have died from or who are living with dementia and their families.

Sandesh Gulhane: The national care service would be a great place to start. One of the SNP's leadership candidates is making promises about money that he is going to find from I do not know where.

At least now, the SNP looks set to bin its widely criticised national care service plan, as we have just heard, and the associated £1.7 billion spend. Despite rigorous defences of the SNP's flagship policy from members around the chamber and members on the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, the SNP leadership candidates are retreating from that position and leaving other SNP members exposed and fleeing for cover. Humza Yousaf says that he will overhaul the plan, despite defending the policy many months ago. Kate Forbes says that Scotland may not need the flagship policy at all, and she is the finance secretary. Ash Regan would immediately pause the plan if she leads SNP members and becomes our First Minister.

Perhaps Bob Doris should think about that and reflect on it in his speech. It seems that the ministers in the chamber today are the only ones who are staking their political reputations on the policy—or have they U-turned, too?

This year, more than 6,000 Scots will die with dementia, and, in under 20 years, the number of deaths will rise to more than 19,000. We need to do better to support people now and act to ensure that Scotland can support many more people with dementia tomorrow. We look forward to taking that forward with whoever has the job come the end of the month.

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a practising national health service doctor.

I move amendment S6M-08053.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises that improvements in social care, primary care and delayed discharge would make a huge improvement to the quality of life of people with dementia, and calls on the Scottish Government to make these improvements at pace.”

16:21

Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): I am sure that most, if not all, members in the chamber have been impacted by dementia in some way. When I was a student, I worked in a care home as an activities organiser. I know that colleagues will struggle to see me as the home’s redcoat, but in many ways that allowed me to get a better understanding of people living with dementia, and to build relationships with their families and understand something of the illness and the support that is required to ensure that we work hand-in-hand with families to deliver the care and support that is needed.

It is estimated that 90,000 people in Scotland live with dementia. As we heard, new research from Marie Curie estimates that the number of people dying with dementia as the primary underlying cause of death will rise by almost 200 per cent by 2040.

I begin with the areas of consensus that exist in the debate. Our public health approach to dementia must recognise and respond to the increasing prevalence of dementia across society. That is why that we, in the Labour Party, believe that it is imperative that we have a person-centred approach to dementia that focuses our energies on empowering people with dementia to continue to live fulfilling lives with access to additional care and support when they need it.

Any strategy for dementia must, first and foremost, recognise that people who live with dementia are human beings just like you and me. They have social needs and are supported by their loved ones, who, as we have heard from members, are often struggling in their own ways to cope and find the space to deal with the illness. We must explore how we make our communities more dementia inclusive and dementia friendly, so that people with dementia can live at home for as long as they are able to do so. We support the work of the dementia-friendly communities network, which brings together hundreds of dementia-friendly communities that have made meaningful changes to local villages and towns across Scotland to create inclusive spaces for people with dementia.

When the Government launched its national conversation on a new dementia strategy for Scotland, last autumn, we welcomed that development, and we take seriously the responses of people with lived experience, clinicians, third sector organisations and the family carers whom I have spoken about.

What is clear from the conversation is that people who live with dementia and their families need to see action. They need to see tangible signs of progress from the Government, because national conversations become devalued unless they result in substantially improved outcomes for patients. We have had a national conversation, but have we really been listening to what has been said? Despite encouraging rhetoric, the Government’s delivery record has been less than impressive.

The SNP has been in power for 15 years and the first dementia strategy was published 13 years ago, yet people with dementia and their families still face a postcode lottery for diagnosis and post-diagnostic support. The most recent statistics, which are from 2019-20, show that only 42 per cent of people who are newly diagnosed with dementia are referred for post-diagnostic support. Indeed, during the pandemic, people with dementia and their families were at the centre of that maelstrom and they did not receive support in their lives often enough. In some ways, that reflects the Government’s failure to learn lessons since the implementation of the first national dementia strategy, in 2010.

Kevin Stewart: I recognise what Mr O’Kane said about accessing post-diagnostic support in certain places. The Government has put in an extra £3.5 million per annum to ensure that folk get the support that they need. Beyond that, our proposals on national quality standards should get rid of the postcode lottery that he mentioned. I recognise that it is not good enough that in some places people get very good help and support while folk who are not that far away from them do not.

Paul O’Kane: I recognise what the minister said about that investment, but I think that it is fair to say that that money was the restoration of previous cuts. Also, we have already heard about the various flavours of a national care service, so we are not sure what the future of the bill will be or how it will address the postcode lottery in the way that the minister suggested. We are in a wait-and-see situation right now. The reality is that, no matter how well intentioned the dementia strategy is, it cannot and will not succeed in achieving its aims until the Government gets serious about tackling the systemic issues in the NHS and social care.

That is why Scottish Labour has been calling on the Government to end the indignity for dementia patients who are stuck in hospital when they could be back living in their house or care home. That issue could be resolved if the Scottish Government took the necessary action to increase the availability of care packages. At present, provision is patchy and access to suitable packages depends on where someone lives. All members' inboxes show examples of people who are in real need, so we need real action.

The SNP promised to scrap non-residential care charges in its manifesto, as recommended by the independent review on adult social care, and it is time that it took action and delivered on that commitment.

The Scottish Government must deliver for the social care workforce, because it is the backbone of ensuring that people get the care provision that they need. We have consistently called for an immediate pay rise to £12 per hour, rising to £15 per hour. If we are serious about rewarding the workforce and increasing staff retention, we have to make that move. Week after week, the minister has derided calls from those on the Labour benches for £12 per hour, rising to £15 per hour, for social care workers, claiming that it was unreasonable and unaffordable, yet this afternoon in the *Daily Record*, his colleague Kate Forbes, the finance secretary, stated her commitment to deliver as First Minister what she steadfastly opposed and refused to introduce as finance secretary: £15 per hour for social care workers. It is amazing what U-turns can be performed when there is an SNP membership to be won over. Given the Government's track record on delivery, I will not be holding my breath.

The challenge for the Government is that it needs to close the gap between the rhetoric and what is delivered to ensure that people living with dementia and their families and carers have an improved quality of life. It is time for the Scottish Government to get serious about delivering for people with dementia, and that starts by fixing the omniscrisis in the NHS and social care.

I move amendment to motion S6M-08053.1, to insert at end

“; regrets that the current NHS workforce challenges are impacting on dementia care, with timely access to diagnosis and post-diagnostic support becoming a postcode lottery, and calls on the Scottish Government to publish a plan for ending the high level of delayed discharge among dementia patients, and to improve support for people with dementia by removing non-residential social care charges and increasing the availability of care packages, supported by efforts to grow the social care workforce by delivering an immediate increase in pay to at least £12 per hour, and a plan to increase pay to £15 per hour by the end of the current parliamentary session.”

16:28

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I am pleased to speak for the Liberal Democrats in this important debate. As we have heard, dementia is a devastating and often tragic condition that exacts a particularly cruel toll on those living with it and those who love and care for them. It is often referred to as the long goodbye. It is the slow disappearance of cherished memory, the gradual loss of the loved one you once knew and their physical, mental and spiritual deterioration into a shell of what they once were. I cannot imagine how painful it must be to visit a brother, sister, parent or grandparent to find that they no longer recognise who you are.

Despite improvements in care and treatment over the years, this devastating illness is not going away. Indeed, it is estimated that, by the year 2025, more than 1 million people in the UK will have a dementia diagnosis and that almost all of us will know somebody who is living with the condition.

As Scotland's population steadily ages, so, too, will the number of dementia sufferers grow. As the number of dementia sufferers rises, a renewed focus and a commitment to sustained funding are essential. Therefore, I would like to turn to the Government's dementia strategy.

It is right that the Government has reached out to those with experience of the condition in order to inform its new strategy. Its previous strategy has not been updated since the pandemic, so a renewed focus, which takes account of the impact of the Covid years, is vital. As with every condition, early diagnosis and intervention are critical. The interruption to services that was caused by the pandemic has meant that many people have received a dementia diagnosis much later in their experience of the condition, so their condition is more progressed and their needs more acute at the point of diagnosis than would otherwise have been the case. The Government's strategy, therefore, needs to recognise the particular and unique challenges that the recently diagnosed cohort will face, and to ensure that they and their families have access to a breadth of support.

Research conducted by Marie Curie has found that, by 2040, 10,000 more people each year will be dying with palliative care needs, and a large proportion of those are expected to be dementia sufferers. I echo Marie Curie's calls for the Government's new dementia strategy to include a commitment to support people living with dementia to access the tailored palliative care that they need.

We need to ensure that people are supported to live as they want to for as long as they can—that is dignity. The Government's strategy must include

an improvement in accessible and tailored end-of-life support for people with dementia, with an eye on how the ever-increasing need can be met. That must include care provision in people's own homes and care homes as well as hospices. The previous dementia strategy included a commitment to improve palliative care, but that must now be backed by a clear and measurable implementation plan.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): Does Alex Cole-Hamilton agree that there must also be respite for families, as it allows those suffering dementia to stay in the home but is also important in terms of the dignity of the families that surround the person and provide most of their supportive care?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Absolutely. Martin Whitfield is right to bring the attention of the chamber to the fact that much of the unpaid care force in this country is exploited by the state through the love that they have for their families. They are on their knees and they are in want of a break. Therefore, respite absolutely has to be part of that strategy.

The strategy must also align with and inform the upcoming palliative and end-of-life strategies—

Kevin Stewart: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that Mr Cole-Hamilton is in the closing part of his speech.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: The Government's motion correctly highlights the vital importance of care in our communities. One may wonder, then, why it is intent on disempowering the providers of local care in those communities by creating a vast and unnecessary bureaucracy that represents the ministerial takeover of social care in our country instead of rewarding social care staff with better pay and conditions. The Government should scrap those plans today. SNP leadership hopefuls are seemingly lining up to do exactly that, so there is hope yet that social care staff will get the support that they need now, not five years down the line.

The actress Phyllis Logan, a long-time supporter of dementia charities, said:

"If you find yourself caring for a relative with dementia, the chances are you will need help."

We must also recognise the toll that this condition takes on the families.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Cole-Hamilton, could you please conclude?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I will end here, Presiding Officer.

Although the Government still has a lot to do, we will support the efforts that it is making.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we move to the open debate, I note that some members who, I believe, wish to speak have not yet pressed their request-to-speak buttons. I invite them to do so now.

16:33

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I take this opportunity to highlight the growing need to improve support for those with dementia. Alzheimer Scotland advises that, worldwide, the number of adults living with dementia is on course to nearly triple to 153 million by 2050. There are around 90,000 people with dementia in Scotland, and it is estimated that that figure will increase by 50 per cent over the next 15 years.

I put on record my appreciation of the work of Alzheimer's Scotland, including the work that it has done with Age Scotland in the about dementia forum, and I praise the support that it has given to my constituents through the Clydebank and Bearsden dementia resource centres. I also thank the staff and volunteers of Carers of West Dunbartonshire and Carers Link East Dunbartonshire for providing an outstanding level of support to carers in my constituency.

It is no surprise that most individuals who replied to the consultation were people who are caring or have cared for someone with dementia. Of course, dementia is having a disproportionate impact on women, because they are predominantly the carers, so we must make sure that their needs are also fully recognised in the new dementia strategy.

From my time as convener of the West Dunbartonshire health and social care partnership, I know how important it is to involve those who are impacted by dementia in the design of support and services to meet their needs. That is why I welcome the approach that the Scottish Government is taking to design the new dementia strategy. It will work with people with lived experience, so that the voices of people with dementia, and of their families and carers, will shape the new strategy. The responses to the consultation need detailed consideration, but we can already see a range of issues to be addressed by the new strategy. Those include the need to change how we talk about dementia.

Kevin Stewart: The way that we talk about dementia is extremely important, and one of the things that has come out loud and clear from the panel is the use of language. Already today, at least one member has talked about dementia sufferers. We all need to start talking about people

who are living with dementia, so Ms McNair made a really good point about language.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, we are really tight for time.

Ms McNair, I can give you the time back.

Marie McNair: The issues to be addressed by the strategy also include the gaps between policy and practice, the postcode lottery impact on the provision of support—which has been spoken about—workforce issues, education and training, and the trauma of diagnosis.

The change that is needed was summed up by one response that said:

“In my humble opinion, focus has to move away from entertaining people with dementia to empowering people with dementia by putting the foundations in place to allow someone like me to be more independent which in turn will enable me and my family to contribute both socially and financially to society and to live well as a family with dementia.”

From the responses that were shared with us, we know that a means of overcoming self-stigma following diagnosis was being able to talk to others who had gone through the same process.

Last night, on the Alzheimer Scotland website, I read “Tony’s Story”, which is a blog about Tony’s experience with dementia. The Tony in question is Tony Worthington, who was the MP for Clydebank and Milngavie from 1987 until 2005. Since his diagnosis, he has been active in influencing policy through his involvement with the Scottish dementia working group. In recognition of the importance that sharing his story could have in tackling stigma, he has spoken publicly about his experience. It did not surprise me to see him doing that, because I have always greatly respected him and his desire to seek justice for his constituents. I put on record my admiration of his sharing his experience for the benefit of others.

Scotland has a track record of supporting people with dementia, as is shown by our commitment to provide immediate support in the first year after people receive a dementia diagnosis. The new dementia strategy is a real opportunity to build on and improve the provision of support and assistance. It is also a chance to shape change in a way that those who are impacted by dementia want.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I advise members that there is no time in hand, so any interventions will have to be incorporated into your allocated time, which will also need to be adhered to.

16:38

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): My wife and I were carers to two elderly parents with

dementia. I have experienced the condition from both sides—as someone with caring responsibilities and as someone who saw at first hand how two wonderful people’s lives were increasingly impaired by a loss of independent function. I have also seen how social care staff in the north-east have cared gently and attentively for people who live with dementia, and I pay tribute to them today.

The Scottish Government needs to back up its rhetoric on valuing social care workers, because they are tired of hearing platitudes. There has clearly been some progress in laying the groundwork for a new dementia strategy, and that is to be welcomed. It will affect upwards of 90,000 people with dementia in Scotland, as well as their carers and, as we have heard today, their families.

Dementia symptoms can cause serious confusion and profound frustration for the people who live with them, and they can be very distressing for carers and loved ones. Their experiences need to be addressed in any framework, as we have also heard today.

This will also be the fourth such strategy since 2010. It is important to point out that the number of patients aged 65 or over has increased by 20 per cent during that period, as the Royal College of General Practitioners has emphasised to us. However, the reality is that the current systems and structures that are in place across health and social care simply do not have the capacity or the resources to rise to the monumental task ahead. We just are not equipped to deal with it.

We have an ageing population in Scotland and serious national health service workforce challenges, from a lack of general practitioners to shortages of community psychiatrist nurses and allied health professionals. We have a chronically underresourced social care system and a social care recruitment crisis contributing to delayed discharge and bed blocking in our hospitals. It is shocking that a patient in NHS Grampian in my region had their discharge delayed by 2,312 days. However, that is just the reality of the system.

The proposed national care service is deeply flawed and simply kicks the can down the road. We need immediate action. The Royal College of Physicians has also emphasised the wide variation in the number of consultant geriatricians across the country, with the north of Scotland having one geriatrician per 65,000 compared with the national average of one per 36,000. That must change.

Meanwhile, less than half of people who are newly diagnosed with dementia were offered post-diagnostic support during a vulnerable and potentially frightening time. Support should be person centred, accessible and available, but that

is not the reality on the ground. We owe it to people living with dementia to get the fundamentals right to ensure that they have access to early diagnosis and post-diagnostic support, as well as appropriate palliative care as they near the end of their lives, as Marie Curie has called for. They should not have to bear the brunt of the dementia tax and the worry about how to cover the cost of their care.

We have had more than a decade of dementia strategies—it is time to start making a real difference.

16:42

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I very much welcome a debate on preparing a new dementia strategy, because it is a miserable, cruel disease that impacts on so many people, and it is increasing.

I have to confess that I am not a big fan of strategies unless and until they convert into practical changes. I have read the summary paper, although I am disappointed in the low number of individuals who responded. Citizen Space—I do not know how many of the public have heard of that—had just over 139 responses, and I believe that the consultation ran only from September to December last year. That seems to be a low response given the incidence of dementia, and quite a short response window.

Like others, I have had friends who have succumbed to dementia and have left their loving partner distraught after years of watching their loved one slip away. In the paper, there is the following quote:

“Dementia is like having a hole where someone used to be. They are gone, but you can’t mourn them, and you can’t move on. The lives of those closest to them is held in limbo, with guilt affecting every decision of every day.”

How true.

Here, the support of community, which is addressed in the paper, is crucial, as well as that of professionals. I shall give examples in my own constituency in a moment, but, on language, which the minister referred to, I make a plea that dementia should not be referred to as a “journey”—this is not “Strictly Come Dancing”. I balked at referring to a dementia journey. Why do we not refer to the progress of dementia? That seems to be a bit more sensitive and respectful, but perhaps that is just me.

On the question “What supports work well for you?”, which was posed in the consultation, I share this reply from the paper:

“I had this huge desire to just to be able to be in the company of somebody who was going through the same

process as me. Someone who was having similar experiences, who had similar hurdles to climb over and whose mountains to climb were just as high as mine. I needed to hear their experiences, I wanted to find out how they overcame them, how they overcame their difficulties.”

I will take members to Cowan Court in Penicuik in Midlothian, which is a place where carers have a cup of tea and a chat while their loved ones are being looked after. I have visited and sat with the carers as they had a very brief respite while their loved ones were looked after. We were there to chat, but for one woman it was all so traumatic that she could not speak because she was so tearful. Such is the unremitting stress 24 hours a week, seven days a week, together with anxiety as to what further damage the disease has done as each day and, indeed, each night passes.

I will give other examples of live initiatives. The Scottish Borders Council was the first local authority in Scotland to appoint a champion for older people and people living with dementia. As part of her role, Councillor Elaine Thornton-Nicol has been responsible for encouraging all her fellow councillors to undertake dementia-friendly training to better understand the needs of people living with it.

There is also a Borders dementia working group, which meets monthly in Galashiels. That is for people living with dementia and their carers who are interested in influencing local and national policy and in making the Borders more dementia friendly.

Another example is Peebles memory cafe, which meets twice a month in Firholm day unit, providing a friendly, supportive meeting place for anyone who is affected by dementia to socialise, share stories and enjoy a cup of tea with others.

Why am I giving those examples? I note that the minister referred to building on what is there and to “short-term deliverables”. When summing up, will the minister specify whether the Scottish Government has undertaken an audit of such initiatives across Scotland?

16:46

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): Our population is, on average, becoming older with each passing year. We must come to terms with the increased prevalence of dementia and related illnesses. Dementia can be a harrowing diagnosis and one that many of us dread, but we can do a lot, including providing people with dignity. Currently, unfortunately, we are not near that standard.

An issue such as dementia requires serious attention from the top of Government, yet the headlines that dominate are about the internal war that is going on in the SNP and the flawed national

care service plan, which is not worthy of the name. In politics, and as politicians, we must do better. We must seek to discuss the issues that matter to people in their everyday life: health, education, care and communities.

Three national dementia strategies have been published since 2007 and a fourth is planned. If we take a close look at the previous plans, we see that a great deal has never been realised, including effective local delivery plans and key commitments on post-diagnostic support. We can also see the effects of those broken promises in the day-to-day care of patients and the toll that it takes on those who look after them.

To tackle dementia, we need a well-funded care service with well-paid carers. There is no getting away from that. My party repeatedly calls for a decent pay rise for social care workers.

The challenge that we must face up to is to provide care for people where and when they need support in a way that works for them. I am well aware that that is easier said than done, but launching strategy after strategy is not a substitute for serious action. I am very concerned that we are two years into this session of Parliament and there has been little of the latter.

I want to briefly mention the developing international evidence base that highlights the benefits of allied health professionals' early interventions, supported self-management and rehabilitation as a means of supporting people to live well with dementia for longer.

Despite all the innovative, creative and evidence-based work, it is evident that access to allied health professional services remains inconsistent and challenging. At times, they are simply not available. More must be done to raise the profile of and to improve access to those essential AHP services. In relation to dementia services, access to AHPs is most definitely a postcode lottery.

Since the first dementia strategy was published 13 years ago, delayed discharge has become a huge problem, leaving a lot of dementia patients in a state of distress and prolonged discomfort. In many areas, people are victim to a further postcode lottery, in which their experience of provision might be vastly different from that of someone just a half-hour drive away. Will the new strategy solve the problems, or will it just play lip service to them? The public are perfectly justified in asking those questions.

Many of us will know of a friend, family member or colleague who has been diagnosed with dementia and will have witnessed the intolerable toll that it takes on them and their families. Would it not be some support for them if the Government delivered on its commitment to remove all non-

residential care charges? Using the delayed national care service plan as an excuse for inaction on that is just not good enough.

Let us give people something to be positive about. Let us give those who care for people with dementia a wage that they can build a life on. Let us take some of the cost of care away from those who can barely afford it. Let us stop the postcode lottery.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You need to conclude.

Carol Mochan: We are not asking for much. We are just asking for the Government to live up to its own commitments.

16:50

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the debate and, indeed, the Scottish Government's upcoming dementia strategy.

My first job after I left school was in a care home, and my first placement as a student nurse was in the care of the elderly module. My experience helps me understand that there has been lots of knowledge development and changes to care delivery over recent decades for people living with dementia.

The commitment from the minister that the Scottish Government will work with people with lived experience of dementia to deliver the strategy, which keeps Scotland at the forefront of dementia policy, is also welcome.

Improving care and support for people living with dementia and those who care for them has been a major ambition of the SNP Government since 2007. Since then, dementia services have been transformed, with excellent contributions from staff working across health and social care and the wider public, third and independent sectors.

Just a fortnight ago in Stranraer, I spoke with a dementia nurse specialist who shared the view that, although progress has been made, we can go much further. I was also interested to hear from her that young-onset dementia is increasing in Scotland, and I ask the minister to say in closing whether the Scottish Government is addressing that.

The Scottish Government's previous dementia strategy recognised the importance of taking a person-centred and flexible approach to providing support at all stages of the dementia journey, from work on diagnosis through all stages of the illness and in all care settings. Those principles are important.

The Scottish Government wants everyone with dementia to live with good quality of life for longer,

at home or in a homely setting or in another place of their choosing, where they are connected to friends, family and community. I therefore ask that the next national dementia strategy should look at self-directed support and, in particular, at what stage a person has to be in their dementia journey to receive self-directed support. At the moment, various social work departments apply SDS in different ways, and I have had several local cases in which SDS decisions were reversed. SDS can be a crucial tool. Therefore, I ask the minister for a commitment that SDS will be looked at as part of the strategy and that its use nationally can be evened out and maybe become a wee bit fairer.

The Scottish Government wants more people living with dementia to be able to live well at home for as long as possible. Last year, a major forum on housing and dementia published a series of recommendations on living well with the condition. Housing has a huge role to play in supporting people who are living with dementia to feel safe and able to play an active role in their local communities as their needs change.

Loreburn Housing Association in Dumfries and Galloway has built dementia-friendly housing alongside an innovative employment hub on the site of the former Garrick hospital in Stranraer. Young people living at the youth foyer are expected to be in education, an apprenticeship, employment or training, and they have access to volunteering opportunities in the community. The youth foyer also offers community access areas, a state-of-the-art conference facility, breakout spaces and access to wifi. The aims of the site are fantastic and, as the Scottish Government takes forward the new strategy, I encourage it to look at that model. I invite the minister to visit Stranraer—I would be happy to join him.

I know that this afternoon's debate is short. My focus has been on self-directed support, but I know that we could have had a longer debate about dementia care. I will close there.

16:54

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): As we have heard, more than 90,000 people in Scotland live with dementia, and the figure is due to rise by 50 per cent in the next 15 years. We need to establish now how we will continue to support people, and we need to plan how to staff services to ensure that we have an appropriately qualified workforce in the coming years.

It is helpful for people to know who is at increased risk before they experience symptoms of dementia. Many people will have seen news articles about the actor Chris Hemsworth, who, after being tested as part of a show that he was taking part in, discovered a genetic factor that puts

him at as much as 10 times the normal risk of developing dementia. He has spoken about how that has changed his outlook on his career. His honesty and reflections on the risks to him have undoubtedly helped in raising awareness of the condition. We need more awareness raising, and I will touch on that later if I have time.

I am not saying that genetically testing everyone is the way forward, but we need more research. It is hugely important that we support further work on who might be at greater risk of certain kinds of dementia. Once someone has been diagnosed, it is important that we offer person-centred support. Age Scotland's briefing raises the issue of post-diagnostic support and the varied take-up of that offer. Scotland guarantees a year of post-diagnostic support to anyone who receives a diagnosis of dementia, but fewer than half of those who were diagnosed in 2019-20 received that support. Notwithstanding the pandemic, it would be interesting to understand why that was and to tackle that issue. We also need to ensure that those who are caring for or supporting someone with a diagnosis are adequately supported. These are life-changing diagnoses, and the path is different for everyone.

In that context, peer support could be of high value to those who need it. Many of the organisations that have sent briefings have called for that. I will highlight a few examples of successful projects in my region. As we all know, doctors are prescribing time in the outdoors and in gardens to alleviate the mental health problems caused by ill-health, isolation, anxiety and loneliness. The effects are no different for those with a diagnosis of dementia. In 2015, the dementia garden at Airbles Road in Motherwell was developed as a specialist garden for people in the community who have memory issues. The weekly gardening groups facilitate health and wellbeing benefits for hospital in-patients, out-patients and community volunteers, many of whom face the greatest risk of health and mental health inequalities. The dementia garden has been a lifeline during a difficult few years, as it has given participants the opportunity to do some gardening, thus improving their mental health.

Motherwell Football Club Community Trust and the Falkirk Foundation take part in the popular football memories project. The project, which was pioneered by Alzheimer's Scotland, enables groups of people with dementia to come along and enjoy reminiscing about old games, old players and any other fond memories and interests in football, while their carer can either join in or enjoy a cup of tea and a blether with other carers. There are now more than 100 community-based football reminiscence groups in Scotland.

Public awareness of dementia and the ways in which it presents would benefit many of those who are on the dementia journey. Recently, I have heard from many people who have dementia or other illnesses and who feel that they are less able to participate in everyday society or do something as simple as take the bus, because of others' attitudes. People with communication issues might not be given time to respond, and other people are judged on their outward appearance when it comes to whether they should be able to sit in accessible seats. Those are just some of the examples of everyday barriers.

We need to be more tolerant and make people aware of the potential issues that some people face. I hope that the minister will consider an awareness-raising campaign to make people more aware of the condition and, I hope, combat some of the issues that people face. We have an obligation to ensure that people with dementia have the tools to live well and that their families have support to deal with whatever comes their way.

16:58

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): In 2015, my mum died from dementia at the Vale of Leven hospital. She had been in a care home for around a year before her passing, and I can still remember the denial when, as a family, we sat with mum and agreed that a care home was the best setting for her to continue with her life. I had not noticed the moment when I realised that mum's decline was so physically and cognitively profound. Perhaps I was just in denial for some time.

I have no idea whether mum got any post-diagnostic support or what that involved. I do not even remember the first time the words "vascular dementia" were said out loud. Why do I say this? It is because my experience will not be uncommon in the slightest, and any dementia strategy must involve and encourage engagement with families, not as a one-off but on an on-going basis. Those living with dementia do not always share with families, and they seek to protect their family members despite that dramatic decline. Families are key partners.

I worked in partnership with the musical memories Springburn group as part of the Scottish Government's on-going consultation process that we are debating this afternoon. I talked to the families of those living with dementia about the improvements that they would like to see in the system. Musical memories Springburn uses music, song and dance—from "Ye Canny Shove Yer Grannie Aff A Bus" to "Mack the Knife" and everything in between. The weekly gathering is hugely beneficial in enabling those living with

dementia to laugh, smile and have joy—to have a life.

People told us what they wanted to improve and what they wanted to change. I heard that a network of community support provision and a range of activities are often available, if people know where they are, but there is not sufficient signposting to be able to access activities that boost people's quality of life and social interaction. Quite often, there is a lack of appropriate transport or not enough staff who can be released from care homes or day centres to enable those living with dementia and their families to get to where the activities are. That is clearly an issue.

People mentioned staffing pressures and staff pay in a social care setting. On a cross-party basis, none of us disagrees in that regard—of course, there is an underlying issue—so we should not pretend that we disagree.

Some people spoke positively about the one-year diagnostic support for those living with dementia, but there was a concern that, although that support is delivered well, a cliff edge is created once that year passes. I also heard that quality respite care could make a real difference but that the delivery of such care is inconsistent.

There is a concern that, quite often, support is given in a reactive rather than proactive fashion. We heard that people should be supported to live; there should not be support only at crisis moments.

We need to ensure that the wider community is part of dementia-friendly communities. Day centres, garden centres and other places where older and frail people sometimes gather in large numbers are, of course, vital, but we must remember that those people are still part of our wider community.

I have not mentioned palliative care. In the last few days of my mother's life, she was able to have a single room, and I was able to stay in that room with her for those last few days. We had a wonderful service—well, it was as wonderful as it could be when I knew that my mum was going to die—but not everyone gets that support, because it is not possible for the NHS to provide it all the time.

There is no such thing as a good death when vascular dementia is involved, because it is just horrible. However, there is the least worst passing, and I was fortunate and privileged to get that at the Vale of Leven hospital. We have to ensure that more people living with dementia get that kind of death. I hope that that is not too morbid a thing to say, but it is really important.

17:03

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): I thank the minister for outlining the strategy in his speech.

As we have heard, dementia can be a profoundly distressing condition that involves friends and family members watching their loved one progressively deteriorate over a sustained period. More than 90,000 people in Scotland are living with dementia today, and it is alarming that that number is set to rise by almost 50 per cent by 2040. As Alex Cole-Hamilton said, everybody in the Parliament and beyond will know someone who is living with, or who has been lost to, dementia.

The Scottish Government has a duty to provide those living with dementia with access to the very best standards of care and support in the final years of their lives, as is provided by the NHS for those living with other debilitating medical conditions. The final years of a person with dementia's life should be years of comfort and support for both them and their family and friends. However, in Scotland, about 10,000 people living with advanced dementia today are responsible for funding their own care, which can cost up to £69,000 a year. Third sector organisations including Marie Curie, the Alzheimer's Society and care home relatives Scotland have called for an end to that policy, which cuts into the final testament of a person with dementia. That is money that people have saved over the course of their life to pass on to their loved ones or to provide legacies relating to important causes that are close to their heart. They will lose such opportunities because of their condition.

Cathie Russell from Care Home Relatives Scotland said:

"It is the most regressive tax in the country because it can take 100 per cent of everything you and your spouse accrued over a lifetime of hard work."

According to Marie Curie, four out of five people living with frailty and dementia do not get the palliative care that they need, with health and social care workers facing challenges accessing and undertaking palliative and end-of-life care training in care homes and anticipatory care settings.

We have repeatedly heard from members of the Government about how a national care service would be a solution to all those problems. Sadly, however, those working in social care do not believe that to be the case—and nor do the leadership contenders in the SNP's present election.

The Government's current proposals do nothing to resolve the issues that are prevalent across our social care system. In fact, they will divert money away from the front line and from much-needed

dementia care. The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh has said that dropping the national care service plans would present the Government with the opportunity to re-evaluate its dementia policy to better support patients and their families, as well as addressing unequal access to care and taking action to increase the social care workforce.

When he sums up the debate, the minister might give some reassurance or clarity to those in the social care sector amid suggestions that the Scottish Government may be delaying stage 1 of the bill in order to further engage and think again—or is the Government simply delaying the bill in time to bring in a new leader, such as Kate Forbes, who may decide to pull the plug on a national care service altogether?

A recent report by Unison found that 71 per cent of social care staff believe that the changes to social care as proposed would be bad, with 77 per cent having concerns about the implications for their job security and 64 per cent concerned about the impact on their pension. That is from people who are putting in a power of work, who are very uncertain about their future beyond a national care service.

The Scottish Government must urgently review its approach to dementia care to put those living with dementia and their families at the heart of that approach. It should divert money away from its plan for a national care service towards much-needed dementia care in Scotland today.

17:07

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): The first cross-party group that I joined when I was elected in 2016 was on dementia. More than 90,000 people live with dementia in Scotland but, as we have heard, that number is set to rise by 50 per cent in the next 15 years.

Dementia touches the lives of so many of our constituents, and I was always immensely grateful for the contribution made at meetings of the cross-party group by those living with dementia and their loved ones, including Tony Worthington, whom Marie McNair mentioned. Their experiences were invaluable, and at times heartbreaking. I do not think that I fully appreciated the challenges that they faced until a loved one was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and I became their carer. I realised just how unpredictable, how frustrating and how utterly cruel dementia is, how helpless we can often feel and how precious every single minute of every single day is with those we care for.

Time is not on the side of those living with dementia, and a new strategy in the future, six years after the previous strategy was published, will come too late for many. Those people need our support now; the support given at the moment

is not enough. We did not provide it during the pandemic for residents in care homes, 80 per cent of whom have dementia. We did not provide it when we failed to provide testing and personal protective equipment for care home staff and residents, when we discharged untested hospital patients into care homes and when we failed to do more to facilitate safe visits, especially for those with dementia, who were cut off from their loved ones and only able to hug them through plastic sheets.

We are not providing that support now, as another crisis engulfs our care services. A third of beds in my local hospital in Dumfries are occupied by patients whose discharge is delayed by a lack of carers and care home places. More than 3,000 hours of assessed care are not being covered, and the number of care homes and care home places in the region has been cut by a third over the past decade.

Instead of paying our care workers a decent wage, the health secretary's sticking plaster is to pay health boards to discharge patients, not back into their homes, where they want to be, but into care homes, where they often do not need to be. In rural areas, a lack of care homes means that those places are often miles from the patient's family. Imagine how devastating it is for someone living with dementia if they are not able to go home to familiar surroundings where they feel safe, and are instead sent to a care home, cut off from their loved ones.

We are also not providing support for those living with dementia by failing to deliver on the existing dementia strategy commitments. Patients across Scotland are still waiting too long for diagnosis and, as we have heard, fewer than half of those newly diagnosed were referred for a year's post-diagnosis support, despite the fact that that support is supposed to be guaranteed.

We are not delivering our commitments to deliver free personal care for under-65s diagnosed with dementia, secured through Frank's law and the inspiring campaign by Amanda Kopel, never mind ending the scandal of the fact that people with advanced dementia still have to pay care charges when the only reason that they need that care is their health condition.

Unless we tackle the care crisis and unless we properly resource the commitments in the current dementia strategy, we will not be able to deliver the future strategy that we all want to see. That strategy needs to put those living with dementia—and, crucially, their carers—at its very centre. It must break down the stigma of dementia by supporting initiatives such as dementia-friendly communities, such as the one in Prestwick in my region, and it must enable us to recruit specialists in geriatric medicine, psychiatry and neurology,

whom we need but are still short of. Ultimately, the strategy must ensure that everyone living with dementia can make the most of the precious minutes that they have, along with their loved ones.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Thank you, Mr Smyth. I call Jackie Dunbar, who is the final speaker in the open debate, after which we will move to closing speeches. Everybody who has participated in the debate should be present for those.

Jackie Dunbar, you have up to four minutes.

17:11

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Only those living with dementia, their loved ones and their carers fully know the complexities and nuances of dealing with it. The voice of experience is a crucial part of the Scottish Government's policy-making process, and ensuring that that is factored into decision making as early as possible is key to improving services across the country. As such, that is the first step towards a new dementia strategy.

Folk living with dementia, their families and carers have been given the opportunity to spell out what is important to them, what needs to change and how to build on the first dementia strategy from 2010. As the minister has already outlined, the national conversation included a series of online and in-person discussions to make it as easy as possible to contribute, and the responses will feed into the new strategy to be published in 2023. That is being driven by the national dementia lived experience panel, which will provide tangible ways to improve the lives of those living with the condition.

We have a world-leading commitment to provide immediate support in the first year after people receive a dementia diagnosis. An estimated £2.2 billion is spent on dementia annually and, from last year, the Scottish Government allocated an additional £3.5 million to boost post-diagnostic services. In addition, the Scottish Government is investing £1 million over two years via Age Scotland to boost and expand community-based resources. That work is, of course, welcome, but, as we move forward with the refreshed strategy, we must continue to further enhance care and support.

Improving care and support for folk with dementia and those who care for them has been a major ambition of the SNP Government since 2007. Since then, dementia services have been transformed, with excellent contributions from staff working across health and social care, the wider

public sector and the third and independent sectors.

The Scottish Government's previous dementia strategy focused on the quality of care for folk living with dementia and their families through work on diagnosis. It recognised the importance of a person-centred and flexible approach to providing support at all stages of the dementia journey, through work on diagnosis and all stages of the illness, and in all care settings.

I will touch briefly on football and sport. The Scottish Government supports the Scottish Football Association's stance and new guidance against heading the ball during practice sessions on either side of match day. The Scottish Government is aware of the Scottish FA's ongoing assessment of growing evidence of the link between head injuries and the earlier onset of dementia. Any action that can be taken to help reduce head injury and the potential increased risk of developing dementia is welcome. That is particularly important in rugby, and other footballing bodies, sporting bodies and nations need to look at what the Scottish FA is doing and make changes to support the health of their players. That should form part of the Scottish Government's strategy.

Finally, I thank the Aberdeen dementia resource centre for all the work that it does each day to support folk and their families who are impacted by dementia in the city. The centre supports folk with dementia at any stage of the illness. The team are fantastic and deserve a huge thanks for all that they do.

I again welcome the debate and the Government's dementia strategy.

17:15

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): It has been truly moving to listen to so many insights and often heart-wrenching testimony from colleagues about the impact of this cruel disease, and to realise just how widespread it truly is in our communities.

I was reflecting on the numbers that were mentioned, with around 90,000 of our fellow Scots living with dementia. That is equivalent to a town the size of Paisley, and if we were to then factor in the people who have caring responsibilities, it would very quickly grow to a city the size of Aberdeen and Dundee combined perhaps. A very big number of our fellow citizens are living with the condition in one way or another, either directly or through having a caring responsibility.

We owe it to all those people to build the resilience in our healthcare system to support them through what can often be an extremely distressing, disorientating and difficult experience,

as members today have mentioned. Stephen Kerr, a member for Central Scotland, described his mother as fading away. The member for Edinburgh Western referred to the long goodbye and the very difficult process of trying to come to terms with the condition.

One of the biggest challenges is being able to share that with someone initially and deal with the diagnosis. It was concerning to hear from Gillian Mackay, a member for Central Scotland, that the number of people who get that post-diagnostic support is so low. I think that only around 42 to 43 per cent of people access that support. We do not understand why that is. Maybe it is because the symptoms are mild at the initial stage of diagnosis, or perhaps it is something else—perhaps there is not the capacity in the system, for example. We need to understand more about what is going on.

We also need to improve people's resilience, particularly when they are preparing for the future. Issues such as the lack of power of attorney often end up becoming an impediment to discharge from hospital, which causes further issues in the system. Those are areas of deep concern.

Capacity in our care homes has been mentioned, particularly in relation to workforce challenges, as my colleague Carol Mochan, a member for South Scotland, described. We need to pay care professionals appropriately in order to build capacity in our system and allow people to have a proper professional career, which will in itself build the network that is so sorely needed. It was reassuring to hear the member for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch describe that as a key plank of her bid to become the next First Minister. I hope that the ministers sitting before us in the chamber today will agree with that endeavour; indeed, it has been a long-standing policy of the Labour Party.

Our amendment is intended to be constructive and to add extra depth to the Government motion. I hope that the minister will accept it in the spirit in which it is intended. Indeed, I believe that the member for Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale mentioned that she was not a fan of strategies without clear constructive actions. We need to hold the Government to account on the delivery of clear and tangible benefits.

It is a symptom of our own progress as a nation that, as we see life expectancies increase and triumphs in medical science improve things in so many ways, other conditions, such as neurodegenerative disorders, become more of a challenge to deal with. We need to get to grips with that across our entire healthcare system. We need to change the centre of gravity of the traditional national health service model from a hospital-centric one towards one that is based on prevention in communities. That is the crux of

what many members have said. The member for Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn, for example, spoke about the need to support community-based activity. I was particularly touched by his reference to musical memories in Springburn.

I have often heard it said that, when a person dies, a library is burned, but that can often be a very slow burn for people over many years. What a wonderful treasure trove of insights, knowledge and love we can share through that process. Although there is never really a good death in those circumstances, the idea is that it can certainly be much better than it is often experienced in Scotland today.

One example of that that has taken off quite remarkably in Scotland is the viral Facebook page, “Lost Edinburgh”, which was created by a gentleman in Edinburgh. It is widely viewed across Scotland. There is a similar page in Glasgow, “Lost Glasgow”, which is run by a friend of mine, Norry Wilson. The man who started “Lost Edinburgh” did so as part of an attempt to make a DVD of old pictures of Edinburgh so that his dad could talk about them with him. His dad could not remember things that he had talked about 10 minutes earlier, but he could talk in great detail about his childhood and his relationships. Through “Lost Edinburgh”, he got an amazing insight into his father’s younger years, which he would not otherwise have experienced. Building such a means of interaction is quite a powerful experience. It is an amazing, priceless archive of knowledge that we can share with one another, which will add great quality to relationships.

There is much that we can do to build community resilience and to support people well. Many members have mentioned the need for respite and support for the people who care for people with dementia. My mum told me about her experience, growing up, of the tragedy of her uncle, who had to care for her aunt, who suffered from dementia to the extent that he could not take it any more and ended his own life. To be constantly triggered by the loss of the person who is dearest to you in your life in front of your eyes every day must be a deeply distressing experience. It is essential that we provide the capacity to support people in that position.

We are prepared to support the Conservative amendment as well as the Government motion, and we hope that we can work together to build resilience in the Scottish healthcare system.

17:21

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): I am pleased to have the chance to close the debate for the Scottish Conservatives. As we have heard, dementia is a debilitating condition that more than

90,000 people in Scotland live with. It has been among the leading causes of death in Scotland for several years, and research by Marie Curie found that, by 2040, the number of people dying from dementia, as the main underlying cause of death, is expected to rise by a staggering 185 per cent.

In his opening remarks, the minister reminded us that there is no cure for dementia and that people can live with it for decades. It is really important that we give those people the best possible quality of life. No one disagrees that people in social care with dementia have complex needs. We have heard testimony from members across the chamber who have direct experience of loved ones in that position. People in social care with complex needs must often pay more than other residents. Even though some Scots pay up to £69,000 a year for social care associated with dementia, the Scottish Government has taken no direct action on the issue. Marie Curie, the Alzheimer’s Society and Care Home Relatives Scotland have called for an end to that policy and the Scottish Conservatives have pledged to review the fees that people who are suffering from dementia have to pay for social care.

As well as sharing her personal experience, Tess White mentioned the fact that we have an ageing population in Scotland, but we also have a chronically underresourced social care system and a social care recruitment crisis. We hear that in many of the healthcare debates that we have in the chamber. She said that we are not equipped to deal with the situation, yet the SNP Government has cut £65 million from primary care and £70 million from social care, both of which offer crucial support to people who are suffering from dementia. My colleague Sandesh Gulhane talked about dementia link workers; that is a tangible, practical example of what that money could fund.

Statistically, one in three of us will be directly or indirectly impacted by dementia in our lives. People with dementia are still very much part of the community, and we must treat them with dignity and respect. I recognise the minister’s comments about the language that is used. However, the reality is that if we ask families about “living with dementia”, we find that they do not recognise that term. I am sorry, but they feel as though they are suffering with dementia due to the reduced hours of care, the shortage of care staff, the absence of overnight care, the lack of respite provision, which Alex Cole-Hamilton and Martin Whitfield mentioned, and the lack of local council facilities. The minister has stated that support should be person centred, accessible and available but, sadly, that is not the reality on the ground.

Bob Doris: I have heard the terms “suffering from dementia” and “living with dementia”. The

reason that I like to use the term “living with dementia” is that, in my personal experience, family members never know the memories that they have gained until their loved one is no longer with them. When we look back, we hold on to those memories of the last few months of their lives. When a loved one is no longer with us, it is vitally important for family members to have those memories of when they were living with dementia.

Sue Webber: I recognise that that is what we want, but, unfortunately, what is being felt on the ground is some way from that. We need to accept what is actually happening.

My colleague Craig Hoy said that the final years of a person with dementia’s life should be years of comfort and support for them and their friends and families, which goes some way to addressing Mr Doris’s point. We have spoken about the changing roles in families in which a family member has dementia.

Mr O’Kane spoke about developments in his area that help communities to have inclusive spaces and allow people to stay in their own homes for longer, which is important.

Local initiatives are often vital for those suffering with dementia. I want to talk about a brilliant organisation in my region that is close to my heart. Dementia Friendly Pentlands is a voluntary organisation covering Juniper Green, Currie and Balerno, where we have an ageing population and an older demographic. It supports families who are living with dementia and it was set up by two inspiring people: Allister McKillop and Kay Latimer.

The idea was born out of a desire to give people who are living with dementia a stronger presence in their local communities by building communities that are safe, supportive, strong and resilient enough to support people living with dementia and their carers. Creating a community where all are included, where everyone can experience a sense of belonging and where all can express themselves is critical to the efforts of Dementia Friendly Pentlands.

Christine Grahame spoke passionately about many initiatives in the Borders.

Dementia Friendly Pentlands has a community cafe called the Meeting Place, which has just celebrated its one-year anniversary. Rather than placing those living with dementia in a dementia-only environment, the Meeting Place actively encourages all those aged 65 and over to drop in, which ensures that the cafe is truly inclusive. Although I am not over 65, I visited the cafe last summer for its platinum jubilee party, which was also attended by young people from the local primary school. There were lots of cakes and there was singing. On other occasions when I have been, there has also been curling. It is not played

on ice but with little discs and things—it is good fun. The point is to make everyone have fun in the moment and forget some of the challenges that they are facing.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that serious action is needed to improve outcomes and boost research into this condition. The Scottish Government must review its approach to dementia care and pull out all the stops to tackle this horrible disease. We will support the Scottish Government’s motion, but having a world-leading commitment is not enough. Carol Mochan said that having strategy after strategy is not an alternative to action. Commitment is not enough; the issue is about delivery and helping those with dementia now.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I call Kevin Stewart to wind up the debate.

17:23

Kevin Stewart: I am grateful to all those who participated in the debate, and I thank the organisations that helped to inform it with their briefings.

In 2022, the World Health Organization declared dementia a global public health priority. As we have an ageing population, Scotland’s new dementia strategy will be everyone’s story, and that has been reflected in the range of contributions to the debate. Getting a new dementia strategy right requires us to listen and to take in all views on how we best do that. Throughout the process, we have sought to reflect what people have told us, and that will include today’s deliberations.

This is where I will stray, completely and utterly, from the remarks that I planned to make today. Some of the contributions were immensely important, and all of us here have to continue to listen a little bit more.

Craig Hoy: It is good to hear that the minister is listening. Significant concerns about a national care service have been expressed. Will the minister comment on the report that is on the BBC online at the moment, according to which stage 1 of the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill will be paused until after the SNP’s leadership election? If that is—

Kevin Stewart: I think that I have got the gist, Presiding Officer—

Craig Hoy: If what is reported is the case, is it also the case that the national care service is a dead duck?

Kevin Stewart: I will come to that in a minute. I want to make some important points about the strategy.

We have had a debate about the use of language. It is not me who is asking people to change their language here; it is people who are living with dementia and the organisations that represent them. I suggest to members that they might want to look at the dementia language guidelines on the Alzheimer Scotland website. It is essential that we get such things right.

I have a feeling that some folk might have been listening in to the conversations that I had the other week with the lived experience panel, because many of the points that members have made in the debate were made by folks with lived experience. For example, Gillian Mackay talked about an awareness-raising campaign, and one of the members of the panel said to me, "We need an awareness-raising campaign, similar to the one you recently ran on autism." I agree. That meeting was last week. This week, I have been discussing with officials how we can go about finding the resource for and putting in place an awareness-raising campaign, so that communities and people out there understand dementia. That is important.

Members talked about other aspects that the panel raised. Emma Harper talked about young-onset dementia. We have a lot of work to do there. She also mentioned housing. I am glad to see Shona Robison here at the end of the debate. When I was housing minister, we worked on making changes in the context of specialised housing design to take account of dementia, and Ms Robison is carrying on that work, which is really important when it comes to keeping folk at home.

Paul O’Kane: The minister talked about the importance of keeping people at home. Does he accept that, if we are to do that, there have to be good-quality care packages and we need to retain care workers in the system by paying them £15 per hour? Does he agree with the finance secretary’s current position, which is that she would support £15 per hour for care workers? He did not agree with the approach in previous exchanges with me in this chamber.

Kevin Stewart: I believe in the collective responsibility of Government. What I will say is this: the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and I have done all that we can to increase resourcing for care workers and we will continue to do so. If we are to ensure that we have the right care system for the future, we have to go further on pay and conditions.

Sue Webber: Will the minister give way?

Kevin Stewart: I will finish my point.

We have to go further on pay and conditions, which is a reason for having a national care service, to allow for sectoral bargaining. A lot of the issues that have come up today are pertinent

to what we are trying to do with the national care service. I wish that folk could have listened to the lived experience panel, who were very much in favour of the changes—or even joined me today at the Glasgow Disability Alliance meeting, which was attended by 100 to 200 folk who want to see the change that the national care service would bring.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Will the minister give way?

Paul O’Kane: Will the minister give way?

Kevin Stewart: I will not give way, because I am finishing this point, which Mr O’Kane brought up.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. This afternoon, and not for the first time, the political editor of the BBC has released news on social media about a significant Government U-turn, which is apposite to the debate, which the minister in charge was asked a direct question about in an intervention from Craig Hoy and which he is singularly avoiding in the chamber of the Scottish Parliament. Will the minister take the opportunity to establish the veracity of the claims by the BBC that the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill will be delayed?

The Presiding Officer: Minister.

Kevin Stewart: I never ignore—

The Presiding Officer: I will address Mr Cole-Hamilton’s point of order. The member refers to footage that I have not yet seen. I point out that it is a matter of courtesy and respect that responses should address the specific details of questions put.

Kevin Stewart: Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. I have not seen the footage that Mr Cole-Hamilton talks of either. I have written to the convener of a committee of the Parliament outlining a number of things, but I do not know whether that is being reported. I always respect the Parliament and let Parliament know what we are doing.

Let me cover the other points about the national care service, because a number of the important issues that have come up today, including the right to breaks, which Martin Whitfield talked about, the right to visits, which someone else mentioned, and the end to postcode lotteries, are all part of the improvements that we propose as part of the national care service. If members want the right to breaks and the right to visits, we need to make those changes.

I am nearing the end of my time. *[Interruption.]* I will be here for a while in that regard—do not worry. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the minister.

Kevin Stewart: We have had a fairly good debate, but politics has come into play at the last minute. I have to say that that is disappointing, because I had hoped to go over more ground on what the voices of lived experience have told us, and what the panel is doing to help make life better for everyone. I know that that panel will hold our feet to the fire and that it will work tirelessly with the Government and other partners to create and deliver a new strategy that befits the efforts of the group and beyond.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on dementia strategy.

Appointment of Members of the Standards Commission for Scotland

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of motion S6M-08037, in the name of Maggie Chapman, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the appointment of members of the Standards Commission for Scotland.

17:37

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I am pleased to speak to the motion in my name, as a member of the corporate body appointment panel, to invite members to agree to the appointment of Helen Donaldson and Anne-Marie O'Hara as members of the Standards Commission for Scotland.

The Standards Commission is part of the ethical standards framework in Scotland, and its role is to encourage high ethical standards in public life by promoting and enforcing the codes of conduct for councillors and members of devolved public bodies. It issues guidance to councils and public bodies and adjudicates on alleged contraventions of the codes that are referred to it by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. The commission has a convener and four members, all of whom are part time.

After the usual recruitment process, we wish to nominate two people as members of the commission. Helen Donaldson has had a long and successful career in education, initially as an English teacher, then moving into more strategic roles in Aberdeenshire. As head of education and inclusion at Aberdeen City Council, she had wide-ranging responsibilities and worked closely with local councillors, outside agencies and officers from across the council.

Anne-Marie O'Hara recently retired from her post as chief executive officer of an Edinburgh-based charity and social enterprise that provides affordable space for the third sector. Ms O'Hara has worked in various property, charity and grant-giving roles. She was head of the capital team at the Big Lottery Fund, and led the property planning, projects and European funding team at the National Trust for Scotland.

I am sure that members wish Helen Donaldson and Anne-Marie O'Hara very well and every success in their new roles.

In closing, I thank the outgoing members: Mike McCormick, who demitted office on 31 January, and Tricia Stewart, who will demit office on 31 March. I wish them well for the future.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees, under section 8 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, to appoint Helen Donaldson and Anne-Marie O'Hara as Members of the Standards Commission for Scotland.

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

Business Motion

17:39

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-08064, 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 7 March 2023

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Women and Girls' Safety on Public Transport

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 8 March 2023

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Covid Recovery and Parliamentary
Business;
Finance and the Economy

followed by Scottish Government Debate:
International Women's Day 2023 –
Embrace Equity

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 9 March 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 Debate: Reforming
the Criminal Law to Address Misogyny

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time
 Tuesday 14 March 2023
 2.00 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Topical Questions (if selected)
followed by Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee Debate: The Role of Local Government and its Cross-sectoral Partners in Financing and Delivering a Net-zero Scotland
followed by Committee Announcements
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business
 Wednesday 15 March 2023
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Rural Affairs and Islands; Health and Social Care
followed by Stage 1 Debate: Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill
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 16 March 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: Social Justice, Housing and Local Government
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 6 March 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-08064.1.

17:40

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Last week, Scottish Labour formally requested two statements from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, and I made that request again at the meeting of the Parliamentary Bureau on Tuesday, but to no avail. We are therefore proposing an amendment to the business motion to add two important statements on our national health service next week.

The first statement relates to national treatment centres, which are subject to delays and cost overruns. Five of the 10 treatment centres are delayed, and we understand that the cost of the Livingston centre has gone up from £71 million to £184 million. In Scotland, 770,000 people—that is, around one in seven Scots—are now on national health service waiting lists. Those waiting lists are costing patients their health, and they are costing taxpayers money, too. The centres are an important part of the solution. Therefore, we need a statement on those delays and cost overruns as a matter of urgency.

The other statement that we require is on NHS Tayside. The health secretary promised more than a year ago that it would advertise for and recruit consultant oncologists, but that has still not happened. Women with suspected breast cancer still have to travel outwith the region, and that is not acceptable.

Those are not the only issues affecting our NHS. Today, we learned that intensive care unit beds at Ayr hospital have been removed. That is despite Humza Yousaf promising only two months ago that they would be retained.

The health secretary has apparently said that he is happy to answer specific questions on those matters, but that begs the question why we will not have statements to Parliament, as those would provide the appropriate forum for Humza Yousaf to answer such questions. I also understand that the health secretary has suggested that he is happy to meet members to discuss those matters, but at least one of our members has been struggling to get time in his diary. It is clear that Humza Yousaf seems more preoccupied with running his leadership campaign than with running Scotland's NHS.

We believe that the Parliament and the people of Scotland should hear from the health secretary on those important matters. There is a day job to get on with, and Humza Yousaf needs to get on with it.

I move amendment S6M-08064.1, to leave out from

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Women and Girls' Safety on Public Transport"

to

“5.00 pm Decision Time”

and insert:

“followed by Ministerial Statement: National Treatment Centres

followed by Ministerial Statement: NHS Tayside

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Women and Girls’ Safety on Public Transport

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

6.00 pm Decision Time”.

17:42

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): The Scottish Government regularly updates Parliament on national treatment centres; it did so most recently in December. Four national treatment centres will open this year, providing significant additional protected capacity. The programme is a huge investment in front-line planned care infrastructure, and during the next five years it will provide the single biggest increase in planned care capacity ever created in NHS Scotland. The Scottish Government remains committed to delivery of the programme and has no further update that warrants a statement at this time.

The Scottish Government will continue to work with NHS Tayside and other partners across health and social care to address financial pressures and make reforms to deliver improved, sustainable services.

On both issues, as always, I encourage members to lodge specific questions via the normal routes that are available to them. Ministers will, of course, be happy to answer them.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S6M-08064.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend motion S6M-08064, 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 digital voting.

17:44

Meeting suspended.

17:45

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S6M-08064.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, be agreed to. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is closed.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The app failed to connect, but I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: I can confirm that your vote has been recorded, Mr Whitfield.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (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)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-08064.1, in the name of Neil Bibby, is: For 54, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-08062, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on changes to this week's business, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 7 March 2023

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Women and Girls' Safety on Public Transport

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 8 March 2023

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
 Covid Recovery and Parliamentary Business;
 Finance and the Economy

followed by Scottish Government Debate:
 International Women's Day 2023 –
 Embrace Equity

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 9 March 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 Debate: Reforming

the Criminal Law to Address Misogyny

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 14 March 2023

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee Debate: The Role of Local Government and its Cross-sectoral Partners in Financing and Delivering a Net-zero Scotland

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 15 March 2023

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Rural Affairs and Islands;
Health and Social Care

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill

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 16 March 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:
Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 6 March 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

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-08065, 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 Environmental Regulation (Enforcement Measures) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2023 [draft] be approved.—[George Adam]

17:48

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I would like to make it clear at the outset that, although I am a member of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, I am speaking on behalf of my party.

I begin by stating the obvious: the drinks industry is watching the actions of this Government with absolute despair. At the same time as the outgoing First Minister is urging drinks producers to sign up to the deposit return scheme, her three potential replacements are already promising to make changes to it, and Kate Forbes has even warned that the scheme could cause "economic carnage". However, that does not seem to have discouraged Lorna Slater. The Greens are pressing ahead with the SSI, whether the Scottish National Party likes it or not, which makes one wonder whether the tail is now wagging the dog in this coalition Government.

Parliament is being asked to support an SSI that allows penalties to be levied in a scheme that is not yet in place, that has already suffered two delays, and with which only 16 per cent of producers across Scotland have registered.

At the weekend, the minister did not even know whether the small drinks producers would be exempt for a further year but, today, she appears to want to set up a police force to enforce the scheme. That sounds a lot like putting the cart before the horse—a logistical nightmare that the minister seems to be drawing inspiration from.

I turn to the nuts and bolts of the SSI.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I recognise that the SSI covers more than the deposit return scheme but, since it was agreed by the net zero committee, it has become increasingly clear, as Edward Mountain has highlighted—and no more so than in today's statement—that more questions than answers remain around the current plans for the DRS. Today, for example, we heard that fewer than 16 per cent of producers have signed up to it.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Will Colin Smyth take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: No—the member cannot make an intervention on an intervention.

Colin Smyth: Like the deposit return scheme, the Greens are making the standing orders up as they go along.

We do not yet know whether there will be the delay for small producers that Labour has called for and we do not even know whether there will be an exemption from the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020.

Does Edward Mountain agree that the Government should pause the SSI and bring it back when it has the confidence of Scotland's small producers, with a scheme that will deliver our environmental commitments and—if we are serious about a just transition, which the Greens used to be—will deliver for Scotland's consumers and small businesses?

Edward Mountain: I thank Colin Smyth for that intervention, because I clearly agree with him. The deposit return scheme is something that we should encourage, provided that it works properly. That is why, when the SSI came before the committee—and I had a chance to consider its contents—I abstained in the vote on it.

Mark Ruskell: Will the member take an intervention?

Edward Mountain: If I can finish this sentence, I will take an intervention.

Now, in the cool light of day and having had a further chance to consider it, I no longer consider it appropriate to move on with the proposal.

Mark Ruskell: I thank Edward Mountain for taking an intervention. In his capacity as convener of the committee, can he confirm to the chamber that the Labour Party voted for that SSI when it came to the committee?

The Presiding Officer: I ask Mr Mountain to wind up in his response to that intervention.

Edward Mountain: I will try and wind up but, as I said at the outset, I am not going to speak in this debate as the convener of the committee; I will speak as an individual with serious concerns.

To be clear, the SSI is making sure that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency has the power to impose penalties and that there is no option for anyone to appeal that process. As I said at the committee, I really question whether it is appropriate to give SEPA the responsibility. Ever since SEPA suffered the data hack, it has struggled to get back on its feet. That impacted the agency's ability to regulate the industries that, effectively, it should be regulating at the moment.

Given that SEPA is under serious pressure, giving it more powers and responsibilities for a scheme that already appears to be a disaster would further compound that disaster.

Next month, this Parliament will have a new First Minister, so Lorna Slater and the Greens might or might not be in government, and the deposit return scheme might be delayed or go through a revamp.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Mountain, I must ask you to conclude at this point, because we are already two minutes over the allotted time.

Edward Mountain: To conclude, that is why I am not supporting the SSI and nor is my party.

17:53

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): The Environmental Regulation (Enforcement Measures) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2023 provides SEPA with access to civil enforcement measures for offences in two existing pieces of legislation—data reporting regulations that enable upcoming reforms to extended producer responsibility for packaging, and the amending DRS regulations that were passed by this Parliament last year, which added one new offence in response to calls from industry. SEPA is already responsible for the enforcement of both EPR and DRS regulations but, currently, when an offence is committed under either set of regulations, the agency's only option is to report the matter to the procurator fiscal for criminal prosecution.

This technical instrument provides more flexibility to SEPA. It adds those offences to the existing list in the 2015 enforcement order, meaning that SEPA can turn to civil sanctions where appropriate. This makes a substantial difference to SEPA's enforcement options. Criminal prosecution through the courts takes time and the results are uncertain. Upon conviction for these offences, a court can impose a fine of up to £10,000 on summary conviction, or an unlimited fine on conviction on indictment.

In contrast, the values for fixed monetary policies associated with the civil sanctions—

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Lorna Slater: I am going to finish my speech.

The values for fixed monetary policies associated with the civil sanctions are £300, £600 or £1,000, with the amounts of the penalty linked to the seriousness of the offence. Therefore, opposing this instrument means calling for stricter

enforcement approaches for businesses than we are aiming to bring in.

I will give members an example. Regulation 23(3) of the Packaging Waste (Data Reporting) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 says that SEPA may give an information notice requiring a person with data collection or reporting obligations to supply data within a set period of time. Regulation 28(5) makes it an offence for the person not to comply with the written notice unless they have a “reasonable excuse”.

With that enforcement measure instrument in place, SEPA has the option of imposing a fixed monetary penalty of £600. Without it, SEPA’s only option to enforce compliance would be to submit a report to the procurator fiscal in anticipation of criminal prosecution. I made that clear to the committee on 7 February, and I welcomed Monica Lennon’s comments, which supported the flexibility and proportionality that is being provided by this approach.

Amending the 2015 enforcement order does not change the obligations that are placed on producers for either the DRS or EPR. It provides a flexible and proportionate option for enforcing those obligations, which will benefit businesses. Opposing the instrument is illogical and would result in businesses that fall foul of the regulations facing criminal sanctions. I cannot believe that that is the outcome that members seriously want, and I encourage them to support the motion.

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

The next item of business is consideration—*[Interruption.]* Excuse me, I cannot hear myself speak because of other conversations that are ongoing.

The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-08066, on approval of an SSI. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) (Amendment) Order 2023 [draft] be approved.—*[George Adam]*

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

Decision Time

17:57

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

The first question is, that motion S6M-08007, in the name of Tom Arthur, on the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2023, be agreed to. Are we all agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, 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, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 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, 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)
 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)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 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)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 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)

Against

Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

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)
 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)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 84, Against 4, Abstentions 30.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 2023 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-08053.2, in the name of Sandesh Gulhane, which seeks to amend motion S6M-08053, in the name of Kevin Stewart, on a dementia strategy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (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)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 55, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-08053.1, in the name of Paul O'Kane, which seeks to amend motion S6M-08053, in the name of Kevin Stewart, on a dementia strategy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

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, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and
 Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire)
 (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 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 (Caitness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)
 (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Abstentions

Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 23, Against 93, Abstentions 3.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-08053, in the name of Kevin Stewart, on a dementia strategy, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the holding of a National Conversation to inform a New Dementia Strategy for Scotland in late 2022; recognises the key themes that have emerged from this National Conversation, including the need to change how dementia is talked about; supports the Scottish Government's commitment to challenge stigma and promote and protect the rights of people with dementia as valued citizens of Scotland, to value the importance of grassroots community projects to individuals, families and local communities, and to build on Scotland's world-leading commitment to post-diagnostic support to ensure that all people with dementia have the opportunity to benefit from it; supports the need for a long-term vision and set of priorities to improve the experiences and quality of support and services for people living with dementia and those who provide them with care and support; recognises the value of established lived experience groups, and welcomes action by the Scottish Government to build on this and work with the National Dementia Lived Experience Panel and other key stakeholders to develop a new Dementia Strategy for Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-08037, in the name of Maggie Chapman, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the appointment of members of the Standards Commission for Scotland, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees, under section 8 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, to appoint Helen Donaldson and Anne-Marie O'Hara as Members of the Standards Commission for Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-08065, in the name of George Adam, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (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)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (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)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (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)
 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)

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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 O’Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 62, Against 55, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Environmental Regulation (Enforcement Measures) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2023 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-08066, in the name of George Adam, on the approval of an SSI, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) (Amendment) Order 2023 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Scotland's Hospitality and Brewing Sector

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S6M-07499, in the name of Craig Hoy, on Scotland's hospitality and brewing sector.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes with concern the reported current pressures facing Scotland's pubs, bars, breweries and wider hospitality sector, including in the South Scotland region; understands that the sector was amongst the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that ongoing current inflationary pressures and impacts on customer spending power makes trading exceptionally difficult; believes that Scottish hospitality businesses will not receive the 75% business rates relief that businesses in England and Wales will receive in 2023-24; notes the calls for the Scottish Government to reconsider the support on offer to the sector, and further notes with concern the number of policies being introduced or consulted on that it believes will put additional pressure on the sector, including the Deposit Return Scheme and restrictions to alcohol advertising and sponsorship.

18:07

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): Pubs are at the heart of our communities: they bring people together, which helps to tackle loneliness and social isolation. Since Covid, however, they have faced unprecedented pressures.

The latest figures reveal that Scotland has 4,569 pubs, which support 61,900 jobs. The sector generates £1.8 billion for the Scottish economy every year, but pubs, the jobs and the economic and social contribution that they deliver are all at risk. In particular, they are at risk from record energy costs. Nearly half of all pubs are facing energy rises of more than 250 per cent, and one in three are facing rises of more than 500 per cent. They are at risk from sky-high rates, from the increased costs of drinks, food and broadcast subscriptions, and from increased supplier costs. They are at risk from a wilfully negligent Scottish National Party Government, the preposterously complex deposit return scheme and the absurd proposed restrictions on advertising, alcohol sponsorship and merchandising.

The Government now appears to have an anti-alcohol agenda. Rather than easing the pressure on pubs, the Government is piling the pressure on them like never before—the industry is at breaking point. The Scottish Licensed Trade Association says that 50 per cent of outlets were down in trade over the festive period compared with the last normal Christmas and new year season. In the first quarter of this year, six out of 10 outlets have been closing early or for full days.

Wherever I have lived or worked, I have always had a good local, as much for the social contact—if not more so—as for a good pint: the Tyneside Tavern, the Plough Tavern and the Mercat in Haddington, the Alleyn's Head in Dulwich and the Marquis of Granby in Westminster. When I was living in south-east Asia, I would go to the Derby in Hong Kong, the Churchill Bar in Bangkok or the Penny Black in Singapore. Closer to home, just this weekend for the rugby, I went into the Goblin Ha' and the Tweeddale Arms in Gifford. Those are all great pubs—places where I have made good friends and enjoyed beer and banter.

The "Friends on Tap" report that was produced for the Campaign for Real Ale—CAMRA—by the University of Oxford found that people who have a local have more friends and feel more connected to the local community than those who do not.

This week, I had the pleasure of visiting Dominic McNeill, who stepped in last year to save the Tower Inn in Tranent from permanent closure and change of use to housing. For years, Dominic had visited the pub with friends on a Wednesday night for a few pints and a few games of pool. Since taking over the pub, Dominic has not paid himself a wage and he is still swimming against the tide of rising costs and red tape. However, he is seeking to transform the pub into a family-friendly hospitality venue with a cafe.

Dominic and his team want to put the Tower Inn back into the heart of the community of Tranent. He talked fondly of his customers: the man who brings in his wife who suffers from dementia for some company and a cup of tea and to watch an episode of "Pointless", and the elderly customer who suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease who, one day, did not show up for his pint as he normally would. When the staff realised that he had not come in, they went down and found him at his home, suffering an attack. The pub's staff called an ambulance and got him the treatment that he needed.

Across Scotland, our pubs are so much more than places where people go for a drink or a bar meal. They are more than the bricks and mortar, the taps and the table, or the dedicated people who work within them. They are part of and at the heart of the communities that they serve.

Sadly, the future looks bleak for many of our licensed premises. There are urgent interventions that the Scottish Government could take to save them. In England, pubs and hospitality venues currently benefit from 50 per cent rates relief, which will rise to 75 per cent in the forthcoming year. Despite receiving funding through the Barnett formula to deliver the equivalent in Scotland, the SNP is not matching that. The Scottish Beer and Pub Association has calculated that that will cost Scottish pubs £34 million this

year alone. The average rates bill for pubs in Scotland has increased from £13,206 to £13,627. That is a double whammy for Scotland's struggling pubs. For pubs in England, rateable values fell by 17 per cent on average, after significant Covid recovery discounts were built in for the whole revaluation period. We risk losing more and more pubs across Scotland. To help them to survive, the Scottish Government must urgently consider a package of post-Covid reliefs.

I recognise that the Scottish Government must act on the harm caused by alcohol, but we must also recognise that well-run pubs, which monitor people's consumption, are part of the solution, not part of the problem. People drink less when they are in pubs than they do when drinking at home. The Covid lockdowns showed us that. All too often, however, the SNP Government funds experts and launches consultations that tell ministers what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. Ministers do that instead of listening to an industry that already complies with strict licensing and trading laws, that adopts global best practice and that invests heavily in effective self-regulation. Sadly, the Government appears to ignore the effective efforts by organisations such as the Portman Group.

The minister should understand that we tackle the problem of drinking by targeting problem drinkers, not by squeezing the last drop out of a sector that is already struggling. We reduce the harms caused by alcohol by addressing the root societal, emotional and physical causes of abuse, not by marginalising or penalising those who enjoy social alcohol consumption. We do that by directing funding towards local alcohol services and by providing front-line support for those most in need. We do not solve the problem by removing the Tennent's logo from pint glasses, by outlawing grass-roots community sports sponsorship or by boarding up the windows of the Johnnie Walker experience in Edinburgh.

The Government should pause—or, at the very least, massively scale back—its consultation on alcohol advertising. There is also huge concern, quite rightly, about the impact of the deposit return scheme on Scotland's pubs.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): We have had a lot of discussion about the DRS today, and concerns have been raised time and time again. Just this week, the front page of *The Northern Scot* led with a stark warning from Nigel Tiddy of Windswept Brewing, who suggests that, if the scheme progresses as planned, the cost will be the closure of many small businesses in Moray and across Scotland. Does Craig Hoy agree with me that we cannot face that cost and that we have to pause the scheme? The Parliament should be

doing that, and the minister should be listening to what Nigel Tiddy and many others are saying.

Craig Hoy: Absolutely. I agree with Douglas Ross, and I am sure that this will not be the only occasion when I say that.

The inexplicably complex closed-loop system involved in the DRS will impose costs, complexity and cash-flow pressures on pubs. The unintended consequences—crushed cans and broken bottles—and problems such as the search for secure storage and collection and return issues, are clear for everyone to see. Given that many of Scotland's pubs and hospitality venues are already leaders in waste management and do not cause littering, we must ask why pubs are being included in the system at all.

Burdens such as the DRS and an advertising and merchandising ban will push many pubs in Scotland over the edge. Unless the SNP Government rethinks its approach, it will be wilfully and recklessly calling last orders on huge swathes of our pub and hospitality sector.

I say to the minister that it is not too late to save hundreds of pubs and thousands of Scottish jobs, but it is alarmingly near to being so.

18:15

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I thank the member for bringing the debate to the chamber. I add my voice to those who recognise and applaud the stoicism and determination of many in the hospitality sector, including pubs, small hotels, restaurants and similar venues in the Borders and Midlothian, which with Covid funding—although not all received it—adapted as the epidemic progressed and somehow managed to stay afloat.

I am thinking of one place in particular, in Peebles: the Central Bar in the Northgate—a small freehold pub, almost like someone's living room. It had a hard time during Covid because it did not have the space to provide food and therefore missed out on support. It had its regulars, for whom it was more than a place for a wee bevy—it was their social life. Undaunted by virtual closure, the proprietor took the time to redecorate and added hanging flower baskets outside. If members visit its website, they will see what a cheery place it is after his efforts during Covid.

Now, thankfully, we all look forward to more normal times across spring and into summer. Indeed, a by-product of Covid was the popularity of the staycation and the enjoyment of simple pleasures such as taking a walk to a local cafe or pub. I think that it made us all appreciate what was on our doorstep, which also means that we are supporting our local communities.

Particularly in rural areas, such venues are part and parcel of the community, and they often play a large part in raising funds for charities. With regard to rates, there is, of course, the small business bonus scheme, with some—depending on rateable value—paying no rates and others paying a proportion. For decades, that policy has helped small businesses. There is also rural rates relief for businesses in designated rural areas, start-up benefits and so on. All of that distinguishes the Scottish non-domestic rates from the English system, so I do not support the call for 75 per cent business rates relief, as many small businesses already receive a 100 per cent discount. It is like comparing apples and pears.

The Scottish Government continues to pursue the Tied Pubs (Scotland) Act 2021, which is currently blocked by an interim interdict while an appeal against the judicial review that had been won by the Scottish Government goes through the court process. Success in resisting that appeal would redress the current imbalance that acts against tenant landlords.

However, one issue that I agree will cause difficulties is the deposit return scheme, whereby small, pubs, hotels and so on will not charge customers the 20p levy but will instead be required to store the empties to be collected, when the money will be recouped. Where will those empties be stored? I can think of several small businesses in my area that simply cannot store them.

There is also the high cost of energy, which is devastating for hospitality in Scotland. Any hotelier, publican or restaurateur today will tell you that that is the biggest issue that they face. It is not included in the Tory motion, which is therefore like a curate's egg—only good in parts—although I note that the member made passing reference to the cost of energy and rising costs in his opening speech. We have 10 per cent inflation and, indeed, 17 per cent food costs inflation, which are by far the biggest hits on hospitality.

I conclude by recognising and thanking all those small hospitality businesses in my constituency for soldiering on through Covid, often with the support of their communities.

18:18

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):

I thank my colleague Craig Hoy for bringing this debate on hospitality and brewing to the chamber. It is a much-needed opportunity to focus on the problems that the sector is facing—what the Federation of Small Businesses described as

“an unprecedented sequence of challenges”.

During the pandemic, hospitality did its best to adapt, and, of course, the UK Government

stepped in to protect a million Scottish jobs. Even so, Covid smashed through the economy like a wrecking ball. Businesses are still recovering, so being hit by a global cost of living crisis as well as an energy crisis was the last thing that they needed.

In recent months, I have frequently met hospitality owners and drinks producers and have heard at first hand about how hard those problems are hitting home.

It is worth reminding ourselves how important hospitality is for Scotland. The sector employs 200,000 people, delivers £9 billion of value to our economy and helps to attract millions of visitors each year. The Scottish Government should therefore be bending over backwards to help the sector to protect those jobs and see that economic activity grow, but it is doing the opposite by burdening it with higher taxes, smothering it in red tape and even refusing to meet with its representatives.

In England, the UK Government will provide up to 75 per cent rates relief from next year. The Scottish Beer and Pub Association, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Scottish Tourism Alliance have all called for the Scottish Government to match that support, but the Scottish National Party and Green Party have chosen not to.

The Fraser of Allander Institute said that the Scottish Government's budget was taking a “hardline approach” to business. It is not just the budget that is taking a hard line on business; it is the Government's whole attitude. Let us look at the proposal to ban alcohol advertising, on which it is consulting. Just this week, the Scottish Tourism Alliance warned that the policy is

“ill-conceived, high risk and delivers self-inflicted damage to swathes of Scotland's communities”.

We all want to see sensible measures to tackle alcohol abuse, but it is concerning to see a proposal on the table that has such potential to risk jobs and businesses.

Jobs and businesses are also at risk from the Scottish Government's deposit return scheme. Every business that I have spoken to wants it to succeed, but the Scottish Government has cooked up a chaotic scheme that is overly complicated, costly and downright confusing.

Hospitality venues have been left struggling with the lack of storage space. They still have not been told how glass will be collected or whether there is a solution for crushed cans. That is a major problem, because the number of collections will increase for hospitality venues, as will the number of bins that they need to put out. Incredibly, when

hospitality businesses tried to raise their concerns, the minister would not see them.

The damage that the Scottish Government is inflicting is of massive importance and it adds to its anti-business agenda. The Government should be proud to be pro-business, to support job creation and to encourage growth. That is a recipe for success, not just for businesses but for Scotland as a whole.

18:23

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): First, I thank Craig Hoy for choosing such a crucial debate and for raising awareness of the pressures facing the hospitality and drinks sector. The debate has come at a really important time.

We know that the hospitality sector is probably under more pressure than any other sector that I can think of, and it is largely a wonderful and diverse industry. I say “largely” because I always want to raise the issues of the minimum wage and skills, but, largely, it has a lot to offer young people and our economy and I want to stick up for it.

I discovered some of that during virtual meetings that were held during the pandemic while doing my bit to engage with the sector. With Brexit, the pandemic and now the acute cost of living crisis, it is a truism to say that many businesses have gone to the wall and many more will do so if they do not get the help that they deserve.

If we do not act to support the industry in its time of need, the consequences will be dire. We have heard that from many businesses and on many other issues, including the energy issue. I am sure that the minister has heard thousands of examples of energy bills going up in the region of £500 to £1,500 pounds, and that is not even the end of the story.

The Glasgow region, which I represent, is dependent on the hospitality sector, which is one of the reasons why I have taken a strong interest in the issue, but some Government decisions are making matters worse and it does not need to be this way. Take, for instance, the introduction of the low-emission zone in Glasgow, which the council refuses to delay despite the huge impact that it will have on an already beleaguered taxi trade. I have called for a year’s delay because, without a strong taxi trade and strong public transport, there will be a huge impact on Glasgow’s hospitality sector. I see that all the time. When I go out at different times of the day in Glasgow, I can see visibly that the patterns of socialising are changing. That is possibly because people cannot get home by either public transport or taxi. It makes sense to make decisions that are coherent in some way.

That is what concerns me, and I want to continue on that theme.

The relationship with tourism is also critically important to hospitality. If visitors do not come to our cities, people are going to lose business as a result. I have had this conversation with the minister before, and he knows my concerns about support for Glasgow airport, which, at this time, is critically important to getting people to come into the city.

Like other members—Maurice Golden, in particular—I think that the Government still does not fully appreciate the impact that the deposit return scheme will have on every business. One small distiller in Linlithgow said that it will cost it around £21,000 to comply with the legislation, and other suppliers are saying that they will have no choice but to put their prices up, so there will be an impact on the consumer. It seems extraordinary that the Government is not listening to that, regardless of where we want to be in five or 10 years’ time. Given the cost of living crisis and the other impacts on businesses, it seems extraordinary to me, in terms of an economic strategy, not to listen to businesses that are concerned about the scheme.

Of course, the issues that I have already mentioned are not the only ones that impact on the hospitality sector. As Craig Hoy said, the consultation on restricting alcohol advertising promotion will have an impact if we do not do it properly. I want it to be understood that Scottish Labour believes that action is needed to address the growing alcohol-related crisis, but we need to do that in a sensible way. However, the evidence seems to be that the way that the Government is choosing to do that at the moment will hurt the same businesses that we have already said will be hurt by those other policies.

For what it is worth, I am doing my bit. I put on record again my thanks to Ivan McKee for engaging with the business sector in the small group that I put together. Among the things that we want to discuss is the issue of how the UK Government and the Scottish Government can work together, where possible, to do things to help this industry. Christine Grahame has talked about the rates issue. I want to talk about whether a reduction in VAT in the short term would help. I know that that is a UK Government responsibility, but we need to have joined-up thinking here. If something does not give and we keep piling on duties, responsibilities, schemes and legislative changes without implementing positive schemes to support the industry, I am afraid that the situation will be a disaster. I am not going to keep quiet about that.

18:28

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP):

The Cairngorm Brewery operates its brewery and the Winking Owl pub in Aviemore, and it has done so for decades. It is run by Sam Faircliff and it employs 30 people. In a recent conference call, which was kindly arranged by Mark Tate of the Cairngorm Business Partnership, I discussed with Sam and several small brewers and gin distillers the impacts of the regulations that are being imposed on them.

Sam told me what it costs her to run the brewery. The price of malt has gone up by 50 per cent, from £540 to £840 per tonne; CO₂ has gone up 100 per cent—at one point, it had gone up by 400 per cent; electricity has gone up from 17p to 50p per kilowatt hour; and all other ingredients have gone up by 25p. That is in the aftermath of, as members have said, the need to cope with Covid, Brexit and the uncertainties that have been caused by the war in Ukraine. Sam confirmed to me that businesses now face the most stressful time in their history.

I know that the minister does not have portfolio responsibility for the deposit return scheme, but I think that the Government is perhaps beginning, somewhat belatedly, to get the message. The deposit return scheme is the worst policy that I have ever seen in 43 years as a lawyer, as a small businessman, as a minister and now as a humble backbencher serving a somewhat late-in-the-day apprenticeship, starting at 65.

Seriously, I do not know why the Scottish Government is persisting with the scheme. As the minister knows, I can say that I warned the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity and I warned the Government—I warned them all—privately, repeatedly and not just over the past few weeks but over the past two years. This is a disaster and it will become a catastrophe.

In the time that I have available—which is not very much, but I do not want to trespass on your goodwill, Presiding Officer; perish the thought—I want to make one more point, which results from the seven or eight meetings that I have had with the British Glass Manufacturers Confederation, in which Phil Fenton explained that the DRS is not a recycling scheme but a collection scheme. There is an existing recycling scheme with producer responsibility, which involves a re-melt target. The point of that is to ensure that glass recyclate is used to form cullet that can go to the Ardagh Group and to O-I—Owens-Illinois—in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, where it is turned back into bottles. Without that re-melt target, it would just be used as roadfill because those companies

can pay more at auction for the recyclate. There is no re-melt target in the DRS.

Further, guess what? Phil Fenton told me that the British Glass Manufacturers Confederation—which I, as a humble backbencher, albeit with a lot more time on my hands than previously, met—has not been able to meet the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. Despite my asking written questions and writing to the minister on the issue, she has not met the confederation, which knows all about it and is desperate to help.

Guess what else? If, because there is no re-melt target, the glass goes to roadfill, there is an issue with the carbon savings. At the moment, according to Phil Fenton, the carbon saving is 580kg per tonne, but, if the glass is used for roadfill, that saving goes down to 2kg per tonne. Do the maths: 580kg minus 2kg—that is how much worse things could become.

I have never encountered anything like this in politics. Governments make mistakes—that is okay—but this is not carelessness. I am afraid to say it, because I have been a loyalist for nearly 50 years—my party, my cause—but the DRS is wilful recklessness, and that is why I am speaking out. It is as though the captain of the Titanic, when leaving the port of Southampton, deliberately set sail for the iceberg. It has got to stop and it has got to stop now. If not, the economic carnage that Kate Forbes described when she visited Sam Faircliff this week is almost inevitable.

18:33

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I thank my colleague Craig Hoy for bringing this debate to the chamber and allowing us to highlight the importance of this sector to communities throughout the country and the significant pressures that have been heaped on it, as he ably described in his speech.

We know that the local pub is an essential social meeting point for many of our communities and that breweries both large and niche have a positive impact on our economy. However, with the shockwave of Covid still resonating, the sector now faces further dual pressures from the much-maligned and seriously flawed Scottish version of DRS and the uncertainty around the potential blanket introduction of restrictions to alcohol advertising and sponsorship.

In case there is any doubt about the concerns that industry has about the DRS scheme as it has been chaotically introduced, I will highlight an extract from a letter that I got today from a major brewer, which it sent to Circularity Scotland along with its application. It says:

“We write to confirm that, although we have signed the agreement, this has been done simply to comply with our obligations under the regulations and to avoid being unable to sell our products in Scotland after the go-live date.

We have grave reservations about some of the terms of the agreement. We have particular concerns around the advance payments in light of some comments from the three prospective First Minister candidates that the scheme may well be delayed beyond the scheduled go-live date. The methodology for calculating the advance payments is not clear and has not been shared with us, so we don't know how our potential exposure can be calculated.”

It goes on to say:

“We reserve the right to withhold payment of any advance payments in the event of a delay to the scheduled go-live date, given any such delay is now reasonably foreseeable, and you should be acting now to use reasonable endeavours to keep the amount of advance payments as low as possible.”

Fergus Ewing: Does the member agree with Christine Grahame's point earlier today, which the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity did not address? The requirement to pay an advance payment for a scheme, the delay in which is completely outwith the control of the company, means that company directors cannot sign up to the contract, because they have a fiduciary duty not to dispenish the company of its money gratuitously—in other words, it has a duty not to give money away. They might as well be handing away £1.5 million a month for free. Directors cannot do that. Why is it that the Scottish Government has not got the basic point of company law that its producer agreements are ultra vires and prima facie unlawful?

Brian Whittle: Of course, I agree with my colleague. That is what happens, I fear, when a minister who does not understand the basic premise of business is put in charge of a policy.

We have pubs that are only now beginning to realise that stores of bottles and cans will become valuable commodities, and that they must now consider how they will ensure that they have security that is adequate to protect those stores. Furthermore, they must ensure that the cans are not crushed and that the bottles are not broken.

Following on from the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity's ridiculous performance during questions on her ministerial statement, when she refused, point blank, to acknowledge that only 664 drinks producers out of the estimated 4,500 producers that Circularity Scotland said would register for the DRS had signed up to the scheme by the close of the application process, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce issued the following statement:

“It's been clear to the business community for some time that operating this poorly designed scheme in its current form is impossible and is adding unnecessary cost pressures on businesses.”

I quote those interventions because they are not my words but those of the industry, so there can be no suggestion of any political bias. One has to wonder what it is that the Green-SNP coalition has against business, especially business that is so crucial to the Scottish economy.

Members' business debates are often a time when we can come together to celebrate Scottish successes. Today, we witnessed a ministerial statement that has such potentially wide-ranging negative impacts on our pubs and brewing industry that members from all parties were almost pleading with the minister and the Scottish Government to listen to the serious concerns of the industry. Instead, the minister doubled down on the chaotic scheme, remained deaf to MSP colleagues, the industry and even the prospective candidates for the position of First Minister, and blamed everyone else for the problems.

I again thank my colleague Craig Hoy for giving us the opportunity to highlight the plight of pubs and brewers. The industry is central to our communities' wellbeing, and we must protect this integral part of our economy. Members can rest assured that Conservative members will do everything that we can to highlight its concerns.

18:38

The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee): I thank Craig Hoy for securing the debate, and I thank the many members who have highlighted the importance of the hospitality and brewing sector to Scotland and have taken the opportunity to put their points on the record.

The sector, as many members have highlighted, is hugely important to Scotland's economy and is a core part of our communities and, indeed, our culture. It provides employment for upwards of 200,000 people, offers employment Opportunities across all of society and has an ever-growing diverse workforce. There are some 130 breweries in Scotland, around 10 of which are in the south of Scotland. They produce high-quality products for the domestic market and, of course, our increasingly international export markets. That demonstrates Scotland's business strengths and entrepreneurial spirit, some fine examples of which I was delighted to see on my recent trade and investment trip to south-east Asia.

Hospitality is an incredibly resilient sector despite the many challenges that have presented themselves to it in recent years. It is good to see that, despite the challenges, some 590 more businesses in the accommodation and food sector opened than closed over the period of 2020-21. However, that does not take away from the challenges that we absolutely recognise the sector

faces, and the Scottish Government is committed to supporting the sector where we can.

The heritage that is associated with the hospitality and brewing sectors helps to put our nation and regions on the map and to promote Scotland's image to a global audience, which, in my role as the minister responsible for trade and investment, I know is hugely important. Those sectors are national assets to celebrate and develop for a sustainable and successful future.

As I indicated, and as we all know, the sector has been through some real challenges over recent years, and members are right to highlight that conditions have been especially tough for hospitality and brewing over those times. With Covid, when the Scottish Government did everything that we could to support the sector through those most testing of times, all financial support that was made available to us was passed on in the most equitable and speedy manner possible. However, we know that the support that was given was never going to—never could—fully compensate for the loss of business suffered.

That was the case right across the UK and internationally, where the sector faced many challenges. The challenges now are different although no less profound, and from my many interactions with businesses in the sector, I absolutely understand the challenges of the cost crisis, high energy costs and wider inflationary pressures caused by global supply chain issues. The sector is also grappling with labour shortages, which are often highlighted as the most significant constraint on its ability to grow and prosper. Those have been partly caused by Covid but largely created by the impact of Brexit, which has halted vital labour market access with the ending of free movement, and the post-Brexit immigration apparatus does not compensate for that.

We have a structure that does not serve the sector's needs, and we, alongside industry representation, continue to press the UK Government on that. We are also pressing the UK Government on support with energy costs. On 22 February, my ministerial colleagues John Swinney and Michael Matheson wrote jointly to Grant Shapps, the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, to raise concerns over the lack of engagement in respect of the forthcoming energy bills discount scheme and to seek a meeting to discuss our concerns ahead of its coming into force at the start of April.

We want to ensure that vulnerable businesses, particularly small businesses and those on fixed-price contracts, are given proper protection and consideration in the new scheme. We are pressing the UK Government on those issues on behalf of Scotland's business community.

Brian Whittle *rose*—

Craig Hoy *rose*—

Ivan McKee: I am spoilt for choice. I will take Craig Hoy's intervention.

Craig Hoy: I thank the minister for eloquently listing the challenges that the sector faces. Will he perhaps approach the issue of the challenge of the DRS with more candour than his colleague Lorna Slater? If the figure of 84 per cent of companies not having signed up is accurate, does he credibly and honestly believe that the scheme can go ahead?

Ivan McKee: I will come on to talk about my interaction with the business community around the DRS and other issues facing the sector during the course of my remarks.

We must continue to support the sectors where we can.

On the issue of non-domestic rates, which has been raised by many members today, we are taking a different approach from that of the UK Government, with the aim of ensuring fairness and optimal use of what are limited resources. In the budget statement in December, the Deputy First Minister delivered the number 1 ask of 18 different business organisations in many businesses with regard to freezing the poundage rate for next year at the same rate, which remains the lowest poundage rate in the United Kingdom for the fifth year in a row. It is forecast to save business rate taxpayers £308 million compared with an inflationary increase.

We are also supporting a package of reliefs worth £744 million, including the small business bonus scheme—highlighted by Christine Grahame and others—which has been reformed and extended and remains the most generous small business relief across the UK.

Christine Grahame: Just a little bit of history: it was, in fact, the Conservatives, through Derek Brownlee, in negotiating a budget many years ago, who introduced the small business bonus scheme, which the Scottish Government was happy to accept. Gone are those days.

Ivan McKee: I thank Christine Grahame for her intervention.

I will talk about the work that I am doing with businesses through my extensive engagement. Members will be aware that I talk to business organisations, particularly in the hospitality sector, on an almost daily basis through the business regulatory joint task force, which was set up at the end of last year. The group has had two meetings already and its third meeting is coming up. Businesses from many sectors are represented on the task force, including, of course, the hospitality,

leisure and tourism sector, which has had extensive representation at those meetings.

The task force is focused on looking urgently at the regulations that are coming down the track, not to unpick them individually—there is plenty of scope to do that in other forums through engagement with relevant ministers—but to look at their cumulative impact, as well as their timing and the process around them, to make sure that the business regulation impact assessment process has teeth and is taken into account when the Government looks at regulations. It is very important that the overall perspective is heard and that businesses have the opportunity to raise their concerns with me as the minister who is responsible for business. I am delighted that that group is making good progress on those issues.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

The minister speaks about the significant engagement that he has with the business community. Can he tell us how many producers in Scotland could have signed up for the DRS by today? We know that 664 have, but out of a total of how many? Given the minister's experience and his interactions with those businesses, can he tell us what that number is?

Ivan McKee: Obviously, I have not spoken to every business that is involved in that, and I do not have that number to hand. I know that the member is very keen to get that number—some numbers were quoted earlier in the debate. If he continues to ask the relevant minister, I am sure that he will get the appropriate answer.

I want to talk about our commitment to the implementation of the Tied Pubs (Scotland) Act 2021 as soon as possible, which was mentioned by Christine Grahame. Unfortunately, the act is subject to judicial review, but our commitment to take that work forward to give rights to tenants remains in place. Of course, other work is happening to support the sector through the reform of permitted development rights, which would allow premises to make better use of space, improve their business models and increase revenue, which I think we are all keen to see. We are very keen to take forward all that work.

We are focused on having a strong, successful and vibrant hospitality and brewing sector in Scotland. A key part of our national strategy for economic transformation is about providing support for entrepreneurial businesses, to make businesses more productive across all regions in Scotland and to deliver the skills that are necessary to support business growth. We want to see hospitality spaces being well used, responsibly, with viable businesses contributing to local economies and communities. We also want to see fair work at the heart of the sector, which I press very strongly with businesses in the sector. I

raised that during my meeting just this week with the trade unions representing their members in the sector. Pauline McNeill has rightly raised the issue of fair work in the debate.

It is also important to recognise the work that we have taken forward with the tourism and hospitality industry leadership group, which I co-chair with Marc Crothall of the Scottish Tourism Alliance and which also has trade union representation. The group has the opportunity to provide strategic oversight on the medium and long-term challenges that the sector faces.

Pauline McNeill has rightly identified the importance of tourism and international links. She can rest assured that we are working hard to restore and increase the number of air links into Scotland in order to ensure that tourists come to our shores in ever-increasing numbers.

I am committed to continuing to engage with the sector, to listening to what it has to say on regulation and other challenges that it faces and to taking the steps that we need to take as a pro-business Government. I will again meet trade bodies in the sector on 15 March in the Parliament, and we plan to attend a meeting of the Scottish Parliament hospitality group, which is chaired by Pauline McNeill, later in March. I look forward to both of those meetings and thank Craig Hoy for bringing the debate to the chamber.

Meeting closed at 18:49.

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