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AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 22 March 2023

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## Wednesday 22 March 2023

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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 22 March 2023

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio questions on constitution, external affairs and culture. I ask members who wish to ask a supplementary question to press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question or to enter the letters RTS in the chat function, please. As ever, I would appreciate succinct questions and answers in order to get in as many members as possible.

#### Illegal Migration Bill

1. **Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what contact it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding concerns over the potential impact in Scotland of the proposed Illegal Migration Bill. (S6O-02029)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** I wrote to the United Kingdom Government to state unequivocally that the Scottish Government does not support the bill, which will remove offering a place of safety to desperate people who are fleeing conflict and persecution, and I have urged the UK Government not to progress with it. The First Minister has echoed that during First Minister's question time and condemned the cruel and inhumane provisions in the bill. We have a moral obligation to offer a place of safety to people who are fleeing conflict and persecution because that is enshrined in international law and because that is the fair thing to do.

**Alasdair Allan:** The bill is proceeding at pace through the House of Commons, and the more we discuss it, the more horrified those of us who believe in a compassionate, global Scotland become. Will the cabinet secretary again confront the Tories on that monstrous bill and the monstrous provisions in it, which could mean that women will have no protection if they have been trafficked and children will be detained for the alleged crime of seeking sanctuary on this island?

**Angus Robertson:** The restriction on the provision of support to human trafficking victims would penalise some of society's most vulnerable people—those who have suffered unimaginable trauma, including through sexual exploitation or through being forced, through violence, to work for no pay in absolutely appalling conditions. These shameful proposals would create additional barriers for trafficking victims and tighten the grip of perpetrators by reducing the likelihood that people will seek help. Children will also be left in an appalling position until they turn 18, when they will be detained and removed to a third country in which they have no connections and no family. The bill is totally unacceptable.

**Foysoyl Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** The UK Government's Illegal Immigration Bill will mean that those arriving in the UK via illegal means will not be eligible for asylum claims and they will be detained on arrival in the UK. Dungavel immigration removal centre is Scotland's only detention centre. It can detain up to 130 men and 12 women. It is likely that there will be a huge increase in the number of people being detained there as the process for securing a successful asylum application will become much harder due to the restrictive rules. What action is the Scottish Government taking to liaise with the UK Government on the issue, as it is likely to completely overwhelm that detention centre in Scotland?

**Angus Robertson:** Foysoyl Choudhury's question is really apposite. We might imagine that, because some of what is being dealt with by the UK Government is very focused on people crossing the English Channel, the issues are far away from here and may not touch us directly. However, raising the point about the Dungavel facility, which is, of course, managed by the UK Home Office, reminds us that the issue is absolutely on our doorstep. It is not just a matter of human rights and supporting the principles of international law, justice and fairness; unfortunately, given the UK Government's plans, we are talking about something that will also be reflected in institutions in Scotland, which, sadly, we have no control over.

We are absolutely opposed to the bill and, if ever a reminder were needed that the Scottish Parliament should be in charge of immigration and human rights, that is it. We should not leave it up to others to make bad decisions on our behalf.

#### Ukrainian Refugees (Third Sector Support)

2. **Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how much financial support it is providing to the third sector across Edinburgh and the Lothians to support

refugees from Ukraine in the financial year 2023-24. (S6O-02030)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind all members that they need to be here for 2.00 pm sharp.

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray):** The Scottish Government recognises the tireless efforts of the community and voluntary sector in Edinburgh and the Lothians in supporting displaced Ukrainians. We continue to work closely with a number of community and voluntary sector organisations, and we have committed £200,000 to be shared between the Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council, Volunteer Edinburgh, Feniks: Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services Ltd and The Welcoming Association in Edinburgh.

We are operating in a very challenging financial context for the next financial year, particularly given recent cuts to tariff funding that have been made by the United Kingdom Government and the subsequent impact on local government's ability to support displaced people from Ukraine.

**Daniel Johnson:** Deputy Presiding Officer, please accept my apologies. I recognise that my late arrival is unacceptable.

The issues go beyond purely financial ones. The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee has heard from refugees who said that the process to apply for English for speakers of other languages—ESOL—support is cumbersome and requires them to fill out detailed application forms in English. That would be ironic if it were not so tragic, given the imperative to provide English language training to people who have recently arrived in this country from places such as Ukraine. Can the minister set out how the Government intends to improve the situation?

**Neil Gray:** Obviously, we see support for ESOL classes as a critical element of our response. We continue to work with local authorities that provide those services, our colleges and other training providers, as well as the UK Government in respect of the tariff provisions that it has provided.

In the most recent budget, there was no additional support for the UK's humanitarian response for Ukraine. There has been a significant cut to the local authority tariff, from £10,500 to £5,900, with no year 2 funding whatsoever. However, the UK Government has placed greater demands on our local authority partners to respond. We will continue to make representations alongside our Welsh Government colleagues and local government partners across the UK for the UK Government to reconsider that, so that we can

continue to do the good work around ESOL that we have set out.

**Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** We can all be proud of the warm Scottish welcome as Ukraine's fight for freedom and democracy continues. However, for our support to be maintained, we need the UK Government to play its part. Can the minister provide more details on what effect the chancellor's budget may have on Scotland's support for Ukraine?

**Neil Gray:** The UK budget that was announced last week did nothing to reverse the cuts in funding and support for people who have been displaced by the war against Ukraine. In December, the UK Government announced that tariff funding for local authorities would reduce from £10,500 to £5,900 for those arriving after 1 January this year. It also confirmed that there would be no year 2 tariff funding and that the education tariff was being removed. That is not supporting displaced Ukrainians in the way that anyone in the chamber or, indeed, the wider public, would want.

There is wide acknowledgement that the UK Government has done a significant amount in terms of military aid and support. We have contributed £65 million for that. It is time that the UK Government matched that military support with humanitarian support and matched the actions of the Scottish Government. Scotland has welcomed a fifth of all UK arrivals from Ukraine.

#### **Historic Environment Scotland (Waste and Resources Plan)**

3. **Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the culture minister has had with Historic Environment Scotland regarding the organisation's waste and resources plan, including any potential impact of the deposit return scheme on its operations. (S6O-02031)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray):** I engage regularly with Historic Environment Scotland to discuss its strategic plans and key developments. I have not discussed the deposit return scheme specifically with it. I understand that it is preparing to implement the scheme as an opportunity to increase levels of recycling in line with Scotland's national targets. I have asked Historic Environment Scotland to write to Mr Whittle with a detailed answer to his question regarding the potential impact of the DRS.

**Brian Whittle:** Historic Environment Scotland has nine sites with restaurants or cafes and more than 70 sites with shops that could sell single-use drink containers. That makes it a retailer and

potentially a return point operator. According to Historic Environment Scotland's waste and resources plan, it must ensure that it is

"compliant with ... legal obligations"

and its obligations in relation to

"implementing the new Deposit Return Scheme".

Can the minister tell me whether Historic Environment Scotland intends to purchase reverse vending machines at any of its sites and say how many of its sites have applied for and been granted an exemption?

**Neil Gray:** Historic Environment Scotland is making preparations to implement the deposit return scheme in line with the launch date. Regarding impacts from a waste perspective, municipal waste, such as household-type waste, that is collected at Historic Environment Scotland sites makes up about half of the waste that the organisation generates and is a waste stream in relation to which it has been struggling to increase recycling. I believe that, in 2021-22, Historic Environment Scotland recycled around 29 per cent of that waste, despite having recycling-on-the-go bins. It hopes that the impact of the deposit return scheme will help to improve that rate and help it to meet its waste targets, which are aligned to Scotland's national target.

However, to give Mr Whittle some reassurance, I can say that I am due to meet Historic Environment Scotland tomorrow, and I will raise the representations that he has made at that meeting.

**Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con):** Under the deposit return scheme, visitor sites and venues will have no choice but to use the scheme's single logistics partner to collect returned containers. However, those sites and venues will also have existing contracts with other waste firms. Can the minister guarantee that historic sites will continue with local businesses rather than the one that is owned by the American private equity firm?

**Neil Gray:** As I detailed to Brian Whittle, no concern has been raised with me by Historic Environment Scotland around the implementation of the DRS. Similar to the position that I set out to Mr Whittle, I am happy to make representations on behalf of Mr Golden to Historic Environment Scotland when I meet it tomorrow, and I will ensure that its full response is provided to Mr Golden as well as to Mr Whittle.

### **Cultural Assets and Venues (Regeneration)**

**4. Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting the regeneration of cultural assets and venues in communities. (S6O-02032)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray):** The Scottish Government delivers wide support for a variety of cultural assets and venues through funding of our public bodies, including Creative Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland. They, in turn, provide grant schemes such as the conservation area regeneration scheme, which invests directly in local communities. We also support local authorities, businesses and communities to promote regeneration within towns, through programmes including the place-based investment programme, the vacant and derelict land investment programme and the empowering communities programme.

**Jenni Minto:** I am glad that the Scottish Government recognises the importance of cultural venues in rural and island areas to the welfare and prosperity of Scotland's communities, despite an incredibly challenging economic climate. My constituents in Bute know very well how challenging the economic climate is, with rising construction costs threatening the remarkable regeneration of Rothesay pavilion. What reassurance can the minister give to community groups such as those in Rothesay that culture will play a central role in Scotland's wellbeing economy?

**Neil Gray:** I can absolutely give that assurance to Jenni Minto and her constituents. The Scottish Government recognises the important role that the Rothesay pavilion plays in the culture, economy and life of Bute, which is why, in 2015, the regeneration capital fund awarded £625,000 to the project. We also demonstrate heritage support through sponsorship of Historic Environment Scotland, which has also contributed funding towards that project.

I have previously offered to meet Argyll and Bute Council to discuss potential routes ahead, and I would also encourage the council to continue to engage with other funders to explore other options. I am happy to meet my colleague Jenni Minto at any time to discuss the issue.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** Given the recent welcome press coverage that has been received by the campaign to save the Filmhouse, which is still working to save that cultural asset—which is not only vital for cultural cinema in Edinburgh but has played an important role as the key venue for the Edinburgh international film festival over many years—can the minister give us a commitment that the Scottish Government will do everything in its power to use its leadership to save that asset, bring it back into use, and provide cultural cinema, jobs and new opportunities for young people into the future?

**Neil Gray:** Yes, I can. As Sarah Boyack knows, I have to be careful when I speak on that matter due to the on-going legal process around the administration of the Centre for the Moving Image and, therefore, the Filmhouse. I have tried my best within those confines to keep Sarah Boyack and colleagues updated. The Scottish Government is absolutely committed to the issue, and it has a very strong desire to see cultural cinema remain in Edinburgh, and we hope that the administrator can take that into account.

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I thank the minister for his response on the Edinburgh Filmhouse cinema. I note what he said about the legal process, but does he have any indication of how long it will take to get through that process?

**Neil Gray:** I wish that I did, but that is outwith the Scottish Government's control. My officials and the public bodies that are involved continue to liaise with the process as best as we can within those confines. I reiterate that the Scottish Government is very clear that we are keen that cultural cinema is retained and that the building continues to be put to that fantastic use, not just for the people of Edinburgh and the rest of Scotland, but because of the building's equipment, which is of significance across these isles.

### Culture (Highlands and Islands)

**5. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to protect the culture of the Highlands and Islands. (S6O-02033)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray):** Obviously, the Scottish Government is doing everything that it can to protect the culture of the Highlands and Islands. Our culture strategy celebrates and sets out our ambitions for nurturing culture and creativity across all of Scotland's communities. We support a range of organisations that enrich the cultural life of the Highlands and Islands, including Atlas Arts, the Highland Print Studio and Eden Court.

More broadly, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands announced a significant £4 million investment last year to ensure delivery of the national islands plan, which includes a strategic objective that is focused on supporting, nurturing and celebrating the arts, culture and language of our islands.

**Rhoda Grant:** The minister will be more than aware of the chronic issues that young people in the Highlands and Islands face. They have no choice but to leave in order to access jobs, housing and childcare, and that is having a

devastating impact on the Gaelic language and our culture, as well as on local services and economies. The young people want to stay, but they have no choice to do so, because they are priced out of the area. They also face transport disruption, which makes it difficult to access health services and recreation. When will this Government take action to provide affordable homes and boost the economy for the people who live across the Highlands and Islands, in order to protect our culture and language?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Minister, I will leave it up to you to decide which parts of that question to respond to.

**Neil Gray:** Thank you, Presiding Officer. With regard to the culture portfolio response to ensuring that we provide support networks in the Highlands and Islands, I assure Rhoda Grant that, having been born and brought up in Orkney, I understand and recognise the picture that she paints of the challenges for our rural and island communities. My colleagues across the Government continue to invest in housing options, including through rural housing assistance programmes.

With regard to the cultural investment that we make in order to incentivise people to stay, nine regularly funded organisations are supported—with more than £2 million—in the Highlands and Islands, including Eden Court and Moniack Mhor writers centre. In addition, £1 million of Culture Collective support has been provided to four organisations in the Highlands and Islands. We continue to recognise the importance of culture, including the Gaelic language, to retention, and we hope that that support will help.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I have raised concerns before with the minister about the number of culturally important historic sites in the Highlands and Islands that remain closed or partially closed by Historic Environment Scotland, including Kisimul castle on Barra and the Bonawe iron furnace in Taynuilt. What action will the minister now take to fast-track the reopening of those vital historic assets?

**Neil Gray:** Kisimul Castle formed a large part of the discussion that I had with Historic Environment Scotland at our most recent meeting. From the assurances that Historic Environment Scotland staff gave me, I know that they are progressing work as quickly as possible to ensure that the safety of those sites is preserved, that the structural integrity is preserved or enhanced and that the sites reopen as quickly as possible, while putting the safety of staff and visitors first, which I am sure Donald Cameron agrees has to be the priority.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that, for

communities and their culture to thrive, access to affordable housing is key? Recently, the Scottish Government invested £1,512,000 in helping Arran Development Trust to build 18 affordable homes on Arran. What further support will be provided to build more affordable homes in the fragile Highlands and Islands communities?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Again, minister, I will leave you to respond to the bits that come within your portfolio.

**Neil Gray:** I have set out the work that we are doing from a cultural perspective. I have tried to provide a supportive nod to some of the work in housing that my colleagues are deploying through rural housing programmes, which Kenneth Gibson cited and which are a good example. We will continue to provide that investment where our resources allow, because we absolutely value the ability of our rural and island communities to continue to thrive.

### Culture Policies (Social History)

6. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how its culture policies can help celebrate Scotland's rich social history. (S6O-02034)

**The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine (Neil Gray):** Our cultural strategy celebrates the diversity and excellence of Scottish culture in the past, present and future. For example, our Culture Collective programme, delivered by Creative Scotland and supported by more than £10 million of Scottish Government funding to date, includes projects that celebrate local social history and empower communities to shape and share the story of their place.

**Bob Doris:** St Andrew's day this year marks the centenary of John Maclean's death. He was a red Clydesider, jailed for his views on the first world war, who rallied against the British empire, championed a free Ireland and an independent Scotland, was lauded by Vladimir Lenin and inspired both Hamish Henderson and Matt McGinn to pen verse. What role might there be for the Scottish Government or its agencies to support the efforts of my constituents who wish to use that centenary for Scotland to celebrate John Maclean's contribution to our rich social history, and what funds might be available?

**Neil Gray:** Bob Doris makes an excellent case on behalf of such an important historical figure as John Maclean. I encourage any community groups or organisations that seek to organise events of that kind to engage with our agencies and the

many brilliant research resources that we have available to us in Scotland.

As a starting point, I signpost people to Creative Scotland, which offers a range of funding for both individuals and organisations, details of which are available on its website. Community groups might also wish to contact Historic Environment Scotland and the National Records of Scotland, as well as, in this case, Glasgow City Council's archives, to explore opportunities to carry out their own research in support of any celebrations that they are planning.

As plans develop, I would be happy to hear more and to consider ways in which the Scottish Government might be helpful and supportive.

**Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** There is scarcely a bigger icon of Scotland's social history than the Glasgow School of Art, yet we are almost five years on from the second disastrous fire there, with a predicted completion date of 2030. The Notre Dame cathedral fire in Paris happened a year later, yet its rebuild is due to complete next year.

With the news earlier this month that the tendering process for the Mackintosh building restoration project has collapsed, effectively putting the rebuild effort back to square 1, will the minister for culture now instruct that the project be directly overseen by the Scottish ministers in order to get the restoration of this international architectural icon back on track?

**Neil Gray:** Obviously, we recognise the cultural importance of the Glasgow School of Art, and Paul Sweeney will be well aware of the unfortunate history of the renovation and restoration project there. It has been a difficult journey, but we continue to support the restoration work and hope that it can be concluded as quickly as possible.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I could possibly squeeze in questions 7 and 8 if I get brief questions and answers to match.

### International Engagement (Europe)

7. **Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to maintain relationships with Scotland's European neighbours post-Brexit. (S6O-02035)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** The Scottish Government continues to engage overseas and at home with ministers and delegations from across Europe. Our international network of offices works to develop, maintain and strengthen relationships, attract trade and investment opportunities and create economic, social and cultural benefits for people in Scotland.

Of course, rejoining the European Union would be by far the easiest and best way to maintain and enhance those relationships.

**Martin Whitfield:** There is no doubt that the cabinet secretary has been working hard to build relationships across Europe following his visits to seven European countries last year, but the Scottish Government has made no progress on a post-Brexit Erasmus scheme. In Wales, under the Welsh Labour Government, the first learners are already feeling the benefits of the Taith scheme. Will the cabinet secretary confirm on how many of his eight visits to seven European countries during 2022 he discussed a Scottish replacement for Erasmus? More specifically, with regard to his meeting with Dr Manuela Beck of the Goethe-Institut in Germany on 5 December, will he outline what discussions took place regarding a Scottish Taith scheme and any support that was offered?

**Angus Robertson:** I am delighted to take the opportunity to confirm the many conversations that took place when I was in Berlin to discuss educational co-operation, not just with the Goethe-Institut but with the Berlin Scotland hub, the United Kingdom ambassador to Germany and a number of German educational partners.

However, it was noteworthy that, within a few short days, it became clear that the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office had managed to agree an arrangement on educational co-operation with the Federal Republic of Germany without any involvement whatsoever of the Scottish Government. That is ironic, because the German side managed to include the federal states and the Pädagogischer Austauschdienst of the German Bundesländer, but the UK Government managed to exclude Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. If ever a timely reminder was needed that the UK Government does not properly represent Scotland's devolved interests internationally, that is it. The best way to take part in Erasmus, as the member knows, is for Scotland to rejoin the European Union.

### St Andrew's Day 2023

8. **Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it plans to celebrate and mark St Andrew's day 2023. (S6O-02036)

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** As our national day, St Andrew's day is a special day for people in Scotland and around the world to come together to celebrate our country, our culture and our shared history.

Final discussions are yet to be made on plans to celebrate and mark St Andrew's day 2023, but we

expect communities at home and those around the globe with an affinity to Scotland to take the opportunity to celebrate St Andrew's day and the Scottish values of kindness, compassion and solidarity.

**Paul McLennan:** The cross-party group on St Andrew's day, which I convene, will be launching a call for evidence in late April on realising the potential of our national day. Will the cabinet secretary advise what future plans the Scottish Government has to maximise the cultural, economic, faith and external relations opportunities of St Andrew's day?

**Angus Robertson:** I look forward to reading the results of the consultation by the cross-party group, which does such valuable work. St Andrew's day, as Scotland's national day, is a key moment for Scotland and those who feel an affinity with Scotland's culture. It is an opportunity for all of us—individually and collectively—to champion Scotland as an outward-looking and fair country. The Scottish Government will continue to harness all its networks to amplify that narrative and the shared values that underpin our national brand.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes portfolio questions on the constitution, external affairs and culture. There will be a very brief pause to allow front-bench teams to switch seats.

### Justice and Veterans

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to portfolio questions on justice and veterans. Again, if any member wishes to request a supplementary, I would ask them to press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question or enter the letters RTS in the chat function.

### Policing (North-east Scotland)

1. **Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how it ensures that there is sufficient police presence throughout the north-east. (S6O-02037)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** Policing is and will continue to be a priority for the Scottish Government. Scotland has a higher number of officers than at any time during the previous Administration, and more officers per head of population than England and Wales, with 30 officers per 10,000 population in Scotland, in comparison with 24 officers per 10,000 population in England and Wales.

North-east divisions have a core complement of officers, who might be supported by specialist expertise and resources at a regional and national level should operational demand increase. Of

course, the recruitment and deployment of resources are matters for the chief constable.

**Liam Kerr:** Police Scotland is pressing on with plans to close Portlethen police station. Informed professionals warn that such a closure contradicts the joint strategy for policing, sends the wrong message to organised crime and leaves one of the north-east's largest and fastest-growing towns without a police station.

Fears have been raised about how such a reduced police profile will impact on county lines drug dealing and risks throwing open the doors to Aberdeen city and our coastal communities. Will the justice secretary demand that Police Scotland looks again at its closure plans and ensure that local policing stays in Portlethen?

**Keith Brown:** No. I respect the operational independence of the chief constable, which, of course, is written into law by means of the act that established Police Scotland.

However, it is very important to recognise that having enough well-paid police officers on the ground is one of the most important things to local communities and for the detection and prosecution of crimes. To that end, having police officers whose starting salaries are £5,000 more per year than in England and Wales is a very good basis for that. I add that that is against the background of 13 years of austerity from the Conservative Party.

I have one final word—*[Interruption.]* I ask the member to listen for a second. I have one final word to say about the size of the police force. If our police force was proportionally the same size as the Tories' police force in England and Wales, we would have fewer than 14,000 officers, which would be 2,600 officers fewer than we have. I am confident that we are attaching the priority to policing resources that is required to deal with crime in Scotland.

**Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** It is very welcome that, despite years of UK Government austerity, the Scottish Government has increased the policing budget by £80 million, which is a 6.3 per cent increase on last year. How will the budget ensure that the police can respond to the changing nature of crime and continue to keep communities in Scotland safe?

**Liam Kerr:** The question is not relevant.

**Keith Brown:** The member is right to say that the nature of crime is changing—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Excuse me, cabinet secretary. Please resume your seat.

I am in the chair—I decide. The member mentioned Scotland as a whole, which presumably includes the north-east.

Cabinet secretary, please resume.

**Keith Brown:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Of course there is a changing nature to policing. I am very keen to see the outcome of tomorrow's meeting with the Scottish Police Authority and the chief constable. The meeting will refer to the enhanced emphasis on things such as cybercrime and violence against women and girls. Importantly, from addressing incidents associated with vulnerability, including hate crime and domestic incidents, to dealing with the increasing complexity of crime in the digital age, the £1.45 billion of funding in 2023-24, which was not the subject of an amendment from the Conservatives, will support Police Scotland's leading work with communities on prevention and early intervention.

#### Police Officer Numbers (Edinburgh)

2. **Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how many police officers there currently are in the Edinburgh divisional area. (S6O-02038)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** The Scottish Government is committed to working closely with the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland to support the delivery of our joint policing strategy, to ensure that we continue to have safe, protected and resilient communities. Police engagement with the local authority in setting priorities and objectives for the policing of Edinburgh is crucial. I have said already that local deployment is a matter for the chief constable. Scotland's national police service allows local divisions across the country to access specialist expertise and resources at a regional and national level, depending on demand. Police Scotland statistics indicate that 1,131 officers were in the Edinburgh divisional area on 31 December 2022.

**Sarah Boyack:** Given the very worrying briefing from the chief constable, which says that, as a result of this year's budget, hard choices will have to be made and change will be needed, can the cabinet secretary tell my constituents what he will do, not just to protect the vital work of our police in our communities in Edinburgh and the Lothians, but to address the particular challenge of policing our capital city? Does he accept that we need additional police to tackle crime and keep people safe right across the city?

**Keith Brown:** I believe that we need additional police—of course—to tackle crime across the whole country. I have answered already in relation to the number of police officers, which is substantially higher than it was at any time during

the previous Administration. Substantial improvements in salaries for police officers have also been made.

We will continue to support the priorities that the police tell us are important to them. I have mentioned two of them, which I expect to be discussed tomorrow. Once again, I note that, during the budget process, we received no amendment to the budget from the Labour Party seeking more funding for police. This Administration will continue to support the police. This year, that support will amount to £1.45 billion.

### **Emergency Services (Children and Young People)**

3. **Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that children and young people know how to contact the police and other emergency services correctly. (S6O-02039)

**The Minister for Community Safety (Elena Whitham):** Knowing how and when to contact our emergency services is a key skill that we want our children to have at the earliest possible age. Educational information on emergency services is delivered through the health and wellbeing curriculum, and there is a range of materials to assist teaching professionals who are delivering that learning. Furthermore, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish Ambulance Service work directly with schools and local authorities to ensure that their role is widely understood among children and young people.

**Evelyn Tweed:** Hanlon Stevenson, from Whins of Milton, was two years old in 2019 when he called the police as his mum suffered a seizure. Hanlon has recently been awarded the chief constable's bravery and excellence award in recognition of his bravery and swift action. Does the minister join me in congratulating Hanlon and in reinforcing the importance of children knowing the correct action to take in an emergency?

**Elena Whitham:** The case of Hanlon Stevenson is truly remarkable. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans had the privilege of meeting that young hero at the chief constable's bravery and excellence awards ceremony last month, where Hanlon and other members of the public were honoured for their quick thinking and courage. Hanlon's actions emphatically underline the importance of ensuring that children and young people know what to do in an emergency. Schools, families, communities and our hard-working blue-light services all have a role to play in ensuring that how and when to call 999 is understood at the youngest possible age.

**Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con):** I begin by also congratulating heroic young Hanlon Stevenson.

Millions of 101 calls go unanswered, with almost one in four failing in the first seven months of 2022. The chief constable has warned that Police Scotland's staffing levels cannot be sustained. What is being done to ensure that when young people need the police they will be able to reach them?

**Elena Whitham:** Following the pressures of recent years, which have been brought on by the global pandemic, Police Scotland has been very clear that it will prioritise 999 calls, and the Scottish Government supports that position. The average answer time for 999 calls is around five seconds, and for 101 calls it is approximately two minutes. However, 101 is a non-emergency service, and callers are reminded throughout their wait that if it is an emergency or an escalating situation, 999 should be dialled. All young people should understand that.

### **Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Meetings with Police Scotland)**

4. **Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what contact the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans has had with the leadership team of Police Scotland since January 2023. (S6O-02040)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** I regularly meet with the chief constable and other members of his senior team. Although the chief constable is accountable to the Scottish Police Authority, our meetings provide a valuable opportunity to discuss matters that are important to improving the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities in Scotland. I also had two meetings this morning with the chief constable and the chair of the authority as part of our schedule of regular, trilateral meetings.

**Craig Hoy:** The justice secretary is aware of operation branchform, which is Police Scotland's investigation into allegations of fraud in the Scottish National Party. Does Mr Brown share my concerns about the length of time that the inquiry is taking, and is he aware of claims of operational interference in it? As he is also deputy leader of the SNP, does he expect to be interviewed by Police Scotland as part of that investigation?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, please deal with the matters for which you have ministerial responsibility.

**Keith Brown:** The matters for which I have responsibility involve Police Scotland; I am not responsible for any investigations, and I think that the member knows that. He knows exactly what

he is doing in relation to that. It is reprehensible that we are seeing more evidence of individual cases being referred to, and now there has been reference to an on-going investigation, on which I obviously cannot comment.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** Last night, a cross-party group of MSPs met with whistleblowers from across the public sector, including former police officers; the cabinet secretary knows of my prior interest in such matters. What progress has he made on his contact with senior police leadership and the SPA on improving whistleblowing processes and ensuring that people are listened to and heard, and that their experiences are acted upon in the police service and across the public sector?

**Keith Brown:** I will say two things in response to that question. The first is that quite a substantial number of meetings have taken place following the meeting to which Daniel Johnson referred. There are too many for me to indicate now, but I am happy to write to him with more detail.

The second is that we will introduce legislation in due course that will have a substantial impact on that area of policing. Daniel Johnson will be consulted on that, and he will have the opportunity to discuss issues in relation to the proposal.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** As we approach the 10-year anniversary of Police Scotland, it is important to recognise its achievements since 2013, but it is equally important to consider what the next steps of reform are. Does the cabinet secretary agree that utilising evolving digital technologies, such as the digital evidence sharing capability—DESC—service in Dundee, could make a big difference to police officer workloads, in particular?

**Keith Brown:** DESC is an excellent innovation. It represents a step towards a truly modern criminal justice system, and is, in the words of the police, justice partners and the architects of the system, a world-leading system that places the needs of victims, witnesses and other users of the justice system at its heart. It also represents an investment of £33 million over 10 years. It will make it easier to share evidence; it will allow swifter access, helping cases to be resolved more quickly; and it will reduce the risk of trauma to victims and witnesses.

#### Legal Aid (Eviction Proceedings)

**5. Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on how it is ensuring that legal aid funding is easily available to tenants in order to defend eviction proceedings. (S6O-02041)

**The Minister for Community Safety (Elena Whitham):** Civil legal aid is available to tenants of private and public sector landlords to oppose eviction proceedings. The usual tests of financial eligibility, probable cause and reasonableness apply. If an applicant's home is at risk, it is likely that they will satisfy the merits tests. There are also special urgency provisions in place that allow solicitors to take steps—without needing the Scottish Legal Aid Board's prior approval—to protect an applicant's possession while a legal aid application is being considered. An eligibility estimator for civil legal aid is available on SLAB's website so that potential applicants can check if they are likely to qualify financially.

**Ariane Burgess:** Private tenants have their cases heard through the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland. Although the intention is that cases are heard without legal representation, it is increasingly the case that landlords are seeking legal representation, especially in eviction cases. That leads to an imbalance if tenants have no legal representation. Does the minister agree that that imbalance needs to be addressed? What can be done to ensure that tenants are aware of their rights and that they can access legal aid when and where they need it?

**Elena Whitham:** When a landlord serves a notice to leave, the notice clearly states that the tenant might wish to contact a solicitor and that legal aid might be available to them. Solicitors and the Scottish Legal Aid Board can give advice about entitlement and about making an application. The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service website also contains advice on representation at hearings.

It is important to underline that many organisations can help in defending tenants with an eviction case. The Civil Legal Assistance Office represents tenants on a daily basis, and free advice and assistance might be available from Citizens Advice Scotland, the Scottish Association of Law Centres, in-court advisers or sheriff clerk offices.

#### Misogyny (Criminal Law Reform)

**6. Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how its proposals for reforming criminal law to address misogyny will challenge misogyny in society. (S6O-02042)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** The Government believes that reform of the criminal law on misogyny can help to encourage men to change their behaviour by sending a clear message about what is criminally unacceptable behaviour. Our consultation is seeking views on new laws that would specifically criminalise misogynistic

harassment and the sending of threatening or abusive messages about rape, sexual assault or disfigurement to women and girls.

However, as I made clear during the recent debate on misogyny, new criminal law will not achieve cultural change on its own, so we will continue to focus on tackling wider gender inequality, and we will take action in schools to address gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

**Jim Fairlie:** Two weeks ago, during the international women's day debate, the Parliament was at its best as members from across the chamber stood together to openly discuss their experiences and express their outrage at the existing misogyny in Scottish society. In my speech during the public transport debate, I raised the story of Lorraine Kelly's daughter, who lived in Singapore and will have to adapt simple behaviours, such as walking home alone, now that she has returned to the United Kingdom. What lessons can the Scottish Government learn from other countries so that we permanently change misogynistic behaviour and culture?

**Keith Brown:** I agree with Jim Fairlie about the extent to which men can be ignorant of the ways in which, from a very early age, young women and girls have to adapt their behaviour because of the behaviour of men. It is right to highlight that so that men are more aware of it.

It is very important that we consider best practice from around the world. We should learn from what other countries have done to address misogynistic behaviour and to change deeply ingrained cultural attitudes. That can be done through changes to the law and by taking other measures to achieve lasting cultural change. If a misogyny bill is the result of that, it is likely that that bill will be world leading. For that reason, I hope that we will get support for the bill from across the chamber.

**Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** Unfortunately, one way in which many women experience misogyny is through interaction with the criminal justice system itself. We have all heard stories of how the whole process can retraumatise them, and they are often met with very outdated views on their allegations of abuse, domestic violence and, unfortunately, rape. Might the upcoming criminal justice reform bill that the Government plans to introduce be an appropriate vehicle for improving such negative interactions? When might the Parliament have sight of that bill?

**Keith Brown:** All that I can say is that the bill will be introduced very soon. I confirm to Jamie Greene that it will do exactly what he says. We recognise that, not throughout the system but in the areas that the bill will touch on, people who

come forward, especially women in relation to sexual crimes, can be, and are, retraumatized. We must ensure that we extinguish that retraumatization.

The bill—which I hope Jamie Greene will be able to support—is intended to, in a number of ways, do exactly what he describes, as he will know from the previous consultation. I hope that, when he sees the bill very soon, he will be satisfied that it does exactly what he hopes it will do.

**Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab):** Two thirds of respondents to a survey that was carried out by the working group on misogyny and criminal justice said that the misogynistic behaviour that they had experienced took place online. However, online misogynistic harms such as revenge porn and sexual bullying are absent from the Scottish Government's digital strategy. Will the cabinet secretary look at that issue and consider how it can be addressed?

**Keith Brown:** Of course we will look at that but, as the member will be aware, the bulk of the powers in relation to online harms come under reserved legislation. The United Kingdom Government is currently looking at the matter; we are fully engaged with that process, and we are relatively—in fact, almost fully—supportive of what the UK Government intends to do on that. If there is more that we can do in that regard, we are happy to look at that.

## Legal Aid

**7. Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what its most recent analysis of the provision of legal aid found in relation to geographic area and types of cases covered. (S6O-02043)

**The Minister for Community Safety (Elena Whitham):** The Scottish Legal Aid Board's most recent report shows that the number of grants of civil legal aid in 2021-22 was slightly above the long-term five-year, 10-year and 15-year averages. Within that total, there has been significant growth over time in work relating to adults with incapacity—primarily guardianship applications and renewals. That has been partly offset by a reduction in the number of other types of cases, including family law and personal injury cases, the vast majority of which are now undertaken on a no-win, no-fee basis.

In order to assist with its work to monitor the accessibility and availability of legal services, SLAB recently began a research project that is aimed at exploring how trends in legal aid activity at the subnational level compare to the national trend and vary between areas of law. The

research will analyse data relating to the location of the applicant, solicitor and court. SLAB intends to publish the full results of its analysis when it is completed.

**Maggie Chapman:** The minister will be aware that many organisations that support those seeking legal aid have identified significant inequities in service provision. They cite high workloads and a failure to attract and retain solicitors to legal aid provision, as well as delivery and funding models that are not fit for purpose, as key barriers to access to justice. Given that the evidence review took place five years ago, can the minister provide assurances that those issues will be addressed in the current session of Parliament? Does she think that we should treat legal aid as a public service?

**Elena Whitham:** Since 2019, there have been three uplifts across all legal aid fees. In 2021, there was £10 million in other funding, including for 40 traineeships, and a further £11 million package of reforms is to be implemented in May.

We are committed to working with the legal profession to develop an effective and evidence-based mechanism for keeping legal aid fees under review. Considerable work has therefore been undertaken since the review to support and reform legal aid. The Scottish Government consulted on potential legal aid reforms before the pandemic and will be undertaking further targeted engagement to progress the manifesto commitment on legal aid reform this year.

Access to legal aid is an important aspect of supporting individuals to claim their rights through the courts and should rightly be recognised as an invaluable public service. It is also important to try to build consensus around a reformed system of legal aid. That is why, along with the Law Society of Scotland and the Faculty of Advocates, I will co-chair a working group to look holistically at the future of the legal profession in Scotland. That deep dive will be critical as we move forward.

**Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):** Scotland has one of the best legal aid systems in Europe in terms of spend per capita, eligibility and scope. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to build on our generous system and ensure that there is fair access to justice for all those who need it?

**Elena Whitham:** As I confirmed, the Scottish Government will undertake further targeted engagement this year to progress a manifesto commitment on legal aid reform. Such engagement is necessary to further inform the consultation exercise for legal aid reform that originally took place in 2019.

It is important to acknowledge the post-Covid justice landscape and user need, as we have seen

much greater adoption of technology by users, courts and legal aid providers. It should also be recognised that, despite the economic downturn and other global challenges, the Scottish Government has retained the wide scope of legal aid provision, in contrast to many other jurisdictions where the provision of legal aid has been significantly curtailed.

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** What support can the Scottish Government give to domestic abuse organisations in rural and island areas to ensure that there is fair and equitable access to legal aid?

**Elena Whitham:** The Scottish Government's violence against women and girls unit funds a linked project that employs advocacy workers, a project co-ordinator and administrative support, and funds the delivery of a national helpline. Both projects are interdependent, and the advocacy workers act as initial points of contact prior to help being provided by a local solicitor.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 8 is from Siobhian Brown, who joins us remotely.

#### Recorded Crime (Ayrshire)

**8. Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what analysis has been carried out of recorded crime in South Ayrshire. (S6O-02044)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, if you heard that, please respond.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown):** I heard it loud and clear, Presiding Officer.

The latest figures show a 43 per cent reduction in recorded crime across South Ayrshire under this Administration. That includes a 69 per cent fall in housebreaking and a 73 per cent fall in vandalism. The decrease reflects wider improvements across Ayrshire, where the proportion of adults who were the victim of a crime, including those not reported to the police, fell from 24 per cent in 2008-09 to 10 per cent in the years immediately prior to the pandemic. Looking ahead, we will build on that encouraging progress through investing £1.45 billion in policing across Scotland in 2023-24.

**Siobhian Brown:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that welcome news. The Scottish Government's recorded crime statistics for 2021-22 show an increase in people threatening to disclose or disclosing intimate images of others, not only in South Ayrshire but across Scotland. Does the cabinet secretary agree that such threats—or revenge porn—are a serious crime? What analysis has the Scottish Government undertaken to determine the reasons behind the increase?

**Keith Brown:** I agree that sharing intimate images of others without their consent is a serious crime. There was an excellent programme on television this week about a very courageous young woman who took such a case to court very successfully. Of course, Katy Clark also raised the issue a short time ago.

The Parliament legislated to make it a specific criminal offence punishable by up to five years' imprisonment. The offence is often committed online and, as I said, we have been working hard to push the UK Government to strengthen its Online Safety Bill to help to tackle this kind of activity. Our delivering equally safe fund provides £110,822 to the South West Grid for Learning Trust to help to support its revenge porn helpline and to further its work to get illegal intimate images removed from the internet. That funding demonstrates the Scottish Government's commitment to challenging all forms of violence against women and girls.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes portfolio questions on justice and veterans. There will be a short pause before the next item of business to allow members to change their positions in the chamber, should they wish.

## Historical Adoption Practices

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The next item of business is a statement by Nicola Sturgeon on historical adoption practices. The First Minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:52

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The issuing of a formal apology is an action reserved by Governments as a response to the worst injustices in our history. Without doubt, the adoption practices that prevailed in this country for decades during the twentieth century fit that description. For the people affected by those practices, I appreciate that an apology has been a very long time coming.

One of the most ardent campaigners for it has been Marion McMillan. In the mid-1960s, Marion was a teenager living in Stranraer. When she became pregnant, she was sent to a mother and baby home in the north of England. Marion has described the horror of having her son taken away from her.

"I remember crying and telling them, 'but I'm his mummy', and begging them not to take my son. I was told not to be silly. I'd get over it—and I could always have other babies when I was married."

Elsbeth Ross faced her own ordeal. In 1962, she gave birth to her son in a mother and baby home in Glasgow.

"After I had my son, I was in the nursery for six weeks looking after him but nobody told me they were taking him away.

I was upstairs the very last day and told to pack my bags and go, not knowing that I was never seeing my son again".

In 1979, Jeannot Farmer gave birth at the age of 22. She has recounted the moment in the hospital when she was told that her baby was being adopted.

"I was treated in quite humiliating ways from the outset ... I didn't understand at that time that I had lost the decision—that the decision had been made for me. I didn't understand that until the social worker appeared after the birth."

The horror of what happened to those women is almost impossible to comprehend. It is the stuff of nightmares, yet those were not isolated cases—far from it.

Until the late 1970s, forced adoption was a relatively common practice in Scotland. Many thousands of children were subject to it. In most cases, their mothers were young or unmarried. They were stigmatised as a result, and they were forced or coerced into the adoption process by

charities, churches, health professionals, or social services.

Some mothers suffered physical mistreatment or abuse. Some were denied appropriate healthcare. Up until the early 1970s, mothers in some cases were given stilbestrol—a drug that dried up their breast milk and that is potentially carcinogenic.

Virtually all of the mothers were made to feel worthless. Among many falsehoods, they were told that they had nothing to offer their child except state benefits. They were told that, without adoption, their child would grow up a delinquent, and that they were selfish for wanting to keep their baby, because they would be denying them a so-called better life.

Consistently, mothers were lied to about the adoption process. They were given no information about what was happening. When they did object, they were bullied or ignored. Some women were never even allowed to hold their babies. Most never got the chance to say a proper goodbye, and many were threatened with terrible consequences if they ever tried to make contact with their child.

For those mothers, it was a living nightmare—a nightmare from which they have never truly been able to wake. The grief, heartbreak and shame of what happened have been a constant throughout their lives, and many have had to bear that trauma in silence, for fear of other people's judgment or pity. It has affected their relationships with subsequent children, with partners and with family and friends. For many, it has created serious mental health impacts that persist to this very day.

For the sons and daughters who were taken, of course, the impacts have also been profound. It is important to say—and to say very clearly—that many of them went to loving homes. Acknowledging the injustices should never be seen as a rejection of the deep bonds that people share with their adopted families. Nothing can ever invalidate the love that these families have for one another.

However, it is also clear that many of those affected—far too many—had a very, very different experience. We know that some will always have lacked a sense of belonging; some may even have suffered mistreatment or abuse; and all of them will have grown up believing that their mothers chose to put them up for adoption of their own free will. Understandably, that has affected them—and yet it was never true.

As adults, the practical difficulties of accessing adoption records have been a further torment. Even when families have been able to reconnect, that in itself has brought huge emotional challenges. Sometimes, the search has ended in

further heartache, when the person being looked for is already deceased.

For the fathers affected, there has also been great suffering. They, too, lost a child. They, too, had their rights denied by a system that ignored and dehumanised them. There is good reason to believe that some mothers were not even allowed to put the father's name on the birth certificate—a permanent obstacle to them reuniting with their son or daughter.

Of course, the impact of what happened has been felt more widely, by the loved ones of everyone involved. The legacy of those practices continues to affect generations of families, in this country and beyond. It is a level of injustice that is hard now for us to comprehend. So, today, how do we even begin to explain how such appalling acts could take place?

Obviously, they were the product of a society where women were regarded as second class citizens, where unmarried mothers were stigmatised, and where people in authority had too much power. We also know that similar practices happened in other countries, but that does not for a moment excuse the appalling mistreatment that people suffered, nor does it absolve the individuals and institutions involved.

After all, it is not just in hindsight that such practices are wrong. Mistreating women and forcing them to part with their babies was never right; it was always cruel, unjust and profoundly wrong.

There is a line of argument that says that, because the Government of the time did not support those practices, there is nothing to apologise for, and that, anyway, the events in question took place long ago, before the Scottish Parliament reconvened and before anyone in this chamber held public office, but those are not reasons to stay silent. Ultimately, it is the state that is morally responsible for setting standards and protecting people.

Therefore, as modern representatives of the state, I believe that we—among others—have a special responsibility to the people affected. First, we have a responsibility to do whatever we can to support them in dealing with the legacy of what happened. That is why, last year, the Scottish Government established specialist support and counselling services for people affected by historical adoption practices. At the same time, we launched a consultation, in which we asked people affected to share their experiences. I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone who responded.

We have since commissioned a study, which will report later this summer, on how we can improve the support that people can access, from psychological support to help in reuniting with

family members. We will continue to explore with the people affected the key challenges that they face with regard to adoption records and the lasting health impacts that are faced by mothers who were given stilbestrol. On that final point, I emphasise again today the importance of women attending routine breast and cervical screening appointments.

Another responsibility that we have to those people is to provide an assurance that the lessons of the period in question have been learned. There is no doubt that adoption practices, and our society in general, have come a long way in the decades since, but we can never allow ourselves to be complacent.

At all times, we must ensure that the services that are meant to protect families fulfil that role as effectively and compassionately as possible. That is why the Government is so focused on delivering the conclusions of the independent care review—the Promise—which emphasised the importance, where possible, of keeping families together.

More generally, we need to continue to build a society where women and girls are treated equally, and where everyone's human rights are respected. That has always been a central mission of this Government, and it is how we ensure that such injustices never happen again.

The final way in which we can keep faith with those affected is more symbolic, but it is no less meaningful for that. It is something that has been campaigned for tirelessly, over many years, by many of the people who are seated in our gallery today. It is a cause that I know has been championed by members across the chamber.

As a Government and a Parliament, we can set the record straight; we can acknowledge the terrible wrongs that were done; and we can say, with one voice, that we are sorry. So, today, as First Minister, on behalf of the Scottish Government, I say directly to the mothers who had their babies taken away from them, to the sons and the daughters who were separated from their parents, to the fathers who were denied their rights and to the families who have lived with the legacy: for the decades of pain that you have suffered, I offer a sincere, heartfelt and unreserved apology. We are sorry.

No words can ever make up for what has happened to you, but I hope that that apology will bring you some measure of solace. It is the very least that you deserve, and it is long overdue. *[Applause.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** The First 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.

**Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con):** I thank the First Minister for providing advance sight of her statement. I begin by associating the Scottish Conservatives with that statement.

We are joined in the gallery by the courageous campaigners on historical forced adoption. Today's events would not have been possible without them and their determination to seek a sincere national apology for the fact that 60,000 women were forced to give up their babies for adoption simply because they were young or unmarried. A national apology cannot right the wrongs of the past, but for those suffering lifelong trauma, it will be the start of a healing process. My only regret is that, sadly, many campaigners have died before this apology was made.

We need to make sure that this part of history will never repeat itself and that we protect the rights of women and children in Scotland. Will the commissioned study be trauma informed, and will the support that is offered be meaningful and needs based?

**The First Minister:** I thank Meghan Gallacher for her question and for associating her party with the apology that has been offered today. Let me give an assurance that, although I recognise and understand completely the importance of offering an apology today, it is in many respects not the end of the process. There is much work still to do to understand the impact of these horrendous practices and to ensure that, in the months and years to come, we offer as much appropriate support as we can to those who are still dealing with the impact of that trauma.

I give a commitment today that any work that is done by the Scottish Government will always be trauma informed and that we will work together with those in the gallery, the campaigners and everyone across the country who has been affected by these tragedies to ensure that the support that they need, now and in the future, is provided. I know that the person who succeeds me as First Minister will give as much importance to that as I and my Government have done.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I, too, thank the First Minister for her formal apology and, on behalf of the Scottish Labour Party, I echo her remarks.

We believe that an estimated 60,000 Scottish mothers were compelled to give up a baby for adoption simply because they were unmarried in the 1950s and 1960s and even into the 1970s. Those cruelties are among the most appalling of injustices that our society has inflicted on women and their children.

Marion McMillan, from Paisley, is one of those mothers. She is now in her 70s and terminally ill. Her wish is that the victims in Scotland receive the

apology that they deserve, and I welcome to the public gallery Marion and all the other women who have bravely campaigned for so long. Marion has, of course, worked with other victims of forced adoption from around the world. She has reunited mothers with children and has given evidence that helped to secure the world's first Government apology for forced adoption, which was in Australia in 2013. We commend the brave and tireless work of Marion and all the other campaigners.

Let me also pay tribute to Marion Scott at the *Sunday Post* for her tenacious support for these women.

MSPs from across parties have lobbied the Scottish Government. It was, of course, Neil Bibby who first raised the issue, way back in 2015, and it has been taken up since by my colleague Monica Lennon and others. It is right and beyond time that there is a formal apology in Scotland for the injustice of forced adoption, and that we confront this shameful chapter in Scotland's history.

For some, the apology will bring closure. For others, it is the start, not the end. Will the First Minister therefore commit her Government to a firm timetable beyond the study that will give these women and their children access to appropriate health services, including trauma-informed counselling, and easier access to adoption records?

**The First Minister:** I thank Jackie Baillie for her question and the Scottish Labour Party for associating itself with today's apology. Members across the chamber have campaigned for the apology that has been offered today. I, too, would make particular mention of Monica Lennon, who has done a great deal to advance the cause.

One of the many tragedies of this situation is that we do not know for certain how many were affected by forced adoption practices. According to National Records of Scotland statistics, from 1930 to 1979, approximately 73,000 adoptions were recorded in Scotland, but there is no data available for that period to tell us how many of those adoptions occurred without the birth mother's informed consent. Not knowing the precise data is, as I said, one of the many tragedies of the situation.

We also know that there are many mothers who were forced to give up their babies in Scotland and now live in other countries—for example, I know that we have at least one person from Australia with us in the public gallery today. The impact and depth of the tragedy and the suffering that has come from it are impossible for any of us properly to quantify.

That is what makes it so important, first, that we issue the apology, and secondly, that we continue

to work with the people who are affected. I again pay tribute to the women who are with us in the gallery and to the many others, some of whom are no longer with us, who, out of their own trauma and suffering, campaigned for justice and to stop this ever happening to others.

It is essential that we work to identify the appropriate support—that part of the process is really important—and then, that the Government implements the support across all the different areas that are necessary, as quickly as possible.

As everyone knows, this time next week there will be a new First Minister here. Whoever that is, I have no doubt that they will give the same commitment as my Government has given. I am sure that all members in the chamber will do everything that we can to hold the Government to account on that.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** This is a momentous day for at least 60,000 mothers who were forced to give up their child, not least Marion McMillan and the other brave campaigners who have spent their lives fighting that heartbreaking injustice. Does the First Minister agree that that dark period in our history should never be forgotten and should inspire progressive policies, to ensure that nothing like it ever happens again?

**The First Minister:** Yes. I whole-heartedly agree with that. We are talking about a historical practice, but we must never be complacent. We must make sure that, every single day, we guard against such injustices ever, ever happening again.

That is why some of the wider work that the Scottish Government is doing is so important. In my statement, I referenced the independent care review and the Promise that came from that. This Government is committed to keeping the Promise.

We must also continue our work to lift children out of poverty. Sadly, we know that children who are growing up in poverty are more likely to be removed from their families, which is why a package of support—not least the Scottish child payment—is important in that respect.

We must never be complacent. We must ensure that we do all that we can to tackle gender inequality and to protect the human rights of everyone. Only if we do all that can we build the better society that we all want.

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** Today is important. I pay tribute to all the campaigners, to the cross-party work, especially of Neil Bibby and Monica Lennon, and to Marion Scott, who has been mentioned, who made today happen.

Mothers, fathers and adult adoptees have lived with lifelong trauma. Often, they have been unable

to develop and maintain relationships, given their feelings of total rejection. Today is just the start of the healing process.

Today is also the start of a wider exposure of medical practices that took place in our country during those times. As the First Minister said, the use of diethylstilbestrol—DES—or stilbestrol, has had lasting, negative health impacts. Awareness of the impacts of the drug on mothers and children needs to be raised and those impacts need to be addressed. Will the First Minister say what role the chief medical officer in Scotland will have to investigate and take forward work on the medical practices of that time? What additional advice will be given to mothers and adult adoptees?

**The First Minister:** I think that all of us have the utmost sympathy for any woman who had their child forcibly taken away. That is added to by the sympathy that we have for the women who were prescribed stilbestrol. It is important that they have access to the support and advice that they need.

The chief medical officer will offer such advice, always on an independent, clinical basis, and I am sure that he will be happy to correspond with members about any advice that he considers appropriate.

The most recent guidance, which the UK Health Security Agency produced, is that routine cervical screening is appropriate for those who believe that they were exposed to the drug. That applies in Scotland. On the lasting health impacts, I emphasise again, as I did in my statement, the importance of women attending routine breast appointments and routine cervical screening appointments.

There is no doubt whatever that the medical practices to which the member referred compounded the injustice that women faced and are one of the reasons why today's apology is so important and so long overdue.

**Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I also thank the First Minister for her powerful words, which are, crucially, backed up by a range of actions from the Scottish Government to support those who have been affected. I ask the First Minister for an assurance that the Scottish Government will continue to place lived experience at the heart of its approach to helping those who have been impacted by historical adoption practices.

**The First Minister:** I will give that assurance and I think that I can give that assurance with confidence on behalf of whoever succeeds me as First Minister.

Over my years as First Minister, I have become ever more convinced about the indispensability of lived experience in all of our policy making, but

there are probably few areas where lived experience matters more than this one. Although our hearts are filled with sympathy on behalf of the women who suffered this injustice, I do not think that any of us in the chamber can comprehend what it was like, so making sure that we hear directly from those who are still with us and who feel able to contribute that lived experience is essential. Therefore, I give that commitment and I know that whoever comes after me will honour that commitment, because it is so important.

**Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab):** A veil of silence has been lifted today, so I add my voice to those thanking the First Minister for making an apology on behalf of the Scottish Government and indeed on behalf of Scotland. This is a day of mixed emotions. Some people have been name checked already but, as I look round the public gallery, I see that Marion and Jeannot are here, and that Evelyn Robinson has travelled from Australia with her son, who was born in this city in 1970 and was taken from his mother. It is a difficult day for other adult adoptees. I know that Esther, Fiona and Marjorie are here, and many more. There will be people who do not even realise that they, too, have been affected. There are so many survivors.

There have been many good questions already but I want to ask the First Minister whether she agrees that, after today, not just as a Government but as a Parliament, we should continue to work together on the issue to educate ourselves, because it was prejudice and complacency, along with a lack of compassion, that made this happen.

This week, we are celebrating single-parent families in Scotland. When I was speaking to some media representatives today, I said that this happened because women did not have a wedding ring on their finger. We cannot be complacent. There are people who will ask why we are not talking about the 1980s and later dates. We heard earlier today from Lisa about her experience, which happened in 1982, the year after I was born. What can we do to continue to educate the people of Scotland about the issue? There has been a call to record some of this history in the Glasgow Women's Library. What else can we do to make sure that there is no complacency and that never again can something like this happen in Scotland?

**The First Minister:** I thank Monica Lennon for the question and for all that she has done to bring us to where we are today. Miles Briggs and Neil Bibby have been referenced, too, and I thank them as well.

I very deliberately quoted some women in my statement, because their words can give an understanding of the horror of this much, much more than any words of mine can. However, I am

conscious that, in quoting some women, there are many more who have not been quoted. I pay tribute to every woman who suffered this injustice, not only those here in the public gallery today.

Monica Lennon talks about what happened in 1982; we know that this was a routine practice up until the late 1970s, but that does not mean that it did not happen at all after that. It is important to recognise that. It is also important to recognise that, although we describe the practice as historical, it is recent history that we are talking about. Monica Lennon referenced a man who is with us from Australia but who was born here in 1970. I was born in 1970 to a young mother. This is not history that is way in the past—it is in our lifetimes, and that should underline the importance of not being complacent.

Unfortunately, across a range of issues, we frequently discover that injustices that we thought were long gone can reoccur if we are not vigilant and do not guard against that. We must continue to learn and to stand together—I hope that, on issues such as this, we can do that.

While trying to bring some closure for those who suffered, we must also find ways to remember. I have heard suggestions of a memorial in the Glasgow Women's Library, an institution for which I have huge affection and respect. I cannot speak for the library, but we should be open to all suggestions in order to make sure that we deliver as much justice as possible, and that we never forget. We need to allow those horrendous experiences to stand as reminders of what happens if we do not remember the value of our common humanity and we do not protect what matters most in our society.

I gave a commitment today knowing that someone else will take it forward, but with confidence that the chamber will stay united in making sure that we learn the lessons and that we find the most appropriate ways of delivering support and always remembering.

**Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP):** My constituent Fiona Henderson has been in regular contact with my office, and I have been working with her for some months. I believe that she is in the chamber today. I have asked her, and she is happy for me to use her name in my question. Her name pre-adoption was Samantha Jane Penfold. Her adoption has caused her severe trauma and anguish, so I am asking my question on her behalf and on behalf of all other adoptees who are suffering.

The First Minister addressed the difficulties of access to adoption records. Although I recognise the sensitivities that exist in relation to the matter, the adult adoptees have been waiting a very long time for help. What assurance can the First

Minister give that the Scottish Government and its agencies are continuing to work with parents and adoptees to understand and overcome the barriers to accessing adoption records?

**The First Minister:** My statement, deliberately and, I think, rightly, directed an apology to mothers who had their children taken away from them, fathers who lost their children and the children who were adopted as a result of those practices. It is important that, as we move forward, we give support to everyone whose lives were affected. That means that we continue to support those who have had difficulties accessing adoption records.

As we all know, there are unfortunately some complexities involved in that but, nevertheless, it is important that we overcome those. I give an assurance that we will continue to do that. In the meantime, National Records of Scotland will continue to provide access and assistance in line with current legislation. Any changes will need to be carefully considered, but I give an assurance that we are listening, and we will continue to listen, to the important and valid calls that are being made for improvements in that area.

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I thank the First Minister for the advance sight of her statement. On behalf of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, I echo the sentiments in it. Tens of thousands of Scottish women had their children forcibly taken from them and adopted, and I express my sympathy to all those who had to live with that wrong. The First Minister's formal apology acknowledges that the state was wrong. It will not change what has happened, or the pain, hurt or injustice, but I hope that it brings some comfort. Does the First Minister agree that it is incumbent on all of us to uphold women's and girls' human rights, ensuring that such practices never happen again?

**The First Minister:** I thank Beatrice Wishart for her question and for associating the Scottish Liberal Democrats with the apology that was offered. Her question goes to the heart of the issue. Those practices were able to happen because of the inequality of women in our society. Therefore, part of making sure that injustices such as that never happen again is continuing to progress, advance and secure women's equality. That is a responsibility for us all, but it is a fundamental part of what we must do to recognise what happened in the past and ensure that it can never happen again in the future.

**Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP):** I thank the First Minister for her statement and for her apology, which is very welcome. What support will be provided for those who have been impacted by forced adoption, in order to allow them some closure?

**The First Minister:** We have a special responsibility to those affected to do whatever we can to support them in dealing with the legacy of what happened. For example, we are already funding the charity Health in Mind to establish specialist peer support groups to provide support services that will be person centred, trauma informed and, crucially, run by those with lived experience. As has been referenced already today, we have commissioned a scoping study to explore further the support that those affected need to assist them in the recovery process. All of that will help us understand where we need to improve, introduce or enhance services to better meet the needs and expectations of those affected. I give an assurance again today that the Government is committed to that wider work.

**Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** I thank the First Minister for her statement and apology and for giving voice to some of the women affected by this abhorrent practice. I associate myself and the Scottish Greens with the Scottish Government's fulsome apology.

The First Minister has indicated that some of those affected have already left Scotland. Some will have made a positive choice to go; some will have felt that they had no option but to leave a place that caused them so much shame and guilt. Can the First Minister confirm that the study that is currently under way includes a consideration of how best to work internationally across state boundaries to support reuniting families, and that it will include learning from how that has been done successfully elsewhere, as well as a way to share our experiences so that others can learn from us, too?

**The First Minister:** I thank Maggie Chapman for associating the Scottish Green Party with today's statement. She raises an important issue: many people who were subject to these historical practices will no longer be here in Scotland, and it is therefore important that we ensure that the work that we are doing is, where possible, brought to their attention. For example, further to delivery of the statement, we will be distributing copies to the networks of campaigners who we have engaged with throughout this work, including those who live abroad, so that they can issue them to their members. I would like to thank all of them again for their engagement today.

It is also important that we continue to learn from other countries, where that is appropriate. It has already been referenced today that an apology was issued in Australia some years ago, so there will be examples of best practice elsewhere that it is important that we identify and learn from, and I hope that we in Scotland can

offer some best practice for others to learn from, too.

**Roz McCall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I align myself with the comments of admiration for campaigners. The First Minister will be aware that I am as passionate as anyone about these issues. As an adoptive parent, I cannot imagine going through that process to find out that the adoption was forced. Having spoken to adult adoptees, I know that they are looking for a comprehensive collection of relevant data and a commitment to develop specific funding mechanisms for bespoke developmental trauma-informed therapies.

I know that assurances have been given, but I will ask this again, as one back bencher to a soon-to-be back bencher. Will the First Minister support and work with me to push the new First Minister to make those fundamental changes, so that all those voices are finally heard through Parliament?

**The First Minister:** I certainly give a commitment that I will continue to seek to advocate on the issue from the back benches of this chamber. I know that many members across the chamber have been involved in the issue for longer than I have, but I can say that it would not have been possible for me to do the work required leading up to the statement today without the issue finding a place very deep in my heart and developing a determination to continue to do everything possible to deliver as much justice as possible for those affected.

Because adult adoptees were referenced in that question, I repeat that the apology delivered today is directed to all those who suffered as a result of these abhorrent adoption practices, from mothers and fathers to the sons and daughters who grew up without their parents.

Those affected will need a range of support now and in the future. It is important that we go through a proper process of identifying what support is most appropriate and ensuring that we act to deliver it. I have been privileged to be part of that work as First Minister, and I am absolutely determined that I will continue to play my part from the back benches of this chamber.

**Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** This is a historic day for the people who have been impacted by the inhumane practice of forced adoption. The First Minister really did speak for the people of Scotland, and her statement was just and made with compassion. My constituent Jeannot Farmer welcomes that apology and raises the point that many people who were impacted now live outwith Scotland. Obviously, the First Minister has outlined the steps, but can she expand on that?

**The First Minister:** It is important to recognise that many of these people will no longer live in

Scotland, so we have a responsibility to make efforts—first, to ensure that today’s apology reaches all those to whom the apology is directed, wherever in the world they now live; and, secondly, to make sure that, as we further develop the necessary support services, access to and knowledge of those services is also extended to people in other parts of the world. I give an assurance that the Scottish Government will take all reasonable and practical steps to make sure that both of those aims are achieved.

The last thing that I will say in response to that question is that I am under no illusion that an apology, however heartfelt—I know that I speak on behalf of all of us in the chamber when I say that it is very heartfelt—cannot undo the harm, damage, trauma and heartbreak that have been suffered, so there is still much work to do to address that in whatever ways that we can. I know that the Government will continue to be very committed to doing exactly that.

**Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** The First Minister will be aware that Marion and other campaigners have called for a permanent memorial to be erected in Scotland. Has the Scottish Government thought of erecting such a permanent monument to remember that dark moment of Scottish history? Can that be taken forward on a cross-party basis?

**The First Minister:** I referenced that briefly in response to Monica Lennon. First and foremost, today is about an apology, and it is important that we focus on that in the chamber today. The apology has been a long time coming and, today, it is vital that we allow the space for that apology to be received and understood.

However, it is also right that we consider further important steps that we can take. This afternoon, we have talked a lot—and I have spoken a lot—about the further support that we must now develop and make available, but part of that is considering proposals for an exhibition or memorial. I think that it would be wrong for me to pre-empt a proper process of consideration by stating anything definitively today, but I am very happy to say that the mind of the Government is open to that, and it is one of the issues on which we will seek to have further discussions with the people who have been impacted by those practices.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes the First Minister’s statement on historical adoption practices.

## Wellbeing Economy

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):**

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-08305, in the name of John Swinney, on the transition to a wellbeing economy. I would be grateful if members who wish to speak in the debate were to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

I call John Swinney to speak to and move the motion.

15:33

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney):**

The performance of any country’s economy is not an abstract concept. The prospects for the economy, as well as its focus, are fundamental to the life chances of every person in our society. They affect the living standards of our people, the ability of people to fulfil their potential and the choices that we can make about how we use our resources. They all, as is at the heart of the debate today, on a cumulative basis affect the wellbeing of our people. That is the rationale behind this Government’s determination to pursue a wellbeing economy on behalf of the people of Scotland.

The cost of living crisis, the obvious and recognised negative consequences of the United Kingdom Government’s mini-budget last September, and the impacts of Brexit are all creating a significant impact in Scotland on the wellbeing of people, businesses, the third sector and our vital public services.

The UK budget last week outlined the gravity of the situation, with the Office for Budget Responsibility estimating the impact on household disposable income over last year and this year—a fall of 5.7 per cent—to be the highest in living memory. That represents the largest two-year fall in real living standards since Office for National Statistics records began in the 1950s, and it means that by 2027-28, real living standards will still be around 0.5 per cent below pre-pandemic levels.

UK inflation has again risen today and, although the OBR has forecast that inflation will fall by the end of 2023, the severe impact on households in Scotland of the cost of living crisis brings home the impact on wellbeing and the lack of economic resilience in the UK economy.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):**

The other feature that both the OBR and the Scottish Fiscal Commission highlight is the slow long-term growth rate. I believe that the OBR has forecast 1.2 per cent and the Scottish Fiscal

Commission has forecast 1.1 per cent. Will the cabinet secretary outline his thoughts on that relationship? Ultimately, does not having a growing economy make it easier to deliver a wellbeing economy?

**John Swinney:** That is obviously a significant factor in the performance of the economy, as my opening remarks make clear. The size of the economy, the way in which the economy develops and grows and its impact on people are all relevant to the circumstances and the wellbeing of individuals. One of the key issues that I will come to—Mr Johnson will not be surprised—is population growth, which is a significant factor in the development of any national economy. I think that Scotland is significantly inhibited in that regard, as the Scottish Fiscal Commission report this morning indicates. I will come on to say a great deal more about that particular point.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** I am sure that everybody will get a bit teary this afternoon because this is John Swinney's last speech as Deputy First Minister. Could I entice him to give his views on the various candidates for his party's leadership and their contribution on the issue of taxation? I have seen a variety of views, and I am sure that the candidates will be keen to hear the Deputy First Minister's advice about what future taxation policy should be.

**John Swinney:** I always want to keep myself in proper order in Parliament. I think that I might be straying from that if I were to move into that territory.

I was actually going to say something kind about Mr Rennie later on—

**The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf):** Strike it out!

**John Swinney:** I am being encouraged to strike it from the record, but I will be more generous. However, I say to Mr Rennie, just to set his expectations in the right place, that this is not my last speech. I will make another one at the end of the debate, so he should be careful what he intervenes on me about before we get to that point.

The budget that was set out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer last week—I recognise the scale of the challenge that the chancellor faces—has, of necessity, had to act to repair the damage that was done by the UK mini-budget that crashed pension markets and led to higher borrowing costs. Decisions have consequences; we are having to live with them and they will have an impact on the wellbeing of people in Scotland.

As we continue to deal with the aftermath of that, today's debate is focused on how we can achieve a more balanced and sustainable

approach to the economy—one that prioritises wellbeing across social, economic and environmental dimensions and recognises interlinkages and the need to address those issues together. That is, essentially, the point that Mr Johnson has invited me to comment on. Yes—growth is important in the economy, but the implications and the impact of that growth, and how we use resources in achieving that growth, are equally significant considerations.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** The cabinet secretary will know of my passion about health and the fact that Scotland is the unhealthiest nation in Europe. Does he agree that the key battleground is long-term investment in education in its broadest sense, and that if we are to tackle economic growth, that will require investment in education?

**John Swinney:** Yes. A good thing about the investment that this Government makes in education is that we now have record levels of young people leaving our education system for positive destinations and having positive outcomes. We also have the largest-ever proportion in our history of young people from deprived backgrounds entering higher and further education. Those are just two examples of the successes that are being delivered in Scotland today.

However, there are cautionary notes, as we can see in the "Fiscal Sustainability Report", which the Scottish Fiscal Commission published this morning. It provides a 50-year outlook of Scotland's fiscal position. It contains stark projections that Scotland's population will age and decline over the longer term, with our working-age population also being forecast to fall, while a slight increase is forecast for the UK as a whole. It is projected that those changes, alongside other factors, will increase pressures on spending, especially spending on health.

I will make a point about the importance of ensuring that we are able to support and sustain population growth. If that report had been written 20 years ago, it would have said much the same thing. However, in the past 20 years, we have been saved from the impact of projected changes of that type by the effects of EU migration into Scotland and the population growth that has come with it. I fear that we are now—I suspect that the report begins to reinforce this point—beginning to see the significant impact of the loss of free movement of people whereby EU citizens are able to choose the jurisdictions in which they live and operate. As a consequence of that, Scotland will suffer more acute pressures.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I agree with some of the concerns that the Deputy First Minister has just cited. Nonetheless, the

*Financial Times* did a very important study just last week that shows a slightly different picture—namely, that although some of the migration into Scotland is coming from different destinations, there are very positive signs in relation to people who are coming here for better-paid jobs. Does he acknowledge that?

**John Swinney:** I take no issue with that; it is very welcome, indeed. That is about ensuring—our universities are critical to the whole endeavour—that we create economic opportunities through research collaborations. Recently, I visited the University of Glasgow and the magnificent Mazumdar-Shaw advanced research centre, which has been developed with the incredible generosity of Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and the late John Shaw. It is providing a focal point for investment in advanced research that will create the type of employment opportunities that Liz Smith highlighted. It is also very significant in relation to other sectors, including the financial services sector.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** On 6 March, I awarded an apprenticeship certificate to a young man who, three weeks later—about now—is emigrating to Australia. Does the Deputy First Minister agree that the fact that people are educated and trained in Scotland is perhaps a double-edged sword? They are in such demand worldwide that many of them seek new pastures. Does he agree that more must be done to try to retain some of the people who are born, brought up and educated here in Scotland?

**John Swinney:** That is an important objective, but we should also recognise that people will want to move to other jurisdictions for wider experience and economic opportunity. However, we must be able to ensure that we can welcome others into our society. That is where Scotland's opportunities have been constrained by the folly of Brexit.

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** Last year, the UK had its highest-ever net migration figure—in excess of half a million more people came to the UK than left it. What is the Deputy First Minister's analysis of why we do not get enough of those half a million people coming to Scotland to live?

**John Swinney:** Obviously, a range of factors will affect that. People are certainly welcome to come here. If we look at the labour market data, we have near record lows in unemployment and economic inactivity, and very high—almost record—levels of employment in Scotland. We have a very tired and constrained labour market, so the invitation for people to come to Scotland is clear. It is important to ensure that they can, as a consequence of doing so, benefit from and experience our strong public service offering,

which can have a significant impact on their quality of life.

The objectives of the Government in advancing the wellbeing economy strategy, which are demonstrated by the contents of the national strategy on economic transformation, are all about ensuring that we take a balanced approach to economic opportunity in Scotland. We have to strike the correct balance between pursuing investment in our society, attracting international investment, utilising resources and ensuring that we are supporting enhancement of the wellbeing of individuals in our society. Those interrelated questions lie at the heart of the economic strategy that the Government is taking forward.

Why is that necessary? It is necessary because of the challenges that face our society. Whether we are looking at climate change, energy sustainability or wider economic opportunity, all those factors are relevant in judging the approach that we need to take in order to ensure that we create the strongest possible economic foundations for our society. We need to develop an economic model that addresses all those matters.

The underlying causes of the interrelated crises that I have talked about in this speech underline the need to strengthen and transform our economy into one that is socially just, delivers a better and more prosperous future for everyone in Scotland, empowers communities, protects and regenerates our natural environment and builds long-term resilience to the future shocks that will inevitably come our way. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has indicated that the type of economic model that enables us to take a balanced approach—which, of course, is anathema to what we heard on the mini-budget in September—is exactly the right approach.

In 2017, the Scottish Government held a significant conference on inclusive economic growth. From that international event, the idea of forming a coalition with other progressive Governments to develop and advance a new economic approach emerged. That led to the establishment of the international wellbeing economy Governments network, along with New Zealand and Iceland. The group meets regularly to share ideas and good practice and now includes Finland and Wales. Other countries are also engaging ever more closely with the network; for example—

**The Presiding Officer:** Cabinet secretary, I appreciate that you have taken several interventions, but we are tight for time this afternoon.

**John Swinney:** I will draw my remarks to a close. That network is now bearing significant fruit through sharing of economic and intellectual thinking between Scotland and other jurisdictions that have significant roles to play.

All that is relevant to ensuring that we create an economy that meets the needs of all our citizens in Scotland—an economy that uses our resources wisely and plans on the basis of investment for the future. The Government's motion indicates the steps that we need to take to ensure that we turn that into reality in the forthcoming period.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises Scotland's international leadership in the transition to a wellbeing economy, by not only growing but transforming the economy to one that serves current and future generations, and delivers a prosperous, socially-just Scotland within safe environmental limits, where everyone can flourish; notes that this remains a defining mission for the Scottish Government, including through its leadership in forming the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) group and delivery of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation; agrees that the delivery of a wellbeing economy requires a worker- and community-led just transition to a net-zero, nature-positive economy that has equality, human rights and fair work at its heart, enabling Scotland to tackle child poverty, empower communities, build community wealth and create a socially-just society; notes the publication of the Wellbeing Economy Monitor, which tracks broader outcomes beyond GDP on issues such as health, equality, fair work and the environment, and the Wellbeing Economy Toolkit, which supports place-based economic development; commends the work of the Cross-party Group on Wellbeing Economy and partners across Scotland, and recognises that independence would allow Scotland to make greater progress, but, until then, calls for the devolution of energy and additional economic powers to the Scottish Parliament to support Scotland's transition to a wellbeing economy.

15:48

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Before I come to the issue in hand, I want to say something about John Swinney. He will not know this, but the first time that I knew very much about Mr Swinney was when he was on a poster on my classroom wall, way back in 1997, when he was, perhaps, a bit more hirsute than he is today. My secondary 5 modern studies class had been looking at the 1997 general election, and Mr Swinney was beaming because he had just won the North Tayside seat by, I think, something like 4,000 votes. Although I hope that my lesson was interesting for my modern studies pupils, the election was perhaps not quite so good for me, given that 1997 saw Mr Swinney overturn a traditionally powerful Tory seat. The 1997 election was also the occasion on which we lost all our seats in Scotland. *[Interruption.]* I do not think that the Scottish National Party should clap just yet.

Once I was elected, I got to know John Swinney pretty well, especially in the education brief, and then latterly in the finance brief. We have probably not agreed on terribly much over the years—in fact, he might argue that it has been very little—but I hope that he will agree at least that we have enjoyed some engaging conversations, one of which I want to refer to in just a minute.

No one could doubt John Swinney's commitment to public service or to government, and I am very grateful for the courteous approach that he has taken towards me—at least, most of the time—and I thank him for that. I will miss our front-bench engagement, and I hope that he will be true to his word that he will be an enthusiastic participant from the back benches. I take this opportunity to wish him all the best in the future. *[Applause.]*

The quite unbelievable events that have been taking place inside the SNP in recent weeks—in fact, it is quite hard to keep up with them—will, I suspect, mean that John Swinney feels today a bit like I did in 1997 when I was asked on BBC Radio Scotland why my party had suffered such a meltdown. Maybe I can offer him some advice from that interview. It is perhaps a little ironic that his last debate in the chamber as a senior minister will be on the subject of wellbeing, but that is exactly what is in front of us.

Let me set out my thoughts on wellbeing before I come to our amendment. I want to refer back to one of the discussions that I had with John Swinney when we both had the education brief. At the time, he was—rightly—very exercised about underperforming schools and what to do about them. We were discussing Scottish Qualifications Authority exam grades, the numbers of pupils who were sitting different levels of exams, class sizes and teacher numbers—all valid considerations—but we also agreed that not everything that is important in education is actually measurable. Good education should be about building resilience in our young people, increasing their confidence and self-esteem, helping them to become much more responsible and helping them to understand what it is to be tolerant and appreciative of a team. It is for those reasons that I have proposed my bill on outdoor education. Young people should have those things, and they are not quantifiable.

John Swinney said something interesting that day, and I very much agreed with him. He said:

“Of course, none of these qualities can become a reality for our young people unless they are complementary to, and build upon, the good quality educational experience inside the classroom.”

Why do I refer back to that conversation? I do so because it is relevant to the debate. When people talk about the development of a wellbeing

economy, the feel-good factor is vitally important when it comes to delivering better opportunities across the board. It is not measurable, but we know that it matters. The 100 or so leaders from civic society and faith groups who, last year, signed a letter to the Scottish Government about the importance of that made it clear that they do not think that the national performance framework does nearly enough to put in place the basic building blocks on which Scotland can build a better society and environment.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Liz Smith:** I will not, if the member does not mind.

They are also very critical of the focus on gross domestic product as a measure of economic success. The trouble is that the aspiration to build a wellbeing economy depends on our success in creating the growth and widening the tax base. I was very interested in what Kate Forbes said—and I think that she is absolutely correct—about that needing to be the urgent priority of the Scottish Government. That is echoed in today's headlines from the Scottish Chambers of Commerce. Kate Forbes is also correct in saying that continuity just will not cut it. She knows only too well that the focus of the Scottish Government has been elsewhere for a long period of time, and she knows that being tied to the Bute house agreement—when the Greens have rejected the concept of economic growth—is a major problem for the Scottish Government, and more importantly, for Scotland.

In April 2017, and again in June 2019, we debated a Conservative motion on what we should do to deliver economic growth. How we wish that the Scottish Government had listened at that time, because it might just have saved it the embarrassment of Kate Forbes, in her brutally honest way, telling us that the status quo is not an acceptable way to make the best use of Scotland's undoubted talents. She knows only too well where the SNP's economic policy has been failing.

**John Swinney:** I am grateful to Liz Smith for giving way—I will come back to her earlier remarks later. Does she understand that she is on rather thin ice in giving the SNP Government advice on economic policy when she demanded that I follow the Liz Truss budget in September 2022? If I had done, I would have caused absolute mayhem with the public finances of Scotland.

**Liz Smith:** Mr Swinney knows that I was not a supporter of Liz Truss, but I did support some of the principles of achieving a low-tax economy, which are extremely important.

At the time, I also agreed with Liz Truss about the importance of economic growth. Earlier, Mr

Swinney cited the Scottish Fiscal Commission's comments. Economic growth is essential to deal with the problems that the Scottish Fiscal Commission cited. Mr Swinney also mentioned the size of the working population in relation to the size of the dependent population.

Another issue with the delivery of a wellbeing economy relates to the projections for social security spending, which is to increase from £4.2 billion in the financial year that is about to end to £7.3 billion in the 2027-28 financial year. That is £1.4 billion more than the funding that Scotland is projected to receive from the UK Government. That is quite a statistic.

In our discussions about what we have to do, wellbeing is an important concept, but it cannot be delivered unless we are true to the spirit of developing economic growth and we ensure that we can all benefit from an economy that is far more prosperous.

I move amendment S6M-08305.2, to leave out from the first "recognises" to end and insert:

"believes that the pursuit of economic growth and widening the tax base is an immediate priority for Scotland, and further believes that these priorities are essential to underpin the delivery of a wellbeing economy."

15:56

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** In the past few weeks, there has been a bit of a parliamentary break or hiatus—almost a holiday. We all know the feeling when coming back from holiday: the family that looked like the model of congeniality when checking in is the one that has the biggest falling-out at the front of the aeroplane on the way back. A bit like when coming back from holiday, it feels that, in Parliament, we are being handed out Government motions to distract us and keep us busy as the aeroplanes are stacked and delayed before landing.

As pleased as I am to be talking about wellbeing, I wonder why, if we are talking about the economy, we are not talking about how we get the country off gas, how we deal with the cost of living crisis, how we fill the skills gaps in key strategic sectors or how we scale up for ScotWind. Instead, let us talk about the wellbeing economy.

However, the wellbeing economy is important because, ultimately, we need to ask ourselves whether we are measuring what we value. I am the first to acknowledge that an economic focus only on GDP is far too narrow. I came into politics with the firm belief that we need to tackle inequality, which is measured and defined by both social and economic injustices.

In Scotland, those injustices are not just ethereal but regional and based in our

communities. I have made the point previously that, if we go 30 miles up the road from Edinburgh to Dundee, we see drastic and radical differences in wages, life opportunities and outcomes. What those communities need can be measured by things such as housing, public transport and primary health care. In those cases, there are tangible and measurable economic inputs, with measurable economic outcomes.

When discussing the wellbeing economy, it would be a mistake to think that the economy is somehow not measurable and that growth is incompatible with these things. The Resolution Foundation is clear that it is not a case of either/or. In a recent blog, Torsten Bell made the point that, as well as looking at the distribution of the pie, we need to grow the pie. In fact, it is not easy to change how the pie is divided if it is not growing. The Resolution Foundation makes that point clearly in its “Happy now?” report.

It is about the right kind of growth, not whether we have growth. I am moving the amendment in my name because that mistake potentially lies at the heart of the Government’s thinking. Unless there is growth, we cannot deal with the overarching imperatives relating to the economy, such as technology disruption, demography and the delivery of net zero. To address each of those things, workers are required to be able to do their jobs better and more effectively. They need to use technology to do things more efficiently. Ultimately, we need to deliver wage-led growth, because we need productivity growth to deliver those things.

The issue is that there is confusion from the Government in that regard. In the national strategy for economic transformation, references to growth were comprehensively expunged, but the current Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy says that we need to reset our thinking on the economy.

That is quite an extraordinary statement, but it is not necessarily a surprise. We need to acknowledge that, when this Government came to power, in 2007, it brought with it a fresh approach that was about ambition, focus and streamlining the machinery of government. However, that is not what we have seen subsequently. It is not just about the Government ditching growth—we have seen from it an ever-changing focus, switching from one area to another. One minute, the Government is talking about Scotland being the Saudi Arabia of wind; the next, it has moved on to life sciences technology. Its focus has never really been clear. We have gone from a situation in which the Government was determined to streamline agencies to one in which we actually have more of them, with overlapping purposes and functions.

Ultimately, 15 years on, we see a Government that is focused more on process than on outcomes and that will, when an issue is presented to it, point to another working group being created or another report being commissioned. That is an issue, because we are faced with a serious context. We have an issue with wage and employment growth relative to the rest of the UK. Where Scotland has been second only to London and the south-east, that position is now distinctly under threat.

The figures from the Scottish Fiscal Commission, in its most recent “Fiscal Sustainability Report”, are a wake-up call. The SFC suggests that there is going to be a long-term funding deficit of almost 2 per cent—the figure is 1.7 per cent—driven by the fact that our growth rate in the long term is projected to be just 1.2 per cent.

Ultimately, if we are going to deliver a wellbeing economy, we need a plan to put that right—a plan that grows well-paid, highly productive jobs to grow the economy in the right way. We need to focus on that.

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

**Daniel Johnson:** I am afraid not, because, in my last minute, I want briefly to pay tribute to John Swinney.

Although I do not believe that John Swinney will agree with any of my critiques of the Government, he will probably agree with some of my analysis in what I am about to say.

John Swinney is a very serious politician. I cannot say that I have always relished facing him in the chamber, but that is a compliment, because he is a formidable person to challenge and probe. He is someone who brings focus, purpose and pragmatism to Government, and those are essential qualities. I believe that, above all, he is a reformer: someone who believes in the power of the Government to do good, and someone who has, I think, applied himself to that purpose.

Although I have my criticisms of the Government, therefore, I do not think that the fault with the Government has been John Swinney’s presence within it—in some ways, it is that there are not more people like him on the Government benches. If that is a somewhat back-handed Opposition’s compliment, it is—believe me—a compliment indeed.

I look forward to John Swinney applying that focus, purpose and pragmatism from the back benches, because it is needed as much there as it is anywhere in the chamber. I wish him well in his future endeavours, both within and outwith Parliament.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur):** I ask you to move your amendment explicitly, Mr Johnson.

**Daniel Johnson:** I did so earlier, but I will move the amendment in my name now, just in case that was not caught.

I move amendment S6M-8305.1, to leave out from “international leadership” to end and insert:

“potential to be an international leader in the transition to a wellbeing economy, like the Labour administration in New Zealand; agrees that the delivery of a wellbeing economy requires a worker- and community-led just transition to a net-zero, nature-positive economy that has equality, human rights and fair work at its heart, enabling Scotland to tackle child poverty, empower communities, build community wealth and create a socially-just society; commends the work of the Cross-party Group on Wellbeing Economy and partners across Scotland; notes the publication of the Wellbeing Economy Monitor, which tracks broader outcomes beyond GDP on issues such as health, equality, fair work and the environment, and the Wellbeing Economy Toolkit, which supports place-based economic development; believes that the Scottish Government should be doing more to deliver environmental sustainability, including through the delivery of rapid insulation programmes, which would help people improve the energy efficiency of homes and lower energy bills, and notes that sustainable economic growth will be required to successfully deliver a wellbeing economy and a just transition, including by using the extensive powers available to the Scottish Government to create jobs, upskill workers, grow Scottish businesses and channel more investment into high-growth, innovative firms of the future, ensuring that everyone in Scotland benefits from Scotland’s prosperity.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Apparently it was not explicit enough, so I am grateful to you for doing that now.

16:03

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** There is probably not sufficient time this afternoon for me to pay full tribute to John Swinney and list all his achievements in office, so I am not going to do that. Nor is there time for me to list his catastrophic failures, and I am not going to do that either, for fear that he might list my catastrophic failures during my time in office.

I have been jealous of John Swinney in his time as a minister, because he is so effective at his job; I regard him as the Government’s sweeper. I do not know how many interviews I have heard on Radio Scotland where I have been none the wiser about the Government’s position at the end of the interview than I was at the start. *[Laughter.]*

That is a tribute, because sometimes it was better that people did not know the Government’s actual position.

John Swinney has been generous and kind, but equally he could be utterly savage to those who got out of step. He has been confident, but never

arrogant. We should all recognise the talent that John Swinney is, and the contribution that he has made to this Parliament over such a long period of time. I think that those on the Government benches will miss him, and I know that the whole Parliament will miss him. I wish him well in whatever comes next.

However, he could not resist putting a little sting in the tail of his motion this afternoon by injecting a reference to independence. Although he did not talk about it an awful lot in his opening contribution, I am sure that he will make up for it in his closing speech.

For me, the debate has highlighted one of the challenges that this Government has faced. Throughout its term in office, it has been attracted to things such as the wellbeing monitor and the wellbeing economy. It attaches itself to wider movements. Some people might say that that is done only to advance the cause of independence, but there seems to be an attraction to process issues, theories and beliefs, if I can put it that way, rather than a focus on delivery.

In Government, it is important that we deliver, and the reason why I am attracted to the whole wellbeing movement is because it is important. In some ways, it is a bit of a frustrating debate because, of course, both are necessary. We need economic strength, good GDP and excellent productivity, but in order for people to have a good life and be happy, well and fit to go to work, we need a fantastic foundation. Therefore, they go together. It is not one or the other—it is not a chicken-and-egg situation. The reality is that we need both.

We have also seen—it has probably been a more common feature of the past couple of decades—that people’s quality of life and their local environment are also really important, which is why Scotland has been attractive to many people who have perhaps come to our universities but also come to enjoy our fantastic environment and our great heritage. All that is in one mixed bag, so it is important not to get fixated on one half of the argument or the other.

However, I get a bit frustrated with the wellbeing monitor aspect, because the judgments on whether some of the measures have been met in the latest report from December are really quite subjective. There is a big debate about whether we are closing the poverty-related attainment gap. If we look at one part of the school population, we can see that we are certainly not doing that, because the gap is just as wide as it has ever been. In other parts, perhaps the gap is closing a little bit, and the situation for school leavers might be slightly better than it was. However, to claim that, as the sum of all that, we are making improvements is a bit challenging.

Equally, the share of GDP investment is classed as being at the maintenance or middle level in performance terms, but it has actually fallen since 2017, so I am not sure how that could be described as a steady state. My point is that you could make an argument on both sides as to whether or not things have improved, but that lends strength to the argument that we need some kind of independent assessment of those measures.

Of course, there is debate about GDP and productivity, why that has fallen and whether it is the fault of Westminster or the Scottish Parliament or whether it is because of other factors. There will always be debate around those issues, but we need an independent element to make a judgment to give us more robustness and confidence that these measures accurately reflect our progress on these areas. However, it is not one of the other—it is both.

The work that the Carnegie Trust has done has helped the debate. Many other organisations have also latched on to it. It is important that we have good measures, because, if we do not measure it often, it does not count.

I want to mention, briefly, the immigration debate. I think that, through the Brexit process, we will probably learn the real value of having an open society that attracts people from across the globe to come here to live and work and to contribute to our public services and our strong economy. Perhaps being deprived of many of those people through the Brexit process will shift public opinion to being a little more in favour of a more open immigration policy—something that I would strongly welcome.

However, there is no doubt that the Scottish economy is in trouble partly because we have not been able to attract enough people. Stephen Kerr makes a not unreasonable point that reasonable numbers of people have been coming into the UK as a whole but that Scotland has not attracted a disproportionate number of those or even perhaps our population share. That must force us to ask questions—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You need to conclude, Mr Rennie.

**Willie Rennie:** —about whether we have the right approach to all that.

I commend John Swinney for his contribution to Parliament, and I wish him well for the future.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. I advise the chamber that we are running behind time, so I have to ask members to stick to their speaking allocation, even if they take an intervention.

16:09

**Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP):** I am delighted to be speaking on the motion. I am chair of the wellbeing economy cross-party group and I am proud to be part of a party and a Parliament that are championing building an economy that is underpinned by a wellbeing approach.

I strongly believe that GDP is not the only effective indicator of our economy. Focusing policy making solely on the pursuit of increasing GDP and economic growth is to the detriment of other social, environmental and democratic priorities. The wellbeing economy approach allows a holistic view that takes into account social and environmental progress, which is core to building a fairer and more equal society.

Our approach must be long term, because investing in our future and communities now will lead to long-term economic growth and prosperity. Bolder action is needed if we are serious about redesigning our economic system and addressing social and environmental challenges.

Our diversion, as a country, from the UK status quo can allow us to improve our social and environmental outcomes. However, we must acknowledge that the majority of our financial levers are still in the hands of the UK Government, which sees trickle-down economics as a plausible outcome.

The wellbeing economy provides a framework for addressing the multiple crises that we are facing. The climate crisis is before us, which, globally, we have only worsened by putting profit before our planet. We are fortunate to have a country that is rich in renewables, creating green jobs and green investment.

The Scottish Government recently published the “Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan”, which focuses on the renewables revolution. Our green jobs revolution is under way, with low-carbon production jobs estimated to rise from 19,000 in 2019 to 77,000 by 2050. However, we do not hold all the powers to address the issues at their source, which is why the strategy also includes recommended actions for the UK Government to take in reserved policy areas. That includes sufficient borrowing powers.

That is part of a combined approach of tackling the climate crisis through a wellbeing approach. It seeks to reorientate and rewire the economy to embed equality, inclusion, and environmental sustainability from the outset. Another aspect of the approach—which we have not talked about so far—is about eliminating structural inequalities around race, gender, sexual orientation and disabilities, and recognising our responsibilities towards future generations.

The Scottish Women's Budget Group has been instrumental in pushing for a gendered budgeting approach, which must be considered as we move ahead with our wellbeing economy approach. Working towards equality is an essential part of building a resilient economy.

In the First Minister's TED talk in 2019, she said:

"The goal, the objective of our economic policy should be wellbeing—how happy and healthy our population is, not just how wealthy it is."

The happiest countries in the world tend to be small, independent nations. Just look at Finland, which has ranked first as the happiest country in the world for six years, and which sits alongside us in championing the wellbeing economy as members of the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership. That is an international initiative that we have undertaken with like-minded countries to put the argument for a wellbeing economy on the international stage.

At home, we have all been talking about economic growth, and the Scottish Government introduced the national strategy for economic transformation, which will drive improvements in Scotland's economy to increase productivity and international competitiveness and to deliver fairer, greener prosperity for all Scotland's people and places.

We have already heard about the national performance framework, which sets out our wellbeing priorities. In addition, the wellbeing economy monitor provides important updates on our progress and there is growing support for practices such as community wealth building, fair work, purposeful and democratic business models—which I will touch on later—the just transition agenda and the circular economy.

The wellbeing economy cross-party group has met a number of organisations. Willie Rennie mentioned the Carnegie Trust, which has been an excellent group to work with. We have also met Scotland CAN B and the Scotland's Women Budget Group, along with many others. The cross-party group also works very closely with the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, which recently published an open letter that highlighted the five needs that a wellbeing economy should, and can, meet: purpose, dignity, nature, fairness and participation. Core to meeting those needs is a focus on wealth redistribution, strengthening public investment and ensuring universal basic services and fair wages.

We also need to look at a cultural shift. Just last week, I met Scotland CAN B, which has been championing the cause of business inclusion and training up our business leaders in order to integrate businesses into the wellbeing approach. Scotland is a country with a strong enterprise

heritage and has a progressive economic vision to become a world-leading entrepreneurial and innovative nation. We cannot transition to a wellbeing economy with measurement tools and a vision alone. A long-term vision requires cultural change and improved understanding about what a wellbeing economy means.

Just this morning, I was on Tynninghame beach, planting seagrass with WWF as part of its Restoration Forth project, which is looking to restore seagrass that disappeared over a number of years due to overfishing of oysters. We cannot forget the nature emergency that we face here and now. More than 50 people attended this morning's event, which was a great example of community action. We need to build community action into the process of building a wellbeing economy.

I am delighted that we are debating the wellbeing economy. We must move away from an abstract perception of the wellbeing economy by embedding wellbeing principles in our policy, budgetary, nature and climate-based decisions. I look forward to playing my part.

16:15

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** What can I say about the motion? I know that we are all being terribly nice to John Swinney this afternoon, but I have to say that he has put together a collection of words that is almost wholly meaningless. Let us be frank—this is just a filler debate. It is a filler debate so that the SNP and the Greens can indulge themselves in some constitutional rants about separation and breaking up the United Kingdom. Paul McLennan did not disappoint—that is the theme that he set.

The debate is intended to cheer up members of the SNP—and, my goodness, they need a bit of cheering up. It is all about killing time until the stairhead rammy of the SNP leadership contest is finished. Given how well the candidates have been trashing the SNP's record in government, who would still want to lead it?

The amendment in the name of my friend Liz Smith is a reconnection with reality—the reality that we need to rescue Scotland's economy from the "mediocrity" of Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP. Those are Kate Forbes's words, not mine. It is ironic that we are debating a motion from the acting finance secretary on his last ministerial appearance in the chamber when the actual finance secretary is busy traducing his legacy.

A wellbeing economy needs to be a prosperous economy. I always hoped that John Swinney would learn that a nation cannot tax itself to prosperity, but I fear that he leaves government unrepentant on that matter. Kate Forbes wants to talk about entrepreneurship and jobs; she wants

economic growth. Some SNP members might agree with Kate Forbes, as Scotland continues to grow at a rate well below that at which the rest of the UK is growing, but they must not tell that to Patrick Harvie or Lorna Slater, whose whole effort in government is targeted at stopping economic growth. *[Interruption.]* I agree with my friend Graham Simpson that they do a good job.

To them, economic growth is all about stuff—and I say that they are right. By “stuff”, I mean jobs, increasing wages, better job security, rising profitability, higher national productivity, a growing tax base and investment in our public services. That is the very stuff that they are committed to halting, opposing and destroying.

Wellbeing is, in many ways, indefinable. I find that all the things that really matter to me in my life and that contribute to my personal and family wellbeing are hard or imprecise to measure: love, contentment, comfort, security and peace of mind. Those things and many others make people feel happy. Wellbeing is about much more than happiness. It is about being able to cope when things are not going as well as they could be. As Liz Smith said, it is about resilience. It is about independence—personal independence.

Although I am not of the view that the Government is the answer to all our problems, there is work that can be done, especially in helping our young people. Young people need skills that lead to personal fulfilment. They can get those skills by learning an instrument or taking part in sport, dance, creative writing, drama or art. Too often, we think about those subjects like central planners sitting in an office deciding how many bagpipe players or footballers Scotland needs, using an equation to balance art against science. That misses the fundamental point about education. Education is not only about employment; it is about learning skills that help young people to find fulfilment.

**Willie Rennie:** I commend the member for his glorious attempt to build consensus across the chamber this afternoon. He is talking about education. I am a strong believer in early years education and the opportunity that that provides to turn young people’s lives around and give them a good foundation. What more could the two Governments—the UK Government and the Scottish Government—do to try to make that more of a reality today?

**Stephen Kerr:** I agree with Willie Rennie on both points that he made. My middle initial is C for consensus, and I try to build consensus. His second point was about the importance of the early years. The early years are a very important point in the beginning of the education journey for every single soul.

I return to my premise about learning skills that help young people to find fulfilment. I am talking about the guitar in the loft, the hung-up football boots or, if you will forgive the parallel, Deputy Presiding Officer, a fine cheese, laid down for a future of maturing until it is there to help us through a tough time. Similarly, life skills such as cooking or managing finances help our young people to stand on their own two feet.

How does cutting mental health funding for colleges help any of that? How will cutting subject choice help?

**Paul McLennan:** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is coming to a conclusion.

**Stephen Kerr:** Edmund Burke said:

“If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free; if our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed.”

Intergenerational poverty is a curse, and I, along with everyone else here, want to break that cycle. Helping people to access employment and gain lasting financial security is a way of lifting that curse. The pride that goes with having a good job that allows one to provide for oneself and one’s family is so important as to override all other considerations when addressing worklessness. Work builds confidence and, when families provide for themselves, they are stronger. Child poverty is solved by addressing the worklessness of households.

I will conclude by simply saying, Deputy Presiding Officer, that the motion speaks volumes about the SNP’s attitude to government. This is a Government of ideologues who put ideology ahead of wellbeing.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You need to conclude, Mr Kerr.

**Stephen Kerr:** We can hope for a future in which the Government enables wellbeing, but with these two parties in charge, that is never going to happen.

16:22

**Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP):** A wellbeing economy is simply, as I understand it, a drive and commitment to finding economic growth that recognises that, in the long run, sustainability of the health and happiness of people and the planet will lead to an economy, an environment and a society that are far more productive.

In my view—I said this in the summer of 2020—our economic response to the major disruption of the pandemic needed to be revolutionary, not evolutionary. We needed renewable and net zero

economic growth, use of natural capital, and technological disruption.

In recent years, there have been competing pressures to return to economic conformity without the energy of disruptive change to reset our economy after Covid, but we have also seen step changes in the take-up and use of digital in businesses and remodelling due to labour shortages.

The economy and businesses have had to cope with constant crises: inflation, supply line disruptions, labour shortages and much besides. That has been disruptive, but that does not mean that there has been no progress towards the wellbeing economy. It has been more embedded than most people realise.

Inclusive economic growth is about saying that measuring GDP is not enough. If GDP measures the economic activity of illegal drug dealing but not the economic benefit of unpaid carers, that begs serious questions of value. A wellbeing economy demands a GDP-plus measure for economic traditionalists.

I recognise that such measurement is in its infancy, but interest in it is growing. The groundbreaking mission-based approach of Mariana Mazzucato, professor in the economics of innovation and public value at University College London, is steadily gaining traction, and her advice to the Government has been invaluable.

The work of the chief economist and counterparts in the wellbeing Governments of Iceland, Wales and New Zealand to establish an internationally recognised wellbeing measure is important.

I welcome, as the Government motion does, the publication of the wellbeing economy monitor, which tracks broader outcomes beyond GDP, on issues such as health, equality, fair work and the environment, and the wellbeing economy toolkit, which supports place-based economic development.

Fair work is being mainstreamed into Government grant conditions. The role that workers in a business or an organisation can play in improving processes and productivity when they are in a supportive environment, with fair work conditions and fair work in operation, can shift the dial on the comparatively poor productivity rates that have held back the UK and Scottish economies.

A wellbeing economy approach is being increasingly mainstreamed internationally, but we have yet to apply such an approach fully to our needs and circumstances. In that regard, the national strategy for economic transformation, which sets the foundations of the approach, is a

prerequisite. The strategy's focus must be on delivery, delivery and delivery. I would guard against the dangers of a broad-brush approach that is spread too thinly in an attempt to appeal to all people. Such an approach endangers the deep delivery model at the strategy's heart.

I agree with the Deputy First Minister that population growth is critical to economic growth. Independence would enable us to do so much more in that area, as it would in other areas.

The motion asks members to agree that

“the delivery of a wellbeing economy requires a worker- and community-led just transition to ... net-zero”.

On Monday, with other members of the Parliament's Economy and Fair Work Committee, I visited Ineos Grangemouth, where the challenge is the impact on the workforce, the local community and business of a move to new energies. The evidence of trade unions has been a great advert for the company and the plant. Trade unions identified the existing skill base and the transferability of skills to work that relates to new energy sources.

That will not necessarily be the case in all areas of Scotland. As the committee turns its attention to the north-east of Scotland, a wellbeing economy approach to sustainability and a just transition will be key. That accentuates the need for the more cohesive and explicit green industrial strategy for Scotland that I know is being developed.

Finally, Presiding Officer, I want to turn to the Deputy First Minister. He has been in government and has been lead or acting lead on the economy and finance brief for longer than he probably cares to remember. He has always embraced sustainable economic growth whereby all of Scotland can flourish—indeed, that was his mantra in the early days of government, as an early portent of the economic focus that evolved into the wellbeing economic growth model.

Astute, focused, dutiful and with a relentless and, where necessary, ruthless focus on advancing Scotland's interest, the Deputy First Minister has been one of Scotland's finest public servants. [*Applause.*] He takes no prisoners in debates, but he is also prepared to engage, listen and understand, so that he can reach compromise with his political opponents. That is a masterful skill. His strategic sense and radar when it comes to identifying issues and opportunities for Government policy to attack creatively and problem solve is definitely among the arts of government.

John Swinney, Deputy First Minister, is the best lieutenant that my party has ever had, and he is an example to those who will follow. His work over many years in developing Scotland's resilience

model is also of lasting significance. Indeed, it could be said that a wellbeing economy is, in essence, about building in resilience for people, business and the environment.

For 14 years, I had the privilege and honour of serving at Cabinet level alongside the Deputy First Minister. As he prepares to join us on the back benches—and I tell members that his interventions on Stephen Kerr will be wonderful—I offer him a warm welcome and say to him, “Come on in. The water is lovely!”

I commend John Swinney’s work and the motion to Parliament.

16:28

**Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Presiding Officer, let me add my own short tribute to the Deputy First Minister’s 15 years of public service in government and the sacrifices that he and his family have made to that end. During his appearance at the Education, Children and Young People Committee, I was moved to tears as he updated us on his work on the redress scheme for survivors of historical sexual abuse, to which he has a deep, personal commitment. I wish him and his family the very best.

It is in that spirit of reflection that I regard today’s motion. The long history of and rhetoric around economic policy that the Deputy First Minister has fronted for 15 years calls to my mind Shelley’s crumbling epitaph to Ozymandias:

“Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!”

The scale of work required to deliver a true wellbeing economy is huge. Unfortunately, time and again, this Government has proven itself incapable of driving the systemic change needed to bring about such a transformation in either services or economics. It lacks any coherent economic analysis rooted in the relationship between capital and labour. Instead, it has leapt upon the latest bandwagon—the passing craze pushed by an author, the latest popular economist or the well-intentioned non-governmental organisation—no matter how contradictory those analyses might be.

In 2007, a fresh-faced cabinet secretary called John Swinney called on Scotland to emulate the rock-bottom corporate taxes of the Celtic tiger, aggressively undercutting competitors to find mobile, international capital. In 2008, the same John Swinney believed that we should

“join the Arc of Prosperity that surrounds us”,

including the high taxes of our Nordic neighbours. In 2010, we were to be the world’s first “hydro economy”—I think that Alex Bell had written a book about that. It sounded a bit different, so into the policy pot it went. In 2011, John Swinney

embraced Laffer curve economics, returning to the beggar thy neighbour virtue of corporate welfarism and loudly calling for “a lower tax rate”. That same year, we were to be the “Saudi Arabia of renewables”, with John Swinney promising 130,000 jobs by 2020. The year came—110,000 of the jobs did not. In 2016, we had the infamous growth commission, which promised to slash public spending deeper than the rest of the UK as an iron fiscal rule.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Michael Marra:** No, thank you, sir.

In 2019, it was on to Mazzucato’s mission-oriented framework, inspired by that rock-star economist. It was a good book, but terrible implementation—none of the hard stuff, but plenty of the spin.

**Bob Doris:** Will the member give way?

**Michael Marra:** No, thank you, sir.

In 2021, the SNP’s social justice commission backed progressive taxation; 14 months later, the SNP ran on a platform of regressive tax freezes—again—just as it had opposed Labour on progressive taxes election after election.

Economic policy by press release—

**John Swinney:** Will the member give way?

**Michael Marra:** In one moment, I certainly shall.

We have had economic policy by press release, following fads, cuddling up to commentators and hunting for the headlines, year after year.

**John Swinney:** Those latter comments about the chasing of headlines could aptly sum up Mr Marra’s contribution to every debate.

Can I just ask Mr Marra for his explanation of why Labour opposed the Government’s budget, which included progressive tax changes, when it came to Parliament in February? I am confused by this great exposition of consistent principle from Mr Marra, who argues for progressivity but, when it is right in front of him, votes against it.

**Michael Marra:** I could certainly point to the regressive pay policy that was within that budget. One of the red lines that we had set was around how we pay public sector workers in Scotland. We have made that point time and again in this Parliament.

A real wellbeing economy, as defined by Kate Raworth, Katherine Trebeck and others, is based on the political recognition that the resources of this planet and this country are finite, acknowledging that extractive growth has limits that we must exist within.

It is no new observation that gross domestic product as a solitary goal sends us in the wrong direction. As Bobby Kennedy said back in 1968, GDP

“measures everything except that which is worth while”.

By Kennedy’s account, we better evaluate our economy by

“the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play ... the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials.”

Inherently, that all makes the central challenge on economic management one of distribution: how are the proceeds of economic activity allocated? Time and again, for 15 years, this Government has failed on those questions of wealth and distribution. It is for those reasons as much as any other reason that I am deeply sceptical that we are to believe that a wellbeing economy will amount to anything more than the bandwagon upon which the Deputy First Minister happened to leave town.

Left behind are the three contenders for First Minister. Two of them are falling over each other to ditch the growth commission and to tell the sorry truth about the record of this sorry Government that they have served in for years. The other is advised on the economy by a man who thinks that a central bank is a photocopier in a Portakabin.

More of the same is not a manifesto; it is an acceptance of mediocrity.

“Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

16:34

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** The wellbeing economy is a huge subject and no one speaker can give it the justice that it deserves, so I will try to focus my remarks on just a few aspects.

First, we cannot and should not ignore gross domestic product, gross national income or any other method of measuring how the economy is doing. Those will remain important measures of Scotland’s economic success. Clearly, it is because we have a strong economy and are a relatively rich country that we can afford to pay for the quality health, education, transport and other public services that we have. We just need to look around the world to see much poorer developing countries that struggle to afford many public services at all. However, as has been said, GDP is a poor metric of human wellbeing. The Tory amendment virtually sidelines the concept of wellbeing. It drops out any mention of the socially just, of net zero, of child poverty, of fair work and

of empowering communities—all of that goes in the Tory amendment.

The Mental Health Foundation’s briefing makes the point that people in New Zealand started to question why, when GDP was rising, the things that citizens valued, such as child wellbeing, housing and mental health, were deteriorating. Clearly, GDP can be strong and rising, but we as a society can be failing at the same time.

We have the national performance framework, and we should pay particular tribute to John Swinney for that. It may not be perfect and it is up for review, but it has certainly widened the debate and helped to clarify where we want to go as a country. I do not think that I—in fact, I do not think that most of us—have talked about the NPF as much as we should have. I am wearing my NPF badge today, but I do not see many around chamber. We still need to talk about it a lot more, and to encourage more citizens and organisations to engage with it. Two of the national outcomes, economy and poverty, include national indicators such as tackling income inequalities and wealth inequalities. We have not made as much progress on those as I would like to have seen.

I will give some facts and figures. Scotland’s richest 20 families own more wealth than 30 per cent of the poorest families. Scotland’s richest 10 per cent of households have 217 times more wealth than the least wealthy 10 per cent of households. Those are signs of failure. Although we need to create more income and wealth, we also need to better distribute what we have. As the OECD says, we cannot continue with the attitude of

“grow first, redistribute and clean up later.”

In an ideal world, we would see better-off people exercising more self-restraint, for example by refusing a salary of £300,000 if it is offered to them. However, realistically, that is not going to happen in many cases. As in all countries, some people in Scotland seek more and more for themselves, even if it means that there is less and less for others. Therefore, at least part of the answer needs to be taxation, which can help to more evenly distribute both income and wealth, as well as clearly providing funding for public services and investment. No one is suggesting that we return to the 98 per cent income tax rate that I remember the Labour Party imposing in the past. However, something is not working at present when some have so much income and some have so little.

Income tax is reasonably progressive in the UK, and more so in Scotland, but our wealth and property taxes are not so progressive. Council tax needs reforming and replacing, and I very much

hope the new Government will be urgent about addressing that.

We have received a number of briefings for the debate that have been helpful and I am grateful for them. Some are very aspirational: for example, everyone should have enough to live in comfort, safety and happiness, with poverty a thing of the past. I agree with that as the ultimate aim, but I fear that it is some way ahead.

The Carnegie UK Trust talks about gross domestic wellbeing and the delivery later this year of a wellbeing index for Scotland and the UK. That looks like the kind of thing that we should be considering very seriously. Oxfam and several others in their briefings support having a commissioner for the wellbeing of future generations or similar, which we recently discussed at the cross-party group on international development. I am wary of multiplying the number of commissioners, as that can divert resources away from front-line services, but I agree that each needs to be looked at on its own merits.

A key aspect of wellbeing is that we bear in mind the impact on both future generations and other people across the world. There is no success for this country if we maximise wellbeing only for people in Scotland and only for the next 20 years. Although we want to maximise wellbeing, we need to constantly think about what effect our actions are having on our children, our grandchildren and our friends and neighbours in Malawi and elsewhere.

Of course, a lot of this agenda would be easier with independence. There would be no nuclear weapons; we could combine income tax and national insurance and make them more progressive; and we could control corporate and wealth taxes. However, I agree that we need to do the best that we can in the meantime.

Finally, I say that we need to be bold enough to take actual practical steps towards a wellbeing economy. One current example of what I am talking about is the deposit return scheme. Of course, I want to see Scottish products such as whisky, Irn Bru, salmon and beef doing well on the world stage, but if Irn Bru cans and whisky bottles are littering our cities and countryside while the producers make big profits, something has gone wrong. That is not a wellbeing economy. It is not a question of how councils can pick up all the rubbish; it is about changing the system so that the cans and bottles are not dumped in the first place. I hope that we can all agree today to change the way that we do things.

16:41

**Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** I welcome this debate. I am glad that we

are talking explicitly about the wellbeing economy and I am grateful to have the opportunity to contribute on this important motion. Greens used to have to wait for our rare Opposition day debate to bring about a discussion on the nature of economic growth—now everyone is doing it.

I thank John Swinney for the conversations that we have had on this and many other topics. I wish him well and look forward to seeing him cause trouble from the back benches.

The motion sets out the vision that we share of a Scotland that works for everyone and nurtures everyone; a Scotland that creates communities of justice, care and real prosperity; and a Scotland that treasures and protects its natural environment, not just for our sake but for its own sake and the sake of generations to come. We can agree—at least, most of us can—that that is what we are setting our sails towards, and that that is what we mean by wellbeing.

However, the more contentious question is this: how do we get there? Do we prioritise economic growth with wellbeing as an added extra—something that we hope will come along for the ride; something that we will encourage with little nudges and some gentle pottering around the edges—or do we consciously choose wellbeing and choose to prioritise the good of people and planet in all the ways that the motion encompasses? That choice will involve growth for many sectors—those we need for a sustainable, caring and creative future—but not all, and rightly so.

Growth is a positive word, imbued with millennia of good associations. We see the growth of a tree, a child or a community and we rejoice. However, economic growth—GDP—measures neither health nor development, neither care nor creativity, but only the narrowly defined product of economic exchange. GDP increases with disaster and contracts with generosity. It makes no distinction between price and value, or between healthy nutrition and catastrophic consumption. It only asks, “How much?”—never “For whom?”, “Why?” or “How?”—and when we only ask, “How much?”, those positioned to answer are those who have the most already.

Making money out of money is not hard—except, perhaps, for Liz Truss—especially for people with the right connections. The tough bit is to get it where it is needed. Prioritising economic growth and privileging GDP cannot help but reward the rich and punish the poor. In its obsession with counting, it cannot help but see the natural world as a warehouse of raw commodities and view ecological destruction as an externality at the edges that is regrettable but inevitable.

This is where the fixation on GDP—that paltry measure only ever meant to fill in some statistical gaps—has brought us as a global community: to the overlapping crises of inequality, injustice and ecological and climate breakdown. It is a path that the current Westminster Government is happy to continue along, even after this week’s heartbreakingly clear warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. There is, it seems, no other path that those in power can even see, never mind have the integrity to take. Brashly by Johnson, bizarrely by Truss and blandly by Sunak, they will keep on singing the only song they know, even as the darkness deepens.

However, we can do things differently and achieve different results—transforming not just our economy but our society, communities, families and futures. That is not a niche perspective. Just a few months ago, more than 100 charities, academics and others—including Oxfam, the Scottish Men’s Sheds Association, Scottish Women’s Aid, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the NSPCC—wrote to the First Minister to call for an urgent transition to a wellbeing economy that

“delivers good lives for all people and protects the health of our planet”.

Those are people and organisations whose work shows them, starkly and brutally, day after day, what good lives would really mean, and how far short we are falling.

We must go back to what the economy should really be about: creating a better world. We will do that by eliminating the problems that William Beveridge identified of want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. We must also build on what we now know—that we must put people at the heart of addressing those challenges. We need to do that work with, and not unto, people.

We have seen the success of community buy-outs, and we need more of that. We need to give workers the right to buy their businesses, and we need to transform the processes of government and democracy in order to put citizens at the heart of those decisions that affect them. We need more participatory budgeting and an end to the hegemony of advice from the big consulting firms and vested interests. Let us rely on our understanding of the world, rather than relying on the people who are most responsible for getting us into this mess.

Of course, much valuable work is being done by the Scottish Government, the third sector and all the signatories of that letter. All of that work—on child poverty, climate action, the circular economy, progressive tax and much more—forms part of the creation of a wellbeing economy.

Especially critical, at the intersection of social injustice and the climate crisis, is the need for a just transition—a radical envisioning of what a post-hydrocarbon, justice-centred, thriving and joyful future looks like for communities across Scotland, with practical plans of how to get there and get there fast. However, without an overarching priority for wellbeing over economic growth, all of those elements will remain disparate and disconnected.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Ms Chapman, you need to conclude.

**Maggie Chapman:** In conclusion, as long as all that we do has to be slotted into the artificial and archaic framework of GDP, it will never be as effective, revolutionary, transformative or human as it urgently needs to be. Now is a time for critical choice, but that window will not stay open for ever.

16:47

**Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con):** We have already discovered that, a bit like a just transition, a wellbeing economy is one of those phrases that is very hard to define and can mean different things to different people. However, here is how the Scottish Government defines it:

“Wellbeing is at the heart of our national purpose as a country, underpinning our National Performance Framework and reflected in our national outcomes and indicators. Economic activity should serve that purpose as a means to deliver improved health and wellbeing.

Our vision for Scotland is to create a wellbeing economy—an economic system that places the wellbeing of current and future generations at its core. Scotland is already leading the way on this work as a founding member of the international Wellbeing Economy Governments network”.

Deputy Presiding Officer, are we any the wiser? I thought not.

However, helpfully, we have the wellbeing economy monitor, which Kate Forbes launched last year. According to the Scottish Government, that

“will complement traditional metrics like ... GDP and include measures such as child poverty, levels of greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity, and fair work indicators to consider Scotland’s economic success.”

At the time, Ms Forbes said:

“Our vision for Scotland’s economy is to create a system which prioritises the collective wellbeing of current and future generations. While traditional economic metrics, such as GDP, will remain important measures of Scotland’s economic success, this new monitor will ensure we are tracking how to build a fairer, healthier and greener economy.”

That is all right then. Liz Smith is looking suitably confused.

There is a wellbeing economy toolkit as well, just in case people are stuck. We also have a strategy—a 10-year one. The national strategy for economic transformation, published last year, aims to deliver that wellbeing economy.

**Paul McLennan:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Graham Simpson:** Not yet.

How are we doing? The Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland has pointed out some areas where we are not doing so well. It is right to say that too many people live in cold homes. Decent housing is surely a human right, but what do we have here? A housing crisis, not helped by insane Green policies that are driving landlords out of the rental market, meaning that there are fewer homes for rent, which will ultimately drive up those rents.

What about transport? A wellbeing economy would have world-leading and affordable public transport, including ferries. Instead, we have NatRail, a disjointed bus system, ferries that do not sail and roads that would not look out of place on the moon.

Then we have the deposit return scheme, which is meant to increase recycling but will not, and which, as Fergus Ewing has rightly said, transfers money from the poor to the rich. Is that a wellbeing economy?

**Paul McLennan:** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Graham Simpson:** I will.

**Paul McLennan:** The member is talking about wellbeing economy monitors. Last year, a report from the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health said that Tory austerity is linked to almost 20,000 excess deaths in Scotland. Is that a Tory wellbeing monitor?

**Graham Simpson:** Speaking about deaths, what about the drug deaths record that is the shame of Europe? That is not a wellbeing economy. Neither are record waiting lists in accident and emergency, and patients struggling to get appointments to see their general practitioner or dentist.

As Liz Smith said, there is a scandalous attainment gap in our schools. That is not a wellbeing economy. Councils being unable to deliver the basics, such as decent roads, because of years of SNP cuts—that is not a wellbeing economy.

It is all very well bandying about such phrases but, at the root of it—again, we get common sense from Liz Smith—we need a strong and growing economy to deliver first-class public services. Kate Forbes seems to get that, but does anyone else in the SNP? Maybe Michelle Thomson does.

Liz Cameron of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce put it very well in her letter to the three people who are vying to be First Minister. She said:

“Scotland needs a credible economic growth plan which must be a top priority for every department in the Scottish Government. That can only be delivered if the next First Minister makes economic growth its driving mission”.

She is quite right.

This debate is the Deputy First Minister’s swan song in that role. I look forward to seeing him on the back benches and to possibly being on a committee with him. He is going to find it difficult to perform in quite the theatrical way that we have become accustomed to seeing.

**John Swinney:** Why? Tell me why.

**Graham Simpson:** I do wish him well. [*Interruption.*] There he goes. I have always found him—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Deputy First Minister, it might be your swan song, but that does not justify the interventions from a sedentary position.

Mr Simpson, you should be concluding.

**Graham Simpson:** I have woken him from his slumber, so that is good. I wish him well; he has always been good to deal with. He is great to spar with and I find him hugely entertaining. However, speaking of wellbeing, I have worried about his wellbeing on occasion, particularly when he is roaring with laughter at one of the First Minister’s quips—he throws his arms and head back and guffaws with gusto—or when he is affecting anger at the Opposition. We saw a great example of that last week during questioning about ferries—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You need to conclude, Mr Simpson.

**Graham Simpson:** I was, of course, interrupted by Mr Swinney.

I will miss him, and I wish him well for the good of his own wellbeing.

16:54

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** If we want to live in a country that services the wellbeing of people and planet, we must ensure that each person in Scotland has the means to live in dignity and safety by eliminating structural inequalities and reducing any negative environmental impacts. Scotland aspires to be a wellbeing economy. If the Government is serious about that, it must demonstrate a transformative approach to addressing poverty and inequality through a changing economic model.

As Maggie Chapman highlighted, last year, more than 100 leaders from Scottish civic society supported a joint statement calling on the Scottish Government to make an urgent transition to a wellbeing economy. Although we can talk of Scotland's international leadership in initiatives such as the wellbeing economy monitor and its membership of the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership, it is clear that current actions are not sufficient to achieve the substantial redesign that our economy needs to achieve that vision. We need bolder action.

Without addressing the continuing high levels of poverty and inequality, we cannot properly progress the journey to a wellbeing economy. The December 2022 update of our wellbeing economy monitoring showed that wealth inequality is worsening. This week, an article by the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, addressed why growth is not the "magic wand" to address poverty and why we must focus on tackling inequality and building an inclusive economy. That is because wealth and income inequalities largely cancel out any of the positive impacts on wellbeing that are expected to come from increased GDP.

During the pandemic, there was a lot of talk of building back better, doing business differently, valuing workers and investing in communities. Some of that ambition seems to have been lost as we face a cost of living crisis, but recognising the value of working together and promoting models that put people first is more relevant than ever, and that offers solutions to some of the challenges that we face. We can create a more resilient and robust economy—one that is better placed to withstand external pressures and unpredicted events.

There are calls for the national performance framework to be transformed into a wellbeing framework, alongside measures such as investment in social security and universal basic services, and a reshaping of the business support environment to prioritise enterprises that enhance collective wellbeing.

The review of the national outcomes presents an opportunity to ensure that wellbeing goals are a key part of policy and spending decisions. The Finance and Public Administration Committee has indicated that national outcomes are not driving financial decisions currently. We need there to be better links between the national outcomes and spending decisions to help to achieve them. The Scottish Government's forthcoming wellbeing and sustainable development (Scotland) bill—it is so overdue that Sarah Boyack's proposed member's bill might beat the Government to it—is another opportunity to be bold and to take decisions to accelerate the transition.

I recently chaired a Scotland's Futures Forum seminar on economic transformation and a wellbeing economy, including what that should look like in Scotland. Speakers from the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland argued that the economic model based on GDP growth needed to be updated, saying that it resulted in a lot of resource and effort being put into failure demand—that is, fixing problems that our current flawed approach has created—instead of reforming the system to prevent those problems. Although the Government's commitment to a wellbeing economy was welcomed, it argued that the current approach through the NPF and tools such as the wellbeing economy monitor was neither doing enough to influence decision making nor being as participatory as it could be.

We can learn from partners. New Zealand has started building its budget around wellbeing priorities, and it has been consistent in those goals since 2019. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales provides additional scrutiny around the wellbeing economy agenda, and here, in Scotland, there are local initiatives to be learned from and expanded on, including innovative community wealth-building approaches in places such as North Ayrshire and Dumfries, where community ownership and engagement models are empowering communities.

Tied to the economic model based on GDP is the idea that business success is demonstrated only by high growth, but we know that many businesses do not fit that model. In my role in the cross-party group on the creative economy, I have met a great number of businesses for which that definition of success is restrictive and has a negative impact on the degree to which they are valued and supported by Government agencies.

The report from the business purpose commission for Scotland showed that almost half of people think that the role of businesses in society is to maximise returns. However, a recent Fraser of Allander Institute survey asked what role businesses should have, and almost two thirds of respondents said that they should have a role in finding profitable solutions to the problems of people and the planet.

Social enterprises and co-operatives can make a considerable contribution to the wellbeing agenda, and we must do much more to promote and grow them. We know that they are often more resilient than other businesses, which is an important consideration as we continue to recover from the pandemic and work towards net zero. There is a real opportunity to grow the number of social enterprises and co-operative businesses in Scotland.

Thinking about the challenges that we face in care, childcare, transport and housing, there are

real solutions in the co-operative movement. There is a co-operative and social enterprise fund in place, but the amount of money that it receives is fairly small. It is disappointing that those models continue to have a very low profile in the Scottish Government's economic strategy. The Scottish Government is committed to increasing the number of employee-owned businesses in Scotland to 500 by 2030, but we have to ask ourselves whether that target is on track.

Redesign that prioritises social, environmental and democratic principles is required to achieve a wellbeing economy. Yes, in Scotland we have the ambition, and we can point to some action and some initiatives, but a wellbeing economy in Scotland needs to be more than the sum of its parts.

**The Presiding Officer:** I ask you to draw your remarks to a conclusion, Ms Baker.

**Claire Baker:** I am on my final sentence, Presiding Officer.

The Fair Work Convention, the national strategy for economic transformation, the just transition commission and more are all strands that must be governed by the principles of a wellbeing economy if they are to work for everyone.

17:00

**Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I find it very meaningful that we are having this debate at a time of great change for the country, as well as for the SNP and the Deputy First Minister. He has been an incredibly important figure for our party and manages to radiate kindness and authority at the same. I am looking forward to trying to learn a few things from him on the back benches.

Since we are sharing stories about the Deputy First Minister, here is mine. It was July 2014 and we were in an Inverness high school ahead of a very much independence-focused question time. I did not get to ask my question, but I marched up to him afterwards and gave him a bit of a hard time, much to the amusement of my history teacher, Alison Roddham. He gave me more than a fair bit of his time before his advisers pulled him away.

I am not going to give him a hard time today. I will whole-heartedly support his motion and go a little bit into why it is important to transition to a wellbeing economy, particularly for the Highlands and Islands.

Crises such as Covid and the cost of living have really brought into focus what our priorities are. They also demonstrate harshly the inequalities that exist in society and how the worst-off will not be rescued—or even really affected—by economic growth that is only on the part of the richest. It is

exactly in times such as this, when it is arguably a lot harder to make progress, that we must put that little extra fight into doing it.

Going through these tough times has also given us an opportunity to highlight, support and progress the things that we know are working well, such as the community-led resilience efforts during the pandemic. I was privileged to be part of efforts on the part of Inverness Foodstuff to deliver hot meals to people who were most in need but were not allowed at that time to gather in the church for lunch, as they usually do.

Communities know best what they need and the best way to deliver it in their areas and for their people. We know that resilience is different in Brae, in Beaully and in Bute. Last year, when many of my constituents in Shetland faced a number of power outages, I was reminded of how resilient many of the communities in my region already are—how supporting the community, volunteering and looking out for neighbours are embedded in the lives of so many that I come across in my role.

However, it is not enough to say, "They can manage, so let them get on with it." We need a Government that will empower communities and provide the support that they need—be that financial or advisory—to be what they want to be. That is why it is so important that there is a focus on community wealth building, on growing the number of people who have a real stake in their community and on redirecting the wealth, the control and the benefits of local resources to the local economy.

The Highlands and Islands are already leading on community empowerment, with 97 per cent of community-owned land in Scotland in my region. That land represents only about 5 per cent of the Highlands and Islands, but it is evidence of our interest in having a say about how our land is used, in taking ownership of our area and in having the freedom to decide our own way forward.

I am very hopeful that community wealth-building efforts will see more ownership of less tangible assets as well. I often talk to constituents and colleagues in Parliament about how unfair it is that we can look at all the renewable energy projects that sit in our region—some of them were researched, developed and built in our region, and the effort to bring them into the world came from the people in my region—and still know that the figures on the energy bills that come through our doors are higher than those elsewhere. A successful, fair, green country cannot be achieved when there remain that level of systemic unfairness and that penalty for people living in the area that is generating the energy that they are being charged extra for.

Being a successful country has to mean more than having high GDP, because GDP tells us nothing about how big inequality is, how much harm we are doing to the environment or how happy or healthy people are empowered to be. Being a successful country has to mean having people at heart, being climate conscious and ensuring that equality—be it in gender, disability, geography or any other characteristic that we know can very seriously impact the chances of avoiding poverty.

We cannot talk about job creation without talking about barriers to work, such as a lack of access to childcare, inflexible working arrangements and a lack of connectivity, particularly in rural areas. We cannot talk about exports without talking about the environmental impact of business actions or about how we can concurrently move towards being a net zero economy. We cannot talk about employment rates without addressing the lack of recognition of unpaid roles—many of which are full-time and skilled. Of course, it is a lot harder to take a rounded approach to all of that when we do not have powers over energy or employment and we do not have the full fiscal responsibility that many members—and many organisations that have given evidence to our committees recently—have called for.

I will end with a reflection. We know that the attitude, “Let’s just grow the wealth; we’ll redistribute it later” and other brands of trickle-down economics lead only to inequality getting worse, so I will never understand why people propose it as though it is a brand new, ground-breaking idea or why UK Governments keep proposing it as though it is a ground-breaking new idea. If you are coming to me with policy, do not talk to me about GDP or private growth. I want to know that you are going to end homelessness, tackle poverty—particularly rural poverty—and uphold basic human rights for everyone. The party that I see doing that is the SNP.

17:06

**Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):**

Many people have paid tribute to the Deputy First Minister today. I will say only that I have treated him with respect and kindness every day, so I do not feel the need to turn up today just to say something nice about him. Perhaps if everyone in the chamber treated each other with a bit of kindness, we would not have such deep division in our country right now, which needs to be healed if we are to have a better economy.

What is there not to like about a wellbeing economy? Well, yesterday I met people who work in a general practice in Lochgelly, and they were deeply disappointed with the announcement because the Government has made promise after

promise about a new health centre being built in Lochgelly. They are desperate for that to happen. They explained to me that, apart from the fact that water is pouring in through the roof of the building, it is not fit for purpose and they cannot bring all of the professionals together in the health centre because it is so dilapidated. They were promised a new centre in 2019 and were then promised that it would be built in 2024, but they were told last week that it will not happen until the latter part of the decade. That will push back building of other health centres that are in the queue.

That brings me to my point, which is that we will not have a wellbeing economy while the housing crisis is getting worse and while public infrastructure is decaying and crumbling, along with public services. We need to talk about the here and now and about what we need to address in order to have a wellbeing economy. The Lochgelly health centre is a good example of that.

There is also the issue of housing. I have told the Government time and again that we need a national house building programme. Housing needs to be a national priority, although I keep being told that it is. I was pleased to hear the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy talking recently about the need to build more high-quality housing for people. She said that

“housing must be viewed as a necessary infrastructure in building a better Scotland, rather than a privilege outwith the reach of the majority.”

and that

“a secure, comfortable, low-energy home needs to be accessible to all in a future Scotland.”

The finance secretary was absolutely correct, so how can we talk about a wellbeing economy when thousands and thousands of kids are going to school every day not knowing where they will be staying in the weeks and months ahead? Children are living in temporary accommodation and in damp houses with condensation. How do we expect those kids to learn in school at the same pace as kids who do not have those worries and problems? If we are talking about a wellbeing society, we surely have to start to address the housing crisis in Scotland right now.

I have raised with the Minister for Transport the issue of barriers to people accessing transport. Earlier, Emma Roddick spoke about powers. I agree that, if we are to deliver on housing, the Scottish Parliament needs to have greater capital borrowing powers. Together, we could fight to get those powers.

However, we must also use the powers that we have right now. A classic example of that is the way in which Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester, is using his powers. He has far fewer powers than the Scottish Parliament, but he is

using them. For example, he has introduced a permanent £2 cap for bus journeys across Greater Manchester. As a result, bus use has gone up by 10 per cent. We need to acknowledge the powers that we have and use them.

We need to invest in the economy and we need growth in the economy, but there is nothing that prevents us from also tackling social issues that exist right now. If we were to provide a house-building programme across Scotland, jobs and skills would be created and infrastructure would need to be put in place. That could not be done in one session of Parliament; we would need four or five sessions of Parliament to tackle Scotland's housing crisis. We would need to start by giving local authorities more planning powers; they would need more powers to take the land that would be needed to build houses for the social good of people and communities. We would also need to ensure that, over a period of five to 10 years, we provided people with the best opportunities to skill up so that we would have the appropriate skills and jobs.

That is the type of wellbeing economy that I want. It should be an economy in which children are educated to the very best levels and in which they have a roof over their head and a house to call their own. We need to move away from the rhetoric of the wellbeing economy and instead to think about the massive challenges that our communities face right now. We should build houses and invest in education. We could do that right now, so let us move from the rhetoric and start to address people's real-life experiences right now. By doing so, we will build a wealthier and healthier economy.

17:13

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** This has been an interesting and, in the main, good-natured debate. Throughout it, there have been eulogies to John Swinney from various parts of the chamber. We have heard so many eulogies that I thought at one point that I would have to cross the aisle and check his pulse to see whether he was still with us, given that everybody was paying him such glorious tributes. However, I hope that he will be with us for some time to come, and I am sure that he will contribute to finance and economy debates, albeit that he will do so from the back benches.

It is good that the final debate that Mr Swinney is leading is on the economy, because in recent years we have had very few debates that have focused specifically on the economy. Perhaps that is no wonder, given the Government's poor record on delivering economic growth. Since 2014, the Scottish economy has, on average, grown at half the rate of growth of the UK economy. That is not

just Conservatives' perspective. Speaking on the BBC on Sunday, the current finance secretary, Kate Forbes, said:

"the point I'd make about the recent hike"

in taxation

"is of course, that the higher tax is a symptom of the fact that our economy is growing so slowly, and our tax base is not broad enough ... We need to raise the money for our public services because people rely on that. But I'd far rather we focused on expanding the tax base and growing our economy."

And so say all of us. The problem is that the Government of which Kate Forbes and John Swinney are members has not been delivering the faster economic growth that we all want.

I suspect that part of the problem—I know that many SNP members understand this—is that the party is shackled in a coalition with a Green Party that simply does not believe in economic growth and is actively hostile to it. As Graham Simpson reminded us earlier, that party is, through its policies, whether they are on infrastructure or housing or in the form of the ruinous deposit return scheme, delivering measures that are actively hampering the growth of the economy. Who knows? Perhaps that is a deliberate policy on the part of the Greens to damage the economy, because they do not believe in economic growth.

Another SNP leadership candidate, Ash Regan, seems to get that. She has attacked the Greens' malign influence on the SNP, and has said:

"We have actually got ourselves into some slightly murky territory at times, and we certainly are not reflecting the views that the public have".

All three SNP leadership candidates—including Mr Yousaf, who has now joined us and is sitting on the front bench—have now attacked the disastrous deposit return scheme. In principle, the policy is a great idea and everyone should sign up to it, but in practice it has been delivered so disastrously that it has become emblematic of this Government's failure on the economy.

All that is having an effect on business. I was talking recently to people in the tourism and hospitality sector. They have a long list of policy failures that they believe are holding back their ability to grow their businesses. The deposit return scheme is at the top of the list, but they also highlight the proposed restrictions on promotion of alcohol, which will have an impact; the short-term let regulations, which are overly bureaucratic and are driving people out of the market; and business rates for the retail, hospitality and leisure sector, which are much higher than is the case south of the border, where such businesses have been given 75 per cent rates relief for another year. All those matters are under the Scottish

Government's control, and all of them can be dealt with by the next First Minister.

Earlier in the debate, my colleague Liz Smith referred to the asks that are being made of the Government by the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, and she made the very fair point that all of them will require economic growth to underpin them. It is only by growing the economy and creating more wealth that we are able to address child poverty, effectively pursue net zero and improve education standards. In that respect, I agree with much of what Alex Rowley just said about getting the basics right.

It would not be a Scottish Government debate or motion without a mention of independence. It is mentioned in Mr Swinney's motion—he did not say much about it in his opening speech, but I am sure that he will refer to it in his closing remarks, so I will get my retaliation in first.

It seems that the Scottish Government has not read the latest economic research that Scottish Business UK published just last month on the economic cost of independence—

**John Swinney:** Oh!

**Murdo Fraser:** Before members on the front bench scoff at that, as they do, I ask them this: who wrote that research? It was written by the Scottish Government's favourite economist, Richard Marsh. He was previously at the Fraser of Allander Institute and was contracted to produce research on behalf of the First Minister's sustainable growth commission, and he was a member of two Scottish Government expert groups. He is hardly a unionist plant.

What did he find? His report found that the impact of a new currency for Scotland, fiscal consolidation to reduce the gap between Government earnings and expenditure and the impact on trade of an independent Scotland disrupting trading arrangements with rest of the UK—our biggest market—would come at a cumulative cost, in terms of output, of £29 billion every year. Gross value added would be down by £16.3 billion, and wages would be down by £9.9 billion. The loss in jobs would be 253,000 full-time equivalent jobs, or nearly 11 per cent, while the impact on GVA would be equivalent to nearly 10 per cent of Scotland's economy.

The report paints a devastating picture of what would happen to the Scottish economy in the event of independence, and it was not produced by the Conservatives or by somebody who is unknown to the Scottish Government; rather, an economist whom the Scottish Government itself actually employs produced that research. That is the policy that the current finance secretary, the stand-in finance secretary and every other contender for the SNP leadership have all put front

and centre of their policy platform. If they had their way, the Scottish economy would be devastated.

In closing, I join others in commending John Swinney on his contribution to Parliament and Government over many years. However, next week will bring us a new Government and a new First Minister—and it may well bring us a new finance secretary. Will it bring us a new approach to the economy? That remains to be seen, but based on the evidence to date, it is badly needed.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call John Swinney to wind up the debate.

17:20

**John Swinney:** At the outset of the debate, Daniel Johnson posed the question about how we define the wellbeing economy, and we have had some important contributions to that discussion. Formidable among those, were the contributions of Fiona Hyslop and Maggie Chapman. Fiona Hyslop went through some of the arguments around the fact that, over a long period—she referred back to my first role in government as Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth—there was an understanding and acceptance that growth had to be developed in a fashion that supported other important considerations in our society and that it could not be growth for the sake of growth.

That was very much the argument that Maggie Chapman advanced substantially in the debate. She made the point that we choose to plan for wellbeing as we plan for growth. I think that that is a fair characterisation of her speech.

When we contrast the speeches of Fiona Hyslop and Maggie Chapman on the question of the development of the wellbeing economy with the vacuous contributions of Stephen Kerr and Graham Simpson, we see the problem that we have in this Parliament—the problem that Mr Rowley alighted on—with the nature and quality of debate at times.

The speeches by Fiona Hyslop and Maggie Chapman were substantial contributions and the speeches of Stephen Kerr and Graham Simpson were insulting contributions of bile from the Conservative Party, and they should be called out.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** Can I—  
[Inaudible.]

**The Presiding Officer:** Can we have Ms Boyack's microphone on, please?

**Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** You can have my microphone, if you want.

**Sarah Boyack:** I will just pretend that I am Foyso Choudhury.

In the run-up to the 2021 elections, more than 100 organisations lobbied us to deliver legislation on wellbeing and sustainable development so that we can get the joined-up decision making that we have been hearing about this afternoon. Therefore, as the Deputy First Minister leaves his current post, will he be tempted to commit to my member's bill on wellbeing and sustainable development, so that we can not only take this debate further but put it into legislation and get the transformation that our future generations need?

**John Swinney:** Sarah Boyack's proposed member's bill raises important and substantial issues that are very much the consideration of the Government in relation to how we take forward the wellbeing economy agenda. Given the length of her experience, Sarah Boyack will understand that I can commit to absolutely nothing this afternoon. However, I am sure that there will be a willing audience on the Government benches for those points in due course.

John Mason, in his usual forensic style, summed up the contribution of the Conservative Party to this debate, because what its amendment does is remove the following concepts from the Government's motion: "socially just", "net zero", "fair work", "community ownership", "environmental care" and "human rights". That sums up what the Conservative Party has to offer us.

A number of very kind things have been said by members and, as has been acknowledged, this is likely to be my final speech to Parliament as a minister in the Scottish Government, unless an urgent question is selected for tomorrow. I will simply try to lean on the Presiding Officer to ensure that that is not the case.

I am grateful to Liz Smith, Willie Rennie, Daniel Johnson, Fiona Hyslop, Emma Roddick and others for their kind remarks. I am very glad that my strategy for handling radio broadcasts has been properly interpreted by Willie Rennie as having the purpose of ensuring that nobody is any the wiser about any of the answers in these difficult circumstances.

I would like to make some remarks in closing the debate and closing the defining chapter of my professional life. I told the First Minister some months ago that I intended to step down at the end of the period in which I had temporarily returned to the finance and economy remit. I fear that I may have prompted the First Minister to do some reflection of her own at the same time.

I was struck by the comments of one commentator about my decision. He said that it was often best to have people asking, "Why are you resigning?" rather than, "Why are you staying?" After 16 years in office, I have to say that

I was rather surprised, from time to time, that more people were not asking why I was still here. The absence of such comments may tell us all something, but being reminded that I appeared in Emma Roddick's school class in Inverness in 2014 is perhaps an indication that it is time to move on.

As a 15-year-old in 1979 I joined a party that had terrible electoral prospects, so my long ministerial career has been something of a surprise. There may be some hope for some in that observation at this moment.

Over my period in office, I have exercised responsibilities across finance, the economy, the constitution, education and skills, Covid recovery, and a multitude of subjects as Deputy First Minister. Of course, I have not achieved all that I would have wanted in my ministerial life. I would have loved, Mr Fraser, to have achieved independence for Scotland, but I am confident that those who follow me will do just that.

In the spirit and substance of this debate, all my work has been focused on enhancing the wellbeing of the people of Scotland. Among the many measures that I believe have helped to do that, the concordat with local government, the expansion of early learning and childcare, the renewal of the school estate, the four harms framework for Covid recovery, a fiscal framework that protected our funding, and the budgets that prioritised investment in our public services all rank as significant moments.

But, for me, the policy intervention with which I have been most closely associated and which has had the biggest impact on the wellbeing of some, and possibly all, in our society has been confronting our country's historical failure to protect children from abuse. The establishment of the Scottish child abuse inquiry, the passage of legislation for a scheme of redress, and the successful operation of that scheme are all now assisting some of those in our society who have been most damaged by their betrayal by others to contemplate recovery.

Those reforms came about only because of a fair-minded and non-tribal spirit in this Parliament. Without wishing to destroy his career, I say that Jamie Greene epitomised that for me on the issue of redress. I have also experienced it on other issues on other occasions. Alex Rowley and Willie Rennie can often get the greatest degree of reasonableness out of me. I have experienced it unreservedly in the partnership that we have constructed and I have nurtured with the Scottish Greens. I say gently to Parliament that there is not nearly enough of that in the Scottish Parliament today, and that I think that our discourse would be the better for it. I agree very much with Alex Rowley on that point.

I know that this will be vigorously disputed by the Opposition—Graham Simpson will probably be at the front of the queue in disputing what I am about to say—but not everything in Scotland today is awful. Yes, there are many challenges—there always will be—but there are also many wonderful things happening. As a tip from an old hand, the Opposition may find that they prosper by being just a bit more positive about Scotland and the work of her Government.

Yes, my ministerial career has been a bit of a surprise to me, but it has also been the greatest privilege of my professional life. I am grateful to the First Minister for giving me the honour of serving as Deputy First Minister, to the people of Scotland for their kindness and to Parliament for holding me to account.

I have done my best. It is now for others to fill this space. [*Applause.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes the debate on transition to a wellbeing economy.

## Business Motions

17:29

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):**

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-08322, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme. I invite George Adam to move the motion.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 28 March 2023

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Selection of First Minister

*followed by* Committee Announcements

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 29 March 2023

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:  
Covid Recovery and Parliamentary  
Business;  
Finance and Economy;  
Net Zero, Energy and Transport

*followed by* Members' Business

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

Thursday 30 March 2023

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body  
Questions

*followed by* Appointment of Scottish Ministers and  
Junior Scottish Ministers

*followed by* Business Motions

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 18 April 2023

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Committee Announcements  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 19 April 2023

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

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

*followed by* Scottish Government Business

*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 20 April 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 27 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]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-08323, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a stage 1 timetable. I invite George Adam to move the motion.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Trusts and Succession (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 6 October 2023.—[George Adam]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:30

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):** The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions. I invite George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S6M-08324 to S6M-08327, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Alcoholic Beverages, Fruit and Vegetables (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2023 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security (Up-rating) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security Up-rating (Scotland) Order 2023 [draft] be approved.—[George Adam]

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

## Decision Time

17:30

**The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):**

There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Liz Smith is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Daniel Johnson will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-08305.2, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S6M-08305, in the name of John Swinney, on the transition to a wellbeing economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division. There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:30

*Meeting suspended.*

17:32

*On resuming—*

**The Presiding Officer:** We move to the division on amendment S6M-08305.2, in the name of Liz Smith. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Liz Smith is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Daniel Johnson will fall. Members should cast their votes now.

The vote is closed.

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I lost my connection, so I was not able to vote. I would have voted no.

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

### For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)

Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)  
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)  
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)  
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)  
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)  
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-08305.2, in the name of Liz Smith, is: For 30, Against 88, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S6M-08305.1, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-08305, in the name of John Swinney, on transition to a wellbeing economy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

The vote is closed.

**Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app would not connect. I would have voted no.

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

**Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My connection dropped. I would have voted no.

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

## For

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

## Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)  
 Allan, 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)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 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)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 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)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on amendment S6M-08305.1, in the name of Daniel Johnson, is: For 24, Against 94, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S6M-08305, in the name of John Swinney, on transition to a wellbeing economy, 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)  
 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)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)  
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)  
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)  
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)  
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

**Against**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)  
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)  
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)  
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 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)  
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)  
 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)  
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)  
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 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)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division on motion S6M-08305, in the name of John Swinney, on transition to a wellbeing economy, is: For 64, Against 54, Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament recognises Scotland's international leadership in the transition to a wellbeing economy, by not only growing but transforming the economy to one that serves current and future generations, and delivers a prosperous, socially-just Scotland within safe environmental limits, where everyone can flourish; notes that this remains a defining mission for the Scottish Government, including through its leadership in forming the

Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) group and delivery of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation; agrees that the delivery of a wellbeing economy requires a worker- and community-led just transition to a net-zero, nature-positive economy that has equality, human rights and fair work at its heart, enabling Scotland to tackle child poverty, empower communities, build community wealth and create a socially-just society; notes the publication of the Wellbeing Economy Monitor, which tracks broader outcomes beyond GDP on issues such as health, equality, fair work and the environment, and the Wellbeing Economy Toolkit, which supports place-based economic development; commends the work of the Cross-party Group on Wellbeing Economy and partners across Scotland, and recognises that independence would allow Scotland to make greater progress, but, until then, calls for the devolution of energy and additional economic powers to the Scottish Parliament to support Scotland's transition to a wellbeing economy.

**The Presiding Officer:** I propose to ask a single question on four Parliamentary Bureau motions, if no member objects.

The final question is, that motions S6M-08324 to S6M-08327, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

*Motions agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Alcoholic Beverages, Fruit and Vegetables (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2023 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security (Up-rating) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Social Security Up-rating (Scotland) Order 2023 [draft] be approved.

**The Presiding Officer:** That concludes decision time.

## BBC in Scotland (100 Years)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-07482, in the name of Jenni Minto, on 100 years of the BBC in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament celebrates 100 years of public service broadcasting with the centenary of the BBC in Scotland in 2023; recognises what it sees as the vital contribution of the BBC to the creative economy of the nation; understands that, from the first live radio transmission in Glasgow on the evening of 6 March 1923, the BBC in Scotland has grown from its early days in radio to include the provision of extensive educational resources, Gaelic language content, current affairs, comedy, music and entertainment, reflecting the breadth and depth of Scotland's culture on TV, radio and online; further understands that the BBC in Scotland directly employs over 1,200 people across 14 bases from Shetland to Dumfries, and supports many more roles via commissions to the independent production sector; notes what it considers the value of the BBC and public service broadcasting in Scotland, and the contribution that it has made, and continues to make, to the Scottish creative sector, and wishes the BBC a successful start to its second century of educating, entertaining and informing the nation.

17:41

**Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP):** I thank all my colleagues who supported the motion celebrating BBC Scotland's 100th anniversary of public service broadcasting. I joined BBC Scotland 30 years ago, almost to the day, and in the 18 years that I worked there, I had the privilege of working with so many talented people in front of and behind the camera and microphone. As an accountant, I could not believe my luck. Here I was, supporting some of the most creative and talented people in Scotland and helping them to portray the stories, the people, the great times and the bad times of our country, along with the big events, whether they be cultural, political or tragic, the personal triumphs and losses, and everyday life—and all that was done in Gaelic and in English, for children, for older folk, and for everyone.

I will share some of my memories of being at BBC Scotland that show the value of public service broadcasting in Scotland and the contribution that it has made and continues to make to the Scottish creative sector.

The BBC Scottish symphony orchestra toured China with Nicola Benedetti in 2008. I had the privilege of being part of the management team—my role included ironing Nicola Benedetti's dress at one point. The second concert was in Shanghai. Our flight from Beijing was delayed, the stage was smaller than expected and mobile phones went off

during the entire performance. The members of the orchestra took it all in their stride and performed faultlessly. As an encore, they played "Purple Bamboo", a Chinese folk tune, followed by a suite of Scottish reels and jigs. The audience were on their feet, cheering, clapping and smiling. We had 90 people showcasing Scottish talent across the world.

The creation of BBC Alba to preserve and encourage the Gaelic language is one of the cherries on the top of BBC Scotland's cake. A channel creating drama, comedy, current affairs, factual children's output, and a daily news programme, all with a tiny budget, is exactly what public service broadcasting is about. As a partnership between BBC Scotland and MG Alba and funded by the Scottish Government and the licence fee, with programming made by the BBC Scotland's Gaelic department and independent production companies, it is a true collaboration.

"Gruth is Uachdar" or "Crowdie and Cream" was dramatised by the Gaelic department in 2002 and I spent one week on a very sunny Harris when it was being filmed. It was a joy to see the true life story of Findlay J McDonald, from growing up on Harris in the 1930s until he left the island after the second world war, come alive. It was described by *The Herald* as

"one of the most stunning, imaginative, and culturally significant experiences of the year".

It was BBC Scotland at its best.

BBC Scotland also holds the most amazing archive of radio and television archives. They are living archives that are constantly being added to with footage being used in other output. On 25 January 2009, we marked 250 years since Scotland's national bard Rabbie Burns was born. Radio Scotland, along with the online department, created a website that celebrates his life's work in poetry and song, including recordings of 66 of Scotland's biggest names performing 716 pieces of his work. I return to that archive regularly, especially when preparing for Burns suppers. It illustrates the importance of archives and high production values, and the wealth of Scottish culture that BBC Scotland curates.

As we celebrate the centenary of BBC Scotland, it is also important that we recognise the role that it plays economically as well as culturally. The BBC's gross operating expenditure on TV production in Scotland in 2019 represented 74.8 per cent of all public sector broadcasting on television in Scotland and for every £1 of direct economic output generated by the BBC, £2.63 was generated in the economy as a whole—members can see that I cannot forget my accountancy background. There are 1,200 BBC staff in Scotland across 14 centres from Lerwick to

Dumfries and Stornoway to Selkirk. BBC Scotland also works with around 60 independent production companies across TV, radio and online.

There is also partnership working with organisations such as Screen Scotland, Creative Scotland, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. Those partnerships support apprentices learning the skills across production alongside on-screen or on-air talent.

Launched four years ago, the BBC Scotland channel has quickly become the highest reach digital channel in Scotland. It has focused exclusively on Scottish programming, with at least 90 per cent of its output being Scottish in origin. I thought that I would take a quick look at tonight's schedule.

It starts with "Getting Hitched Asian Style", which follows Saffron Events as it organises an east-meets-west wedding. Then there is "The Nine", which covers national and international headlines from a Scottish perspective. "Scotland's Greatest Escape" is about finding the best adventure holiday in Scotland, and then programming closes with Scotland's best-loved treasure, "Rab C. Nesbitt". That illustrates how the new channel is ensuring that BBC Scotland continues to educate, entertain and inform.

However, there are also challenges and they are very real. The BBC has been required to take on more obligations with less income, there is increasing competition for audiences and high inflation presents further challenges. The BBC also continues to face the challenge of getting the balance right. A fine line marks the centre of what is political balance and this line does not lie on the same longitude in London as it does in Scotland.

The programme, "Tuned In: 100 Years of Scottish Broadcasting", concluded by suggesting that the new BBC Scotland channel gives Scotland new hope, allows the exploration of Scotland beyond the central belt and reflects the issues facing our changing nation.

An element of and the first programme of David Attenborough's "Wild Isles" series was recorded on Islay—I always get Argyll and Bute in. The dramatic, if emotional, footage of a white-tailed eagle grabbing a barnacle goose was filmed by award-winning Argyll and Bute-based wildlife cameraman John Aitchison. Although "Wild Isles" is not a BBC Scotland production, it is that level of skill and creativity that emphasises the need for strong public service broadcasting. I therefore wish BBC Scotland a successful start to its second century and, in a changing world, I hope that it puts Scotland, its people and their stories at the centre of its output.

17:48

**Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con):** I congratulate Jenny Minto on her speech and on securing support for the motion. The BBC is indeed a precious British institution that sets itself high standards. It often meets those standards, but not always, and that is to be expected given that the BBC's output is so broad and varied, including the output of BBC Scotland.

The BBC is a gift that we share with the whole world, and the brand is sound: it stands for something. All over the world, people listen to and watch BBC broadcasts, including those originating in Scotland. People put a tremendous amount of trust in what the BBC says. They listen to podcasts of BBC productions on global streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. The BBC is a British institution but it is also a global institution, and it promotes our Britishness and our Scottishness, not in an in-your-face way, but in a reassuring and steady way.

The BBC provides us with a window on the world, and also provides a window on Britain for the rest of the world—with all of our diversity and richness of tradition. The images of Scotland as our late queen was brought from Balmoral to Hollywood last September were broadcast all over the world, and they told their own story of Scotland's beauty, her people's generosity and Queen Elizabeth's love of Scotland.

I absolutely believe in the concept of public sector broadcasting. I believe that the BBC has played, does play and will continue to play a central role in the life of our nation. However, I regularly question its leadership and their priorities. I cannot believe that the BBC bosses really think it is a bright idea to abolish the BBC Singers, all to save £1.5 million. I would say, "Come on, BBC. It's not good enough." Then, there was all that fuss about Gary Lineker's tweets. Who cares about what Gary Lineker thinks? He is paid rather handsomely—roughly 15 times the salary of the cabinet secretary—to talk about football on the telly. That is it.

Regarding the business model, I understand that it might be tempting for those in the hierarchy to resist change—"If ain't broke, why fix it?", as the saying goes. However, that is complacent thinking. As the world and society change, the BBC must change with them. Yes, it can be guided by the past, but we should not be entrenched in the past. The idea of a tax on TV viewing seems to me to be something that does not quite belong in the 21st century and I do not believe that it will endure. Therefore, alternative funding models need to be explored. I am open to consideration of all the alternatives, with all the flexibilities that could come with those changes, including the BBC

leveraging its global brand to secure its income and pre-eminence.

The BBC must be bold in embracing not only the future, but the present. Coming, therefore, to my main item—the big ticket, as it were—I really do not feel that BBC Scotland, as a public service broadcaster, is giving adequate coverage to the proceedings of this Parliament. I have said that before and I will say it again, because I genuinely believe it. Why does the BBC Scotland channel not broadcast the proceedings of this chamber live and uninterrupted? People should not have to navigate the internet to find the live broadcast of Scotland's Parliament; they should just be able to switch on their telly. Between midnight and 7 pm, BBC Scotland broadcasts a message reading "This is BBC Scotland". Why can BBC Scotland not take the live feed from the Parliament and distribute it as a public service? That would let more people engage with their Parliament; it would make it easier for people to tune in. That, I believe, is the responsibility of a national broadcaster or public service broadcaster, and I do not understand why that does not happen.

Over its 100 years in Scotland, the BBC has shown that it can and does produce high-quality programmes for TV, radio and podcasts. I want the BBC to prosper. I want its influence across the planet to be enhanced over the next 100 years, promoting the values of decency, democracy and individual liberty, and to have nation truly speak peace unto nation.

17:52

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** First, I thank Jenni Minto for her speech and for securing this fantastic debate. The fact that the BBC in Scotland is 100 years old is definitely worth celebrating. It is one of our most important institutions, it is part of who we are, it has kept us informed and entertained, and it has kept so many cultural artists and workers in employment over the years.

Is also really important to us, as a democracy. Over the years I have had occasional criticisms of the BBC's coverage of politics in here, but that is to be expected. I suspect that, if we went round the whole chamber, we would all be able to cite an example of the coverage of something that we did not like. It is important, however, that our news is impartial and that it has to meet high standards.

We should be celebrating the BBC journalists who bring us that news, reflecting on those who live in challenging places across the world and providing us with brave, accurate coverage that we otherwise would not see. Where there is conflict or humanitarian disaster, BBC journalists do not just give us news; they give a voice to those who have been impacted. The BBC also

provides news to other countries across the world, and in different languages. Again, the principle of impartiality is central to that, and I am personally very proud that we, as licence payers, contribute to the work of the World Service.

The BBC is facing challenges. There has rightly been huge coverage over the past few weeks about the need to ensure political fairness and impartiality, not just in coverage but in the management of the BBC. We must not just assume that the BBC will always be there; we need to ensure that there is adequate funding right across the nations and regions and across all the precious cultural choices that we all want to access, ensuring that the BBC is fit for purpose in a massively changing world. During the pandemic, it kept us informed and entertained, and it kept many people who were isolated—particularly our older population—connected. We must never forget that.

I take Stephen Kerr's point. It is clear that there are challenges. There is also the point about the decision to close the BBC Singers, with the loss of 20 full-time-equivalent musicians and administrators' jobs.

Last month, the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee had an evidence session in which concerns were raised about the rescheduling of classical, jazz and traditional Scottish music, the impact of the digital-first agenda, how we need to continue to support young and emerging talents, and the vital role of BBC Scotland in delivering that.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the BBC in Scotland, it is vital that we ensure that the investment that is needed is provided and the pipeline of investment is maintained so that the BBC in Scotland can continue to create and commission the fantastic range of programmes that are so important to us.

One area in which we need to see that investment is support for Gaelic broadcasting. I was really glad that Jenni Minto mentioned that in her speech. Gaelic is a national asset, but we need to see increased funding to continue the programmes that are needed and in order to enable Gaelic to secure its place in the digital world. With funding for Gaelic media remaining almost static since the inception of BBC Alba in 2008, it is clear that it is being held back from delivering for its audiences and wider communities. We know from research that every £1 spent on MG Alba generates a £1.34 return and that that money supports 160 jobs in the Western Isles and Skye. Those are really important jobs.

We are in a world of change, and we need to be able to ensure that everybody continues to be able

to access the BBC, whatever their generation and whether that using their TV or radio or through BBC Sounds or the iPlayer. That means that continued investment is needed. It is therefore worrying that the licence fee is potentially going. The licence fee is £159, or 43p a day. That is incredible value, and it supports jobs throughout Scotland. However, the National Audit Office has warned that if the United Kingdom Government imposes funding cuts, the BBC could be forced to replace high-end drama and natural history programmes, as Jenni Minto suggested.

In Edinburgh, the BBC is absolutely key in supporting our international festival, our book festival and the fringe. It keeps Scotland on the world stage. That is something that is worth defending and something to be proud of. If anyone has not seen “The Women Who Changed Modern Scotland” yet, they should take a look at it on the BBC iPlayer. It is fantastic. The BBC needs money. Let us work together to support the BBC going forward.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call James Dornan, who is joining us remotely.

17:57

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** I thank Jenni Minto for bringing to the chamber this debate recognising 100 years of the BBC in Scotland.

From that first broadcast “Hey, Johnnie Cope” on the bagpipes—ironically, a song that commemorates an uprising against the establishment—to today being very much part of the establishment, the BBC has brought much to Scotland. I congratulate it on that. Forgive me if I speak of the BBC as a whole, as many of its UK programmes brought enjoyment and insight to Scotland, too.

I am easily the oldest speaker in this debate, so I reckon that I have seen more BBC programmes than anybody else speaking in it. I was brought up with the BBC. Every important news item and almost all my children’s programmes came from that source, from “Andy Pandy” to “Muffin the Mule” and adventure programmes such as “The Adventures of Robin Hood”, “The Adventures of William Tell” and “Ivanhoe”. I can still remember the names of the stars to this day: Richard Greene, Conrad Phillips and Roger Moore—members might be wondering whatever had happened to him. There have been classic programmes such as “This Man Craig”, “The Tales of Para Handy”, “Auf Wiedersehen, Pet”, “House of Cards” and “I, Claudius” and more recent fantastic productions such as “Killing Eve”, “Happy Valley”, “Luther” and “Peaky Blinders”. There are also, of course, all the great period dramas that

the BBC has rightly been feted for. I have not mentioned the wonderful nature programmes and documentaries that it has done and continues to do, particularly with the incomparable David Attenborough, and I would hate to forget to mention the hugely entertaining, informative and magnificent Fyfe Robertson from back in the day. Members should look him up on Google.

My most abiding memory of the BBC as I grew up is as a conduit for world events, first through our big radio, then through television, and later through colour TV. My first memory of that is Yuri Gagarin becoming the first man in space. The family sat round the radio at that time. After that, for every rocket launch, we would sit by the outlet—the radio or TV—and listen or watch with awe as we were shot to the stars.

The death of Pope John XXIII was a massive blow for Catholic families in Scotland, as was the death of JFK shortly after. All of that news was brought to us by the Beeb. However, for me, the strength of the BBC as I grew older was its investigative reporting. Time after time, “Panorama” uncovered secrets that those in power wished to hide. Strong plays with social issues at the forefront were a feature, with social issues being addressed through the medium of entertainment for the first time. It was priceless, and I will never forget the grounding that the Beeb, and my mum—who used to listen and watch those programmes alongside me, chuntering all the time and giving me her political views—gave me.

That happened here in Scotland. That is why it is with a great deal of genuine sorrow that I must comment on how far I feel that the Beeb has fallen: from the downgrading of socially contentious plays or shows to news output that, being generous, we can only accuse of falling over its feet not to be seen to upset the hierarchy of the day. That did not just start under the Johnson Government and continue through to today; there has been a long-standing practice to put pressure on the Beeb, which is still thought of as a neutral reporter by many, as Stephen Kerr quite rightly mentioned earlier on.

However, the appearance of collusion has never been so clear as it is now. The relationship between the Tory party today and the senior hierarchy is both insidious and politically and socially incestuous—same schools, universities, clubs and often political parties. Many of us in Scotland have not trusted the news output since the referendum in 2014, when many in the Beeb, including, I believe, someone at BBC Scotland, admitted to a duty to protect the union. When that happens, it goes from being a news outlet to a propaganda unit, and I truly long for the day when we can all trust the BBC news output as we did in the past. However, I do not see how that can

happen until the links between the BBC and the party of Government, whichever it is, are broken and are seen to be broken.

In the meantime, I will do what I have been doing for some time—I will keep watching the still-admirable drama and sport output, the occasional documentary programme and comedy, while taking the news with a pinch of salt until I can get it verified by another source. It is not something that I take any pleasure in, but I would be a fool not to do it.

Happy 100th birthday, BBC Scotland, and thank you.

18:02

**Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con):** I hope to speak completely spontaneously. I congratulate Jenni Minto on her motion and thank her for the words of congratulation that she has expressed to the BBC.

November 1963 was, of course, a month of international world significance. The first episode of “Doctor Who” was broadcast, and this four-year-old was, at that time, completely entranced by it, along with—to compete with Mr Dornan—“The Woodentops” and “Blue Peter”. Thereafter, I was absolutely smitten with the BBC, but I was furious the following week when Kennedy’s assassination meant that it repeated the first episode of “Doctor Who” rather than showing the next one, which featured the Daleks, which determined my childhood thereafter.

At that point, I embraced a ritual that I have never broken—every Tuesday since 1963, I have read the *Radio Times* when it has been published. I bought it just yesterday. It remains an almanac of everything that the BBC does—its complete range of television, radio, the World Service and local radio stations. It has been the cultural tapestry of my life, but we have to recognise that the world has changed.

In 2016, when the Parliament had the BBC in to discuss how many hours of programming were going to be filmed in Scotland, we did not realise that the world was changing underneath our feet with the introduction of streaming. If members look at this week’s *Radio Times*, they will see that the 10 pages that used to be devoted to film reviews have been axed in favour of 10 pages covering streaming services such as Apple, Disney, Now, BritBox, Paramount, Netflix and Amazon Prime.

It is not about the principle of the licence fee—I support the principle of the licence fee—but the fact of the matter is that an increasing number of people under 35 are not paying it. They are not subscribing any longer because they are happy to watch streaming services instead. Therefore, as a

funding model over the next 10 or 20 years, the licence fee will not be a reliable source of income for the BBC. If, as we expect, terrestrial, traditional broadcasting services are to be switched off and all broadcasting will be online, what is the funding model for that? With its brand recognition, the BBC could become one of the world’s most successful international streaming services and compete with every one of the services that I mentioned a moment ago.

However, that does not mean that there does not still need to be a role for public service broadcasting in that, and we must have an intelligent conversation about how, in due course, that will be funded. We want Gaelic television to be promoted but, if that was to be supported by a streaming service, frankly, the number of people watching would not be high enough to generate the income to fund a television channel. We want to know that there will be news reporting and that, having received Government funding to support it, the World Service will still have a role.

However, in an environment where the licence fee will be increasingly irrelevant to younger people—and that younger cohort, who use streaming services and get their media in different ways, will only grow—it is foolish simply to believe that the BBC can survive on a licence fee model alone.

If we look at the ratings for those programmes that I enjoyed, we see that in those days, 20 million people watched BBC programmes every week. I still look at the TV ratings, because I am an anorak for those things, and programmes on terrestrial television are now sometimes at the top of the top 10 with as few as 3.5 million viewers. People are getting their entertainment in different ways. Gone are the days when we would sit down simply to watch the schedule that one broadcaster had laid out for the night, and gone are the days when we would wait from one week to the next to see what would happen in a series. People want to watch the box set and binge on some shows, but stretch others out.

I congratulate the BBC, I am a fan of the BBC and I want the BBC to have a future, but we need to take some of the pejorative, partisan argument out of all of this, and sit down and discuss rationally how we ensure that the BBC is protected as an institution that can provide public service broadcasting on a sustainable funding model into the future. The licence fee might be part of the mix, but there will also have to be something beyond that, if we are to see the BBC prosper and survive.

18:07

**Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I join other members in thanking Jenni Minto for bringing to the chamber this important debate, to celebrate and congratulate BBC Scotland on its first century of broadcasting.

As Jackson Carlaw has alluded to, things have changed since BBC Scotland's first live radio transmission from Glasgow 100 years ago. People no longer have to tune in at a fixed time to hear the news or watch their favourite programme—we are able to watch or listen at a time of our choosing.

Members will not be surprised that I want to focus on the importance of BBC Scotland in the northern isles, particularly on our highly valued local radio stations, but I will speak more of BBC Radio Orkney and Radio Shetland later.

Before I do so, I will reflect a little on the 30-year post-second-world-war period, from the perspective of my late father. His war service included time in the far east as an Army film cameraman, and he came home to run the family-owned local newspaper. Along with his business partner, who was also the paper's news editor, he was approached by the BBC in Glasgow, at a time when its news service in Scotland was being developed through freelancers, and the BBC wanted news from Shetland. Rather than the written word that they were used to, they were to provide a different kind of reporting for the BBC, by sending telephone voice reports. They also had a link with BBC Aberdeen for the "Town and Country" magazine programme, which was aimed at audiences in Caithness, Orkney and Shetland. The arrival of television meant a new form of local journalism, so they were provided with a 16mm camera and they changed and adapted as technology developed. All in all, they reckoned that they sent around 1,000 contributions.

Shetland was the last area in Britain to get television, when the transmitter on Bressay was finally turned on in 1964, which apparently coincided with grand national day. A news crew from the "Tonight" programme was sent up from London. The powers that be clearly thought that that historic moment was too important to leave the coverage to the local stringers.

My father delighted in telling the tale of how the small ferry boat, laden with the London TV crew and an enormous amount of equipment, crossed from Lerwick harbour to Bressay. The team headed up the hill to the transmitter for the big switch-on—only to discover they had left the camera behind.

I turn now to our local BBC radio stations, which began 46 years ago. Each weekday, from Radio Orkney in the morning and Radio Shetland in the

evening, there is a half-hour programme broadcasting a mixture of local news and current affairs, updates on local events and the weather forecast, which is all important for the farming and fishing communities of our islands.

It is a space on air for our island news, events and shared culture, and our stations are well respected for their impartial coverage. Whether it is the livestock sales at the Orkney mart or fish landings at Lerwick, breaking news such as the scientific breakthrough and link to breast cancer in Orkney last week or major events, it will be on the radio. That includes events such as the intercounty games between Orkney and Shetland, which is an annual event with each island taking turns to host and they compete for sporting trophies. The teams at Radio Orkney and Radio Shetland do similarly in terms of reporting the action while honing their sports reporting skills.

Local radio is a lifeline, especially during power cuts or in extreme weather events, which might see ferries and flights cancelled or close the Churchill barriers. At the end of last year, Shetland was hit by both telecommunications and power cuts and those radio bulletins become important public service information.

Shetland has also featured in the popular television crime drama series of the same name along with wildlife films, most recently the amazing footage of orcas in the "Wild Isles" series narrated by Sir David Attenborough. That is proof that you can film and produce successful programmes in island areas and be well supported locally, as shown by the Shetland wildlife enthusiasts who helped the crew to spot orcas for filming. You can imagine, then, my disappointment at finding that the BBC iPlayer trailer for that series had completely missed Shetland off its graphic promoting the programme.

BBC Scotland has adapted across the century and I wish it and all its staff well for the future.

18:12

**Sharon Dowey (South Scotland) (Con):** I thank Jenni Minto for bringing the debate to the chamber.

Today, we mark a significant milestone in the history of broadcasting in Scotland: the centenary of the BBC's presence in our country. The BBC has been an integral part of Scottish life for the past century, providing news, entertainment and educational programming to millions of people across the country.

The BBC has grown from its humble beginnings as a radio station in Glasgow in 1923 to a multiplatform media organisation with a strong

presence in Scotland, with 14 bases including Dumfries and Selkirk in my South Scotland region.

Over the past century, the BBC has played an important role in shaping Scotland's cultural identity and in promoting Scottish culture and creativity on a global scale. Public broadcasting has always been an important part of Scottish life, providing objective news on current affairs and a platform for diverse voices to be heard. It has been at the forefront of that effort, providing a platform for Gaelic and Scots and working to ensure that Scottish culture and identity are represented on the national and international stage.

The BBC's contribution to the Scottish creative sector cannot be overstated. From comedy shows such as "Still Game" and "Two Doors Down" to dramas such as "Shetland" and "River City", the BBC has provided a platform for Scottish talent to flourish over the years. The presence of the BBC in Scotland has also helped in the development of a thriving independent production sector, which is one of the key drivers of the Scottish economy.

As we celebrate the BBC's centenary, we must acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. The media landscape is rapidly changing, and the BBC must adapt to maintain high-quality programming that reflects the needs and interests of the Scottish people. The challenges of technological changes and political pressures and the demands of the digital age make it increasingly difficult for a public broadcaster to maintain its unique position, but the BBC has proven its adaptability and resilience over the past century.

That success would not be possible without the people in the industry. Therefore, I will take time to thank the dedicated professionals who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the BBC remains an important part of Scottish life and culture, from the journalists who report the news to the writers, producers, cameramen, costume designers, cinematographers, sound designers, composers, editors, make-up artists and many more—including accountants—who create our favourite programmes. They have all made an invaluable contribution to the success of the BBC in Scotland.

The BBC's centenary in Scotland is a significant milestone that we should be proud to celebrate. The BBC has played an important role in Scottish life for the past century, and I am confident that it will continue to do so for many years to come.

18:15

**Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab):** I thank and congratulate Jenni Minto for bringing a celebration of 100 years of the BBC to the Scottish Parliament.

In November last year, alongside Jenni Minto, I was a co-sponsor of an event in the Parliament to mark the 90th anniversary of the BBC World Service. I am happy to speak again about the issue, but this time in a much more local sense. At that event, I spoke about the BBC as one of the most trusted broadcasters in the world. I hope that that will be reflected in the future of the BBC in Scotland.

The BBC is a national asset. Although it is not infallible, it is envied around the world for the quality of its products and the reliability of its journalism, and Scotland is privileged to have such a long-standing and professional service. The BBC serves a valuable role as a public broadcasting service in Scotland.

One of the standout features of the BBC in Scotland is its impartiality, and the ability of members of the public to tune in to BBC Scotland programming without political influence or coercion should remain one of its standout features.

That is why I was happy to hear of the BBC's reinstatement of Gary Lineker last week. "Match of the Day" was certainly not at its best without its valued presenters. However, I am still concerned about the BBC's decision not to broadcast a programme that is related to David Attenborough's new series "Wild Isles". I hope that, in the future, the BBC in Scotland continues to be a trusted voice that remains truly impartial and above political or economic pressures.

On a more positive note, the BBC in Scotland has done a great deal to showcase and promote Scotland's vibrant culture sector. I echo the words of the motion about the BBC's ability to truly express the "depth of Scotland's culture" across a range of educational and entertainment programmes. It has played and will continue to play a vital role in the creativity of this nation.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Scotland's culture sector has seen closures of well-respected and beloved cultural institutions—most recently, the Filmhouse here in Edinburgh—and the sector has suffered greatly as a result.

The BBC in Scotland showcases a wide range of Scotland's culture, including Gaelic language programming, Scottish films and television series and local news reporting, which supports the sector in its vital work. Continued support from the BBC in promoting Scotland's vast areas of culture will help to revive the sector after a difficult few years.

It is now more important than ever that Scotland's culture sector is showcased across this valuable broadcasting service, and I hope for the continued success of this national institution.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Jeremy Balfour, who is joining us remotely.

18:19

**Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** I, too, congratulate Jenni Minto on securing the debate. I give the Deputy Presiding Officer and members in the chamber my apologies; I had to return home due to a family issue, so I have to join you online.

Like other members, I was brought up with the BBC during my childhood. It is interesting to me that, with due respect to my colleagues who have already spoken, people of a certain generation reflect on the subject more than younger generations. As Jackson Carlaw said, the younger generation has moved on, and the BBC has to recognise that.

I was brought up with “Trumpton”, “Multi-Coloured Swap Shop”, “Blue Peter” and many more BBC programmes. Now, we can turn on the television and watch live sport every day, yet I remember the excitement of watching the Scottish cup and the FA cup live on television and of six nations rugby matches and cricket being brought to us by the BBC. The BBC still has a role today in all those areas.

As someone whose children are fairly young, I remember watching characters such as Mr Tumble and programmes such as “The Numtums”, which are fun and enjoyable but have an educational role. A school group that visited the Parliament this morning told me that the definition of being famous is to have appeared on “Newsround”. The BBC still plays an important role.

I will conclude by looking at the present and the future. As Stephen Kerr and other members have said, the dynamic of news and television is changing, which needs to be reflected in what the BBC produces and does. We need to see more diversity in the programmes that are made. I seek to promote disability in many areas of life, and I am pleased that Abby Cook will be taking over as the new “Blue Peter” presenter. She is immensely talented and has shown that someone can take part in sport and television even with a disability. I understand that the BBC is looking at making sure that people in minority groups are better represented, both behind the camera and in front of it. Those are important steps to make the BBC more fit for the 21st century.

Those of us who look back with nostalgia at the BBC, as well as the BBC itself, have to recognise that things are moving on and changing. Like other speakers, I hope that we can have a grown-up debate that looks at all the arguments about where the BBC is and, more importantly, where it should

end up. I look forward to that happening in the Parliament, as well as in civic society.

I wish the BBC in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom a very happy birthday. I wish it future success in whatever form that comes.

18:23

**The Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson):** I am delighted to close the debate and to join members in celebrating 100 years of the BBC in Scotland. I thank Jenni Minto for launching the motion and pay tribute to all contributions from all parts of the chamber.

As colleagues have mentioned, the BBC is central to our broadcasting and cultural landscape. It is right that we recognise its significance to Scotland’s audiences and communities. As a former BBC journalist, I know first hand the tremendous value that the BBC brings in delivering trustworthy news to people locally and globally. It is a source of considerable personal and professional pride that I reported for the BBC as its Vienna correspondent for a decade, getting my break, as it happens, via BBC Radio Scotland, which had me regularly on “Good Morning Scotland” reporting from the former Yugoslavia during the tragic war there in the early 1990s.

**Stephen Kerr:** I do not want to be divisive or partisan about this, but will the cabinet secretary agree that James Dornan’s comments about the quality of the news output of the BBC—BBC Scotland and the BBC in general—are not accurate?

**Angus Robertson:** I think that all public service broadcasters should be able to stand up to criticism. We all have different perspectives on the issue. I am sure that Mr Kerr will sometimes watch news broadcasts and be less happy about them, just as James Dornan will be less happy about certain things in certain news programmes. I do not want to spoil the consensus that there is across the chamber today. No doubt, we will have further opportunities to debate the issues in that vein but, in today’s debate—which, incidentally, will be being watched by a lot of people in BBC Scotland—it is important to protect the common ground that we have all outlined, so that is where I will remain.

As the cabinet secretary for culture, I put on the record the fact that I have a strong interest in how the BBC delivers for our diverse communities and how it contributes to our creative economy.

In the past 100 years, the BBC in Scotland has grown from humble beginnings. It first aired, in 1923, from an attic in Glasgow. A lot has changed since, with the BBC in Scotland becoming a

powerhouse that sits at the heart of our cultural life, supporting education, innovation and skills development, as well as providing impartial news and information. Through 10 decades of programming in Scotland, the BBC's range of content has grown enormously. Audiences can now be informed, educated and entertained by the BBC Scotland channel, Radio Scotland, Radio nan Gàidheal and BBC Alba as well as the UK-wide and global offerings on TV, radio and digital platforms.

**Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP):** The cabinet secretary's mention of Radio Scotland reminds me that, in 2003—I know that that was only two decades ago—Radio Scotland approved 100 Scots words that presenters could feel comfortable using, including words such as puckle, dreich and crabbit. Rob Gibson MSP was part of that initiative. I was just wondering whether the cabinet secretary thinks that it is worth looking at having a wee refresh of the Scots words that are used by presenters to see if they are still yaisin them.

**Angus Robertson:** I will definitely resist the temptation to say anything that would suggest that a Scottish Government cabinet secretary is telling the BBC in Scotland which words it should use. However, my colleague has made her case well about the role of the Scots language. A number of us have talked about the value of Gaelic, but it is good that we also reflect on the importance of Scots as a living part of our national life.

As I have just mentioned, a number of colleagues have talked about BBC Scotland's important role in the support and promotion of the Gaelic language across its television and radio service. For what it is worth, its first broadcast in Gaelic took place in 1923, from Aberdeen. MG Alba, in partnership with BBC Alba is helping to sustain our Gaelic-speaking communities while contributing to economic growth in the Highlands and Islands and to create innovation by delivering content that resonates with audiences.

More new and original English-language and Gaelic content is being made, with Scotland-based talent being developed by the BBC, including through its partnership working with our dedicated screen agency, Screen Scotland. Recent programmes, such as the tremendous Glasgow-based production "Mayflies" and the brilliant comedy drama "Guilt" are just a taste of the new BBC content that builds on the success of household favourites such as "River City" and "Shetland", which have entertained us for decades and provided employment and skills development for our screen workforce.

As has been said by members in the course of the debate, the BBC in Scotland provides skilled employment across radio and television. It directly

employs around 1,200 people here and supports many more jobs and opportunities within the wider creative sector. There are roles across the country, from Aberdeen to Kirkwall, Glasgow to Stornoway and Skye to Edinburgh, and we want the BBC to build on its successes over the past century and grow its investment in our creative workforce. Through its work with partners including Screen Scotland, the National Film and Television School, the Royal Conservatoire, MG Alba and others, the BBC in Scotland supports apprenticeships, learning, and skills and talent development across multiple disciplines.

Throughout 100 years of BBC service in Scotland, we have seen it make an incredible contribution to our broadcasting landscape, but we cannot take that for granted. We must recognise that, a century on, the media environment has changed significantly. Our broadcasters face new and evolving challenges and opportunities at a time when the principles behind public service broadcasting and the purposes of the BBC matter arguably more than ever.

Globally, the increasing variety of commercial content offers great opportunities for audiences and for economic growth, but it is clear from our discussion today that the future of media must continue to have our public service broadcasters at its heart. No other part of our rich media landscape plays quite the same unique role in representing our diverse communities and reflecting audiences back to themselves through trustworthy news and distinctive education.

So, in celebration of 100 years of the BBC in Scotland, we must recognise the challenges and continue to support our broadcasters as they go from strength to strength. That is particularly crucial given the global dangers that are posed by misinformation and disinformation.

**Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Angus Robertson:** Forgive me—I am looking at the clock and I see that I will have to conclude my speech, as I am getting to the end of my time.

The sustainability of diverse and reliable news content from authoritative sources such as the BBC is more vital than ever. In that context, we should all be alarmed by any threat to the stability of the BBC's future or to the stability of its funding.

Although I am relieved that last week's UK Government budget allocated a one-off grant of £20 million over two years to support the World Service, it is this Government's strong view that the BBC should be properly funded to ensure the long-term delivery of essential public services and continued investment in authentic content for Scottish audiences. We will continue to press for

improvements to ensure more investment in and representation for Scotland.

In conclusion, returning to the motion, I reiterate my strong support for the BBC in Scotland and recognise the important and incredible role that it has played in the creative economy, our cultural life and our nation over the past century. I thank members for their speeches and assure the chamber that the Scottish Government will continue to defend the principles of the BBC's public purposes and work to ensure the sustainability of this cherished public asset for years to come.

*Meeting closed at 18:31.*

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