



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Tuesday 20 June 2023

Session 6



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 20 June 2023

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Tetiana Balanova, community co-ordinator, Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain in Edinburgh.

Tetiana Balanova (Community Co-ordinator, Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain in Edinburgh): Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I want to tell you about a country that is fighting for its right to exist. Ukrainians are being killed, tortured and raped, and our cities and homes are being destroyed. Russia is trying to erase us as a nation. It has been trying to assimilate our language and culture for decades.

When Ukrainian territories came under the control of the Russian empire, the printing of books in Ukrainian was forbidden and it was ordered that all state documents were to be rewritten in Russian. The process of the so-called Russification of Ukraine began.

Over the past 400 years, the Ukrainian language has been banned 134 times. The Stalinist terror of the late 1920s and 1930s, when prominent linguists and scientists were sent to labour camps or shot, went down in history under the name of the “executed renaissance”. No language has ever experienced such terrible destruction and persecution as Ukrainian.

For all nations, language is a means of communication. However, for us, because of Russian state propaganda, it is a sign of nationalism and separatism, and the cause of conflicts and moral trauma.

In the 21st century, the struggle for the chance to speak Ukrainian remains. Russia’s military forces strike missiles at our schools and theatres. They believe that, if somebody can speak Russian, they are their property. People speaking the Russian language in Ukraine gives Russia a reason to constantly encroach on our territory. That is why we abandon everything related to Russia—especially its language.

With the beginning of the war, some words changed their meaning. Here, if you see a clear

sky, you will probably think about good weather; for Ukrainians, a clear sky is the all-clear signal. When you hear the word “arrival”, you will think about a plane landing; for Ukrainians, it means the coming of Russian missiles whose targets are civilians. The casual “How are you?” in Ukrainian—“Yak ty?”—has become a new way of saying, “I love you and I care about you.”

For all of us, speaking the Russian language in Ukraine ended with the attacks on Bucha, Mariupol and Kharkiv, and hundreds of other cities that have been similarly attacked. After hundreds of years of repression, speaking Ukrainian today is a conscious act of decolonisation.

Protect your mother language, speak it and teach it to your children, because language disappears—not because it is not taught by others but because it is not spoken by those who know it.

Ukraine was, Ukraine is, and Ukraine will be. Slava Ukraini!

Business Motion

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-09618, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on changes to the business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for—

(a) Tuesday 20 June 2023—

after

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Innovation Strategy

insert

followed by Motion of No Confidence

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.30 pm Decision Time

(b) Wednesday 21 June 2023—

delete

7.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

and insert

9.50 pm Decision Time—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

Topical Question Time

14:05

Water Shortages

1. **Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what work is being done to support local communities that have recently been affected by water shortages. (S6T-01462)

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition (Màiri McAllan): Water levels are lower than usual for the time of year. As little sustained rain is forecast, shortages could become more likely and widespread. However, I can confirm that the public water supply network is largely operating normally. Scottish Water can maintain supplies during prolonged dry periods thanks to continued investment in resilience measures, but I ask everyone to use water responsibly.

There are specific challenges in smaller supplies, particularly in rural areas, which we continue to monitor closely. Last week, prompt action from the Scottish Government permitted Scottish Water to secure and maintain water supplies for the Broadford community on Skye during an isolated incident.

The Scottish Government-funded emergency bottled water scheme has reopened to provide water to households that are affected by shortages. Any householder who is affected should contact their local authority. I have asked officials to do outreach, which they have done, to ask local authorities to proactively advertise that scheme.

Liam Kerr: The Scottish Environment Protection Agency reports that every part of Scotland finds itself with a water shortage and that “the situation is deteriorating fast”,

as the current dry spell may last into July. SEPA says that it is preparing to prevent farmers and other industrial customers from abstracting water in parts of the country.

When did SEPA first alert the Scottish Government to the possibility of water shortages this summer? Precisely what engagement did the Scottish Government have with SEPA before the 8 June report?

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Before the cabinet secretary replies, I ask members who are commenting from a sedentary position to cease doing so, as that is making it difficult to hear.

Màiri McAllan: The circumstances that Liam Kerr narrates are an early sign in Scotland of the manifestation of climate change, so I very much hope that he and his party will reconsider their apparent standing against everything that the Scottish Government tries to do on that.

On water scarcity monitoring, between the Scottish Government, Scottish Water—our public water company—and our independent regulator, SEPA, we have an exceptionally robust mechanism for monitoring scarcity and water levels across the country. SEPA proactively publishes the water scarcity position, just as it does the flooding position. I encourage Liam Kerr, on behalf of himself and—I presume—his constituents, to look for that information online.

I am happy to confirm to Liam Kerr that SEPA has a network of about 350 river gauges that record water levels and flows at 15-minute intervals 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The situation is being monitored closely. Through the tripartite of organisations, we will continue to ensure that Scotland is served with water.

Liam Kerr: SEPA warns people of what is going on. What will concern people most is that, in July last year, SEPA warned that water shortages would become more frequent and could seriously affect water supplies. In August last year, SEPA warned that the situation was getting worse and that “serious action” needed to be taken—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Mr Kerr, I ask you to take a seat. I ask Mr Swinney to refrain from commenting while members are putting questions.

Liam Kerr: In the same month—August—it was reported that Scottish Water was leaking 185 Olympic-sized swimming pools of water each day because of faulty infrastructure. Why has the Government ignored SEPA’s warnings and cut more than £8 million from Scottish Water’s budget since 2021?

Màiri McAllan: There is no part of the very important work that SEPA and Scottish Water do in this regard that the Scottish Government ignores—it is quite the opposite. We are in almost constant contact with SEPA. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands and I met colleagues from SEPA last Thursday. I met officials to discuss the matter on Friday. As I said, we keep each other closely up to date. The First Minister organised a Scottish Government resilience room meeting to put in place the Government’s resilience organisation. We have been assured that the mechanisms that are in place are robust and are working well to ensure that Scotland has water, including as evidenced by what happened on Skye at the weekend.

It is a matter of public record that last summer was the first time that SEPA’s abstraction alterations had to be put in place. For the benefit of Mr Kerr, I will repeat what I said: that is a manifestation of climate change in this country and he should reconsider his party’s very disappointing approach to virtually every policy that the Scottish Government introduces to try to tackle climate change.

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Scotland is already experiencing the effects of climate change, such as warmer summers and wetter winters. Those trends are expected not only to continue but to intensify. Will the cabinet secretary outline what steps the Scottish Government is taking to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change, such as water scarcity?

Màiri McAllan: Jackie Dunbar is right—as a nation, our social and economic prosperity increasingly relies on how well we mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts, which are already embedded. Our climate adaptation programme brings together 170 policies and programmes in order to prepare Scotland for the impacts of climate change that have already been built in.

On scarcity specifically, our approach is to build on the lessons learned from 2022—as I narrated in my response to Liam Kerr. SEPA is already planning a further update to the national scarcity water plan this autumn, to develop our national approach even further. In particular, we are looking for ways to support farmers, who are often the first affected when there is water scarcity and abstraction licences have to be considered.

Last week, I invited all MSPs to an update session that will take place this afternoon with Scottish Water, SEPA and the Met Office. I encourage all members, who I understand will be concerned for their constituents, to come to that session and ask questions.

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): Last June, the Scottish Government announced that it would invest in a pilot programme with Aberdeenshire Council to bring more properties on to mains water supplies. Around 50,000 properties are served by private supplies, often in remote and rural communities, which are more vulnerable to water shortages year on year. Will the cabinet secretary share the progress that has been made on the Aberdeenshire pilot? How many of those 50,000 has the pilot brought on to mains supply since last June?

Màiri McAllan: I am glad that Mercedes Villalba mentioned the issue of private water supplies. I am on a private water supply, so I am keenly

aware of how vulnerable private water supplies can be to changes in the water level, as many people across the country are currently experiencing. I say again to those people that bottled water is available from their local authority and they should seek it out.

The pilot work on connections to the public supply in Aberdeenshire that Mercedes Villalba mentioned is critical and on-going. A great amount of really important research is coming out of that work, including on the costs of connecting those who are not currently connected to the public supply network. On the details that she asked for, if she does not mind, rather than responding now, I will get the figures and update her accurately in writing.

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): Does the cabinet secretary believe that river basin management plans are fit for purpose? Would she consider the development and introduction of a water use hierarchy to allow transparency over the use of our precious resource?

Màiri McAllan: I have absolute confidence in the river basin management plans, just as I have confidence in Scotland's independent environment protection agency. If Maurice Golden wishes to cast doubt on that, he should raise the matter with me directly or with SEPA. As I have said, a great deal of work is going on in SEPA and Scottish Water to monitor the water levels for scarcity and flooding 24/7, 365 days a year. I encourage every MSP to sign up for the proactive alerts that are connected to that, and I ask Maurice Golden to consider signing himself up for those.

On the matter of hierarchy, when it comes to CAR—Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005—licences and abstraction potentially being stopped in the case of scarcity, questions have to be asked about how appropriate it is that certain practices continue abstracting water. That is exactly what the experts in SEPA are grappling with as we deal with increasing scarcity across the country.

Circularity Scotland (Financial Position)

2. **Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government, regarding any implications for its deposit return scheme, when it and its agencies were informed of Circularity Scotland's financial position, including the company's reported need to send staff home. (S6T-01459)

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): We have learned today that a process is under way to appoint administrators to Circularity Scotland Ltd, leaving its staff in an extremely difficult position. That is an unforgivable consequence of the United

Kingdom Government's 11th hour intervention, which undermined—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, members.

Lorna Slater: That intervention undermined our deposit return scheme, made progress impossible and is now resulting in those jobs being lost.

It is clear that this is a concerning time for staff at Circularity Scotland, and we have been in regular contact with it since the UK Government's decision. I wrote to Circularity Scotland to thank its staff for their hard work to get to a position where the DRS was ready to launch in Scotland, and to express our deep regret that we are in this position.

We continue to liaise with Circularity Scotland to consider how we may be able to support its staff, including providing partnership action for continuing employment—PACE—support, which is the Scottish Government's initiative for providing advice and guidance to people at risk of redundancy.

On when the Scottish Government knew that Circularity Scotland faced financial challenges, we warned the UK Government repeatedly that a failure to agree an exclusion to the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 would jeopardise the scheme. At 9.45 pm on Friday 26 May, having first spent the day briefing the media, the UK Government informed us that it would grant only a partial, temporary and highly conditional exclusion. It was clear then the UK Government had torpedoed Scotland's scheme.

The Presiding Officer: Minister, I have to ask you to conclude this response. We have a lot of interest in the topic.

Lorna Slater: Since then, CSL has been working tirelessly to identify a viable business model to take it forward, and it has kept us informed throughout.

Sarah Boyack: Minister, we know that approximately 60 staff are sitting at home and are unaware whether they will be paid, while their chief executive is advertising them on LinkedIn as "60 Brilliant People Available for Roles".

In her answer to written question S6W-18398, the minister said that CSL has been "a trusted partner". However, the minister told us, and we know from press releases, that Circularity Scotland said that the scheme could go ahead, so how should we view that now? Can the minister say that a company that acts like that and does not follow the regulations set by the Parliament to inform ministers and SEPA of material changes in circumstances is a partner that she and the Scottish Government is actually working with? How do we know what is going to happen next?

The minister claimed last week that she did not know, even though we were all reading about it in the newspapers.

The Presiding Officer: As I said, there is a lot of interest in this topic, so I would be grateful for concise questions and responses.

Lorna Slater: Circularity Scotland had confidence that the scheme could go ahead without glass. However, the matter that is pernicious and actually blocks the scheme is the unreasonable conditions that were placed at the same time that glass was removed. The member will recall that one of those conditions was that we matched the deposit level, which is a UK cap. The UK Government has not published its regulations or told us what that deposit level is. It is impossible for me to launch a deposit return scheme when I cannot even tell businesses what the level of that deposit might be, which is why we were not able to go forward.

Circularity Scotland will be appointing an administrator, and it will be for the administrator to decide how to move the matter forward.

Sarah Boyack: Under regulations agreed by this Parliament, a scheme administrator has to be able to subsist for a period of five years. If it cannot, it must inform ministers and SEPA of a change in circumstances, which could ultimately require the minister to withdraw approval. Does the minister have confidence that Circularity Scotland will be able to subsist for the entirety of the next five years, and what does "going into hibernation" mean?

Lorna Slater: As I have just told Parliament, Circularity Scotland is entering into administration. It is appointing an administrator. The conditions for the appointment of the scheme administrator were valid at the time that that was done. The situation has changed in the past couple of weeks, since the 26 May decision by the UK Government. We are adapting, and Circularity Scotland is reacting to the situation that has been inflicted on us by the UK Government, which has changed its mind. Up until January this year, the UK Government was saying in writing that it was for devolved Administrations to decide on their deposit return schemes. It changed its mind in May, at the last possible minute, and that is the situation that we are all now having to adapt to.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): The situation is deeply regrettable, but the staff who are now losing their jobs at CSL are not the only victims of the UK Government destroying Scotland's scheme. Circularity Scotland and its partner, Biffa, were also progressing a £7.7 million counting centre in Aberdeen and a similar facility in Motherwell. Can the minister say how many jobs and livelihoods have been destroyed by the

UK Government's decision to undermine Scotland's scheme?

Lorna Slater: Scotland's deposit return scheme would have created up to 500 new green jobs, including, as Kevin Stewart highlighted, in Aberdeen and Motherwell. We are in the very regrettable position that those new jobs are now at risk, with our DRS being unable to launch. The UK Government is clearly not interested in investment in Scotland, jobs in Scotland or respecting businesses in Scotland.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): The Scottish National Investment Bank invested £9 million of public money in Circularity Scotland. Is that money now gone?

Lorna Slater: The Scottish National Investment Bank is independent of Government, and ministers are not involved in the decision making at that bank. Its investments are a commercial matter between it and CSL, and are in confidence.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Scotland's deposit return scheme was getting ready to go live, create jobs and make our streets cleaner before it was recklessly blocked by the UK Government. When the minister met UK ministers to discuss their decision to impose unworkable conditions on our scheme, did they provide any reassurances that Scottish expertise and experience, a lot of which sits in Circularity Scotland, would be used to contribute to the development of a UK-wide scheme?

Lorna Slater: I met the Minister for Environmental Quality and Resilience, Rebecca Pow, last week to discuss the implications and next steps for Scotland's deposit return scheme, and I urged her to meet Circularity Scotland as soon as possible to discuss how its expertise and experience could be used to deliver DRS across the UK in 2025. I also warned that, by not using that experience and without industry support, CSL would face imminent demise. Unfortunately, UK Government ministers have not followed that up, and no meetings between CSL and the UK Government have taken place. That clearly shows that this catastrophic UK Government is simply unwilling to take responsibility for its decisions and that it is not interested in Scottish jobs or Scottish businesses.

Foysoil Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): At the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee meeting last week, the minister praised the expertise and experience of the approximately 60 staff who now have no idea whether they will be paid or have a job. Is the minister concerned about the impact that those job losses will have on the implementation of DRS?

Lorna Slater: I am, of course, very concerned about the impact of the job losses on the people

affected by them. However, it is telling that the producers, who fund Circularity Scotland, know that they will need to comply with a deposit return scheme down the line. We have said 2025 because that is what the UK Government says. However, producers clearly have no confidence that the UK Government is able to meet that 2025 deadline, so they have pulled their support. Delivering the deposit return scheme in 2025, which I absolutely hope we can do, is dependent on the UK Government passing its regulations, putting in place a scheme administrator, and doing all the work that we did in Scotland. Its fastest route to success would be to take on board the expertise that we have developed here, which includes the expertise at Circularity Scotland.

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): CSL faces going into needless administration, as a scheme could have launched next year if the Scottish Government had chosen to do that. Instead, the 60-plus staff are facing meaningless platitudes from the minister. *[Interruption.]*

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

Maurice Golden: What support will be provided to those 60-plus staff facing redundancy?

Lorna Slater: I am absolutely flabbergasted, Presiding Officer, at how the member can say that we can go ahead with the deposit return scheme when he cannot tell me what the Tories in Westminster would set the deposit to. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Members—thank you.

Lorna Slater: In addition, he can neither tell me what the fees to producers would be nor tell me what the return handling fees would be. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the minister.

Lorna Slater: If he cannot tell me those things, I cannot put together a viable business model for deposit return in Scotland. That is impossible.

As for the staff at CSL, it is my understanding that they have been paid for the work that they have done. We have offered support through PACE, which is the Scottish Government's initiative for providing advice and guidance to people at risk of redundancy.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): What an absolute disaster for those employees and for the country. We have two Governments that simply cannot work together. As a result, this Scottish Government's incompetence has real consequences.

With Circularity Scotland in administration now, will that inevitably mean that industry pays twice to implement a deposit return scheme?

Lorna Slater: I recognise the member's statement that this is a disaster for those staff. However, I do not recognise the representation of two Governments working in the same way. At every point, the Scottish Government followed the common frameworks. We provided the advice and we set out what we were going to do. The UK Government changed its mind at the last minute. Between January and May, it changed what it was going to do. It broke out of the common frameworks process. It has not been working in good faith. It made those decisions—it imposed them on us—knowing, because I told them that it would be the case, that they would have catastrophic effects on our scheme.

The member must not misrepresent what has happened here. We moved forward in good faith. We estimate that around £300 million of investment had been made and Scottish businesses were moving forwards. We had information technology systems, sorting centres and vehicles. The UK Government has not even got regulations.

This is not a case of two Governments not working together; it is a case of our working very hard and the UK Government torpedoing us.

Medication Assisted Treatment Standards

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a statement by Elena Whitham on medication assisted treatment standards implementation. The minister will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:28

The Minister for Drugs and Alcohol Policy (Elena Whitham): Every life lost to drugs is a tragedy, and we collectively feel the loss of the talent and potential of far too many of our people. I offer my condolences to everyone who has felt that loss and my unwavering commitment to continue the work to turn the tide on this public health emergency.

Families and people with real-life experience of drug and alcohol problems tell me that there must be a commitment to change at all levels from the front line to local leaders and from public services to national leaders. That is reflected in the report, "National benchmarking report on implementation of the medication assisted treatment (MAT) standards: Scotland 2022/23", which Public Health Scotland published this morning.

The report covers the year up to April 2023 and charts the significant progress that has been made across the country since the first benchmarking report was published in June 2022. I am heartened by the progress that the report shows. However, there is still much work to do to fully implement the standards by April 2025 and for them to be sustainable by April 2026.

From my previous work in homelessness, supporting many people dealing with substance use issues, as a Scottish Women's Aid worker and, indeed, as a councillor campaigning for change, I am fully aware that the targets that we have set for local areas to implement the MAT standards have always been ambitious, but the standards will save lives and make a long-term difference for people in treatment.

Today's report includes maps comparing progress with the position in April 2022. The national picture is clearly improving, and the maps allow us to chart progress area by area. Naturally, much attention will focus on the red-amber-green implementation tables, which show good progress on MAT standards 1 and 2. There has been a transformation in rapid access to opioid substitution therapy, with 18 of the 29 local areas having fully implemented MAT standard 1, compared to just one area in 2022. Likewise, MAT

standard 2, on choice, is now fully implemented in 27 of the 29 alcohol and drug partnership areas.

Overall, by April 2023, 66 per cent of MAT standards 1 to 5 had been fully implemented, compared to 17 per cent in 2022, and 88 per cent of MAT standards 6 to 10 had been partially implemented. I realise that we were aiming for 100 per cent implementation of MAT standards 1 to 5 and partial implementation of standards 6 to 10 for this report. That has not been achieved, and many will see that as not good enough. Although I absolutely agree on the need for urgency and pace around reducing harm and saving lives, I also know that, from the outset, many people did not believe that services could achieve what they now have achieved. It is better to aim high than not to attempt to make any significant change at all.

All ADP areas with remote and rural settings demonstrated innovation in terms of maximising the use of technology, subsidised travel and flexible models of care so that people could benefit from equitable care and treatment. I really thank those ADPs for thinking outside the box.

The report includes some case studies that reflect that change is already happening in many places. Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of speaking with a lot of groups, service providers and people accessing services, and I have visited drop-in centres providing MAT to see for myself improvements and change on the ground. I have seen and heard of the progress that is being made and the future plans for full and sustained implementation of the standards.

The report shows a dramatic increase in capacity and capability in ADPs for evidence collection, with almost all areas now collecting experiential feedback from people who have recently used services. However, putting in place reliable and sensitive systems for collecting that feedback is a major challenge. That will take some time to fully embed, but it is undoubtedly the most important measure for whether the MAT standards are in place. Strengthening the experiential feedback is one of the four key recommendations made in the report, along with recommendations on building sustainable numerical data systems, establishing systems for more direct support and further development of guidance for implementation and assessment.

The report also reflects on next steps for local and national partners to further improve the landscape to help services make necessary improvements. I expect everyone from every service to work collaboratively to deliver on that part of the on-going national mission. For the avoidance of any doubt, the Government remains committed to the continued funding of the mission over the course of this parliamentary session.

The report highlights the need for changes in healthcare models to support implementation of MAT in prisons. We will therefore be focused on establishing a more consistent approach to access and choice in justice settings; addressing data-sharing challenges; and sharing best practice on service models that will deliver better outcomes for people. A justice network for MAT implementation is already sharing experience across areas and identifying best practice models.

For the remainder of the national mission, we are also committed to focusing more on the care and support for people who have problems with benzodiazepines, stimulants and alcohol, rather than focusing only on opioid use. That is absolutely imperative.

We have already committed to all of that on-going work through the Scottish Government's cross-Government action plan, which we published in January 2023. It sets out how we are responding to the final recommendations made by the Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce and how the national mission is being taken forward through a whole-Government and whole-Scotland approach. It also includes detail on what we are doing to address the workforce issues that are raised in today's benchmarking report, and to tackle stigma.

MAT standards are about delivering faster and more responsive services, but they are also about changing hearts and minds, including tackling stigma and discrimination. Make no mistake, Presiding Officer, I am acutely aware of the damaging nature of stigma, which we must challenge wherever and whenever we see it.

ADPs and local partnerships are taking forward innovations to help address drug deaths. One that I know is of great interest to members is the potential use of safer drug consumption facilities. I confirm that the Government remains committed to the introduction of the Glasgow pilot, and I will inform Parliament immediately a view is reached by the Lord Advocate on the proposals from Glasgow city health and social care partnership and Police Scotland.

Although clear improvements have been made in response to the letter of direction that was issued to local services last year, we need to continue with formal oversight procedures and clear local accountability.

We will maintain the requirement for quarterly progress reports from local areas against their implementation plans, with monthly reports from areas of concern. The new benchmarking report will allow us to identify the areas that we now need to focus on. I will be writing to local areas in the coming weeks to update the oversight arrangements accordingly.

I will also be meeting local leaders to challenge them on progress, particularly where we believe that more commitment is needed from senior colleagues. We all want people to exercise their right to treatment, but that will all be for nothing if the services are not in place. The letter of direction requiring local leaders to implement the standards will remain in place and I will continue to provide Parliament with regular updates on progress.

The benchmarking report concludes:

"There has been a transformational change in improved access ... and choice of treatment ... for people with problematic drug use ..., and significant improvement in the other MAT standards. This is a direct result of hard work and collaboration within and between ADPs (including clinical, third sector, and lived and living experience partners) and of a shift in culture that has overcome many barriers to change."

Of course, the continuing commitment from this chamber and all members is helping to drive improvement as well.

I thank the MAT standards implementation support team for its continuing hands-on support, working alongside local areas, and Public Health Scotland for its vital report. MAT standards are about driving change and improving outcomes. The standards are empowering people to demand the treatment that they deserve and there is no going back. We can now only go forward.

However, to quote again the report's conclusion:

"implementation of the MAT standards is a vehicle for change and not a sufficient end in itself."

For this year and the remainder of the national mission, the priority will be full, equitable and sustained implementation of the MAT standards in all areas.

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

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): The minister may be heartened by today's figures, but I am utterly dismayed. Originally, the Government planned to implement the standards by April 2022, but it was forced to push the deadline to April 2024 with the promise that only standards 1 to 5 would be fully implemented by April 2023—and here we are. Today's analysis lays bare the failure of this Scottish National Party Government: a full third of standards 1 to 5 have not been fully implemented, despite the promise of 100 per cent implementation.

In the foreword to the report, Tom Bennett from the Scottish Recovery Consortium highlighted that in many Scottish local authorities the failure to

meet those expectations is leading to “tragic outcomes”. The minister’s statement made scant reference to the prison system, but the report itself is totally damning. It states that

“Clinical capacity to deliver the MAT standards in prisons is insufficient”

and highlights

“structural and healthcare capacity issues”

across the prison service. So, it is shocking that the minister remained almost silent on the problem in our prisons in her statement. That is exactly the time when we should be intervening to support those who want to break the cycle of substance misuse. Given the emerging drug trends unfolding in our prison system, can the minister tell us specifically what has been done to break the cycle of addiction in prisons?

Elena Whitham: I thank Sue Webber for her question and I recognise the passion that she has in wanting to see change being driven forward. I am absolutely committed to working with her and with members right across the chamber to ensure that we can do that.

The MAT standards have to work in justice settings and we will be pushing and supporting local areas, including healthcare teams in prisons, to achieve full implementation by 2025, as previously announced. There are specific challenges in justice settings, as highlighted in the benchmarking report. However, we have already announced our intention to improve healthcare in prisons through new models of care, improvements in data collection and setting up better links between services in prison and services in local communities to address the issues that were identified in the report. This year, MIST will be supporting health teams in prison settings to embed MAT standard 3, in particular. That is about assertive outreach, but also anticipatory care that needs to meet people when they are coming out of prison—

Sue Webber: And going in.

Elena Whitham: —which we know is an absolute area of concern, with the potential for people to come to harm.

We will continue to learn from best practice in the implementation of the MAT standards and we will engage with experts on the ground on the most appropriate ways to deliver these vital changes in all settings. I was in Glasgow this morning to hear about the wonderful work that Sustainable Interventions Supporting Change Outside—SISCO—is doing in prisons to deliver peer-to-peer harm reduction within that setting, but also to make sure that they are doing proactive outreach work when people are coming out of prison.

I am happy to go and visit anywhere else in the country where we are seeing such work so that we can passport that learning between different areas.

The Presiding Officer: I call Dame Jackie Baillie. [*Applause.*]

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I will get you back later, Presiding Officer.

I thank the minister for her statement, but it represents an alternate reality. Let us be clear: today’s report shows that, once again, the Scottish Government has failed to deliver on its promises about tackling the public health emergency. There have been three drugs ministers in four years and none of them has made a dent in the problem.

I remind the chamber that, originally, all 10 MAT standards were to be fully implemented more than a year ago. In March 2021, the minister’s predecessor said in the chamber:

“We will ensure that those standards are fully embedded across the country by April 2022”—[*Official Report*, 18 March 2021; c 52.]

The Government failed. Then, the implementation date became April 2023 for standards 1 to 5. Guess what: it failed again.

That has real consequences, because Scotland’s drug death figures hit their worst level in two years earlier this month, despite the Scottish Government declaring a public health emergency more than three and a half years ago. Will the minister guarantee that all 10 standards will be fully implemented by April 2025, three years later than originally planned?

Elena Whitham: I thank Dame Jackie for her question. I recognise that she has a keen interest in the area. I am determined that we will see sustained implementation of the standards by the dates that are set out in the benchmarking report, because there is no option but to ensure that we prevent harm and save lives.

I will ensure that the areas that are not where we want them to be continually have monthly meetings with me, because the letter of direction will remain in place. However, I also want to engage with local leaders on the matter. Local elected members need to work in partnership with us to ensure that we drive change forward.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): What steps are being taken to ensure local accountability in implementing the MAT standards with a view to driving improvements across Scotland?

Elena Whitham: Ministers have directed the chief officers of health and social care partnerships to work with chief executives of their national health service boards and local authorities

to implement the MAT standards. For each local authority area, a senior figure has been identified to lead on the implementation of MAT, which includes the publication of, and reporting on, MAT implementation plans. Reports are provided quarterly for most areas, although areas of specific concern are required to report monthly on their progress and have lots of meetings with me. Ministers and senior Government officials will continue to meet regularly to try to ensure that there is local accountability.

I have also recently met Councillor Kelly, the health and social care spokesperson for the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. We both agreed that we need to harness the drive and commitment of locally elected leaders to help to drive our national mission forward. I will attend an upcoming COSLA board meeting to hear directly from local elected leaders about their concerns and to work in collaboration with them.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): I declare an interest as a practising NHS general practitioner.

Drug deaths are still worryingly high, to our national shame. The Scottish Government needs to act and it needs to back our proposed right to addiction recovery bill.

One of the actions that the minister outlined is the pilot for safe consumption rooms in Glasgow. I have had people speak to me who have concerns about a consumption room being in their area. The Scottish Conservatives support the concept of the pilot for drug consumption rooms but, before any decision is made, will the minister publish a long list of areas where the Government might place consumption rooms? Will there be an opportunity for residents around those sites to feed into the consultations and will ministers listen?

Elena Whitham: I recognise that, across the chamber, we have an agreed position on the pilot for a safer consumption facility to be rolled out once we get the go-ahead from the Lord Advocate, if that is the decision that she reaches. Once the Lord Advocate reaches that decision, there absolutely has to be consultation with the local community around the area that has been identified for such a facility. It is correct that we consult the local community.

I would say to Dr Gulhane, however, that there is no doubt in my mind that a safer consumption facility—indeed, multiple safer consumption facilities, if we get to that point—are a key part of harm reduction and saving lives. They are not the only part of that but, around the world, they have been shown to save lives. Nearly 50 of them are now in operation across in Canada.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): As the minister will know, I have been working with her

and with her predecessor to tackle drug and alcohol-related stigma, which affects individuals, families and communities, and which can have a negative effect on recovery. I welcome the fact that NHS Education for Scotland now has specific information for health and social care staff on Turas, the NES learning platform, but although there is education around stigma, there is a wee bit of room to go further. NHS Inform has some great drug and alcohol-related stigma information in a short, comprehensive format.

Would the minister consider working with NES to put that information into a mandatory module on the Turas platform for all health and social care staff, not only those who work in drug and alcohol addiction services, so that we can truly help to combat drug and alcohol-related stigma?

Elena Whitham: I thank Emma Harper for raising the crucial subject of tackling stigma, which I know she is a champion of. As she knows, stigma prevents people from accessing the treatment and support that they need and to which they are entitled. Tackling stigma is a cross-cutting priority of our national mission on drugs, and we published our stigma action plan in January.

The former Minister for Drugs Policy, Ms Constance, wrote to Ms Harper earlier in the year to advise her that officials had met representatives of NHS Education for Scotland. Although there are not currently plans to develop a specific module on drugs stigma, it is a theme throughout the core skills modules within the developing Scotland's substance use workforce section of the learning platform. I will be happy to discuss making that training module a compulsory component of workforce training, and I will be happy to update Ms Harper and the Parliament on progress.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): While I note the minister's comments on overdose prevention facilities—the principle of having such facilities is surely a good thing—progress is still painfully slow. I hope that we can work together across parties in furthering that agenda under my member's bill.

The minister will be aware that the original target date for MAT standards 1 to 5 was April 2022. Despite the minister saying that she is "heartened by the progress" in the report, not a single ADP in Glasgow had fully implemented standards 1 to 5 by April 2023, 12 months after the original target date. That was not a stretch target, as the minister characterised it; it was a baseline—particularly in cities such as Glasgow.

Last year, after the target was missed, the former Minister for Drugs Policy told the Parliament:

“When it comes to implementing MAT standards, I am not asking and I am not taking no for an answer.”—[*Official Report*, 23 June 2022; c 71.]

However, here we are, 14 months after the original target date, and we are still miles off full implementation. Can the minister please tell us when she expects to see full implementation of MAT standards 1 to 5 across Scotland, given that we have now missed two critical target dates? Will she give a cast-iron guarantee that ADPs in Glasgow will have achieved full implementation of standards 6 to 10 by the target date of April 2025?

Elena Whitham: I am fully committed to ensuring that ADPs right across the country, including in Glasgow, reach those targets. Although I accept that they were not originally a stretch aim or a stretch ambition, we cannot fail to recognise the amount of work that has gone on within local areas to drive forward change. I am committed to working with everybody across the chamber on this issue, and I am committed to working with local leaders in their local areas—senior people in charge of services or elected members in charge of driving forward the changes. I give my guarantee that I will work with my colleagues, with MIST and with everybody across their local areas as hard as I possibly can to deliver on that promise.

Audrey Nicoll (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): The recently published “European Drug Report 2023” highlights that, across Europe, opioids, in combination with other substances, remain the group of substances that are most commonly implicated in drug-related deaths. It also notes that the proportion of deaths among older age groups is increasing. Furthermore, the report highlights that the hidden and stigmatised nature of high-risk drug use makes preventing and responding to drug harm extremely difficult.

With reference to MAT standard 3, can the minister outline the progress that is being made to ensure that people at high risk of drug-related harm are proactively identified and offered support to commence or continue MAT?

Elena Whitham: One key aim of the national mission is to get the people who are most at risk into treatment that provides protection and to wrap other support around them. We know that being in treatment offers people protection, but we also know that that protective factor decreases as time goes on, so the implementation of MAT standard 3 is crucial to ensuring that that support is in place.

Under MAT standard 3, all people who are at high risk must be proactively identified and offered a choice of treatment and support. That can be achieved through assertive outreach by services, especially for those who have stopped attending those services. We must ensure that there are

clear pathways for those who have suffered a non-fatal overdose so that services respond to that need and assertively go out to find those individuals and get them into protective treatment services.

We must also ensure that there is support for transitions at key points, such as when someone leaves a justice setting or is discharged from hospital. MAT standard 3 focuses services on those who have left residential justice and in-patient services.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The minister’s predecessor sought and won cross-party consensus for the implementation of the MAT standards, but it is concerning to note how many targets have been missed. In particular, we were meant to have universal coverage for same-day treatment by now, but more than a third of ADPs do not have that in place. That treatment can save lives, so not having achieved that target may cost lives. What specifically will the Government do to ensure that ADPs are equipped with all the resources necessary to achieve the standard for same-day treatment, particularly in rural areas?

Elena Whitham: I absolutely understand the issues facing remote and rural areas. It is very difficult to deliver same-day services and meet MAT standard 1 in settings where people cannot get access to treatment. It is important to support innovation on that standard and to passport innovation, where that has happened, because we know that some remote and rural areas have been able to achieve MAT standard 1. I am happy to work across different sectors and areas to ensure that we can passport that information, and the meetings that we have with ADP chairs will help us to do that work.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I remind members that I am the vice-chair of Moving On Inverclyde, which is a local addiction service.

Will the minister say whether the families of people living with drug and alcohol misuse have been involved in the design of recovery services and treatments, including in the implementation of the MAT standards?

Elena Whitham: As part of the national mission, the Scottish Government provides local areas with £3 million per year to ensure that those with lived and living experience, and their families, are involved in the design and delivery of local treatment and recovery services. We also provide £3.5 million per year through our whole family approach fund to enable local services to provide support to families impacted by drugs and alcohol.

We must remember that the MAT standards were developed by the Scottish Drug Deaths

Taskforce, which benefited from hearing the views of those with lived and living experience, including family members. The MAT standards are not only of the Scottish Government's making but are led by those who are at the front line. Those voices were also reflected in Public Health Scotland's benchmarking report on MAT standards, which included forewords written by people with family experience.

I met family organisations after their empowering families on the front line conference back in March. Those families feel empowered to help to drive change on behalf of their loved ones, and for themselves, and we must listen to them.

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): We know that women, particularly those with caring responsibilities or young families, face specific barriers. What is the Scottish Government doing, through the MAT standards, to support those women who are going through recovery from problem substance use?

Elena Whitham: Through the residential rehabilitation rapid capacity programme, the Scottish Government has committed funding for the development of several projects that will support women in Scotland, and their families, through recovery. More than £5.5 million has been committed during this session of Parliament to support the establishment of two houses at Aberlour that will be specifically designed to support women, and their children, through recovery.

We have also seen the opening of Harper house in Ayrshire, which will specifically support women to sustain themselves in recovery with their children. We know that women experience specific problems with trauma and with the related issues of poverty and deprivation, and we must ensure that we support women who no longer have their children with them, due to issues such as domestic abuse and complex trauma.

I recently met members of the Simon Community's women's group, who told me directly that they are working towards creating a safe space for women in Glasgow city centre, because they recognise the intertwined issues of homelessness and substance use. Women have their own needs, and I am committed to ensuring that we deliver on them.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): The report identifies a clear lack of support for people tackling problems with alcohol, cocaine and benzos such as fake Valium, which is a drug that was present in six out of 10 drug deaths last year. It identifies clear implementation gaps on standards 5 to 10. Not enough progress is being made and too many people continue to die. Is it not the case that all we

have here is a new minister with the same old excuses?

Elena Whitham: I thank Craig Hoy for his question, but I refute his characterisation of me. I will bring my own work experience to the role, and I am absolutely determined that we will see change.

I recognise the important point that Craig Hoy has raised about the new and emerging substances that we are dealing with, which Sue Webber mentioned that we now see in prison settings. Wherever those new substances come to the fore, we must ensure that we are responsive to them, which is why the MAT standards will consider benzodiazepines and stimulants including cocaine and crack. We must ensure that we recognise the breadth of substances that people are using.

When it comes to alcohol, I look forward to working with the UK Government on the alcohol treatment standards that are coming forward, so that we can make sure that we wrap those into the MAT standards.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Will the minister provide an update on the support that is being provided to establish advocacy services in local areas to empower families to have a voice in ensuring that systems and services are non-discriminatory and to actively put their lived experience at the heart of services?

Elena Whitham: I thank Rona Mackay for her question. I know that she is very passionate about this issue. People with lived or living experience are greatly valued in our fight against drug deaths. They are often best placed to help people who currently have problematic drug use, and they can be trusted by people who want help, especially in an assertive outreach situation.

Around the world, harm prevention models have often been driven from the grass roots by people with lived and living experience, so we must harness that experience, too. We are building on our previous work of involving people with lived and living experience, for example with the Drug Deaths Taskforce, the residential rehabilitation development working group and the national mission oversight group.

Local services must involve people with lived and living experience in local decision making. I am heartened to see, across the country, people in that situation being involved in the local commissioning of services. That is when we have people creating services in their local area that best reflect their needs, and we must harness those people who have that unique input to give.

Point of Order

14:57

Rachael Hamilton (Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In England, approval has been granted from 1 July for the use of Asulox, which will allow farmers and land managers to use the only viable means of controlling bracken to mitigate the threat of Lyme disease, control ticks, protect biodiversity, allow walkers to walk safely and allow the safe grazing of livestock. I completely understand that the emergency authorisation process is not satisfactory for everyone and that we must, in the long term, find a better solution, but it is an incredibly important public health issue.

The Government's apparent lack of understanding of the process was evidenced at First Minister's question time, when the First Minister potentially misled farmers, land managers and anybody who comes into contact with uncontrolled bracken. In his response to me, he failed to mention a number of pertinent details, including that, at a meeting on 18 April of the United Kingdom Expert Committee on Pesticides, which was attended by a Scottish Government civil servant, it was noted that advice from 2022 remained unchanged. As I pointed out, the devolved Administrations can make their own decisions about the use of Asulox. The Scottish Government does not have to wait for other Administrations to approve it; if that were true, why has England been able to approve its use?

We are elected representatives and not mind-readers. When asking questions of the First Minister on behalf of our constituents, we expect an honest response, at the very least. Recent developments have shown the First Minister's response to my question on Asulox not to be transparent. I seek your guidance, Presiding Officer, on whether the First Minister might be required to correct the record and to urgently deliver a statement on behalf of the Scottish Government to ensure that approval is granted for the use of Asulox this year.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I thank the member for her point of order. The content of members' contributions is generally a matter for the member. Where a member is aware that there may be an inaccuracy, a mechanism exists whereby the record can be corrected. With regard to personal statements, requests can be made and they will, of course, be considered.

I am not entirely clear that I caught all the member's comments. I will certainly reflect on them and respond to the member if necessary.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2021

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a statement by Màiri McAllan on Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions in 2021. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition (Màiri McAllan): Last month, the United Nations World Meteorological Organization issued a stark warning, projecting for the first time that global temperatures are likely to temporarily breach 1.5°C of warming during the next five years. The Paris agreement calls on every nation to pursue all efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The projections indicate that we likely have—for the first time in human history—a very unwelcome glimpse of what crossing that longer-term threshold would be like.

For Scotland, and indeed across the world, this is uncharted territory. It is therefore more important than ever that Scotland is stepping up and playing our part in realising the benefits of a net zero, climate-resilient future. It is right that this Parliament passed some of the world's most ambitious climate legislation by a significant cross-party majority—I stress that it was cross party—and it is true that the targets are driving transformational change. Scottish emissions have already been cut in half. However, we must be under no illusion that the hardest part of the journey is not ahead of us. We need to halve our emissions again by 2030 in order to meet this Parliament's rightly very stretching target.

It is against that backdrop that I want to update Parliament on progress towards Scotland's statutory climate targets. Official statistics that were published this morning show that Scotland narrowly missed its annual target for 2021, achieving a 49.9 per cent emissions reduction against a target of 51.1 per cent from the 1990 baseline. To miss our target so narrowly, by just 1.2 percentage points, is of course disappointing, but it demonstrates that we are not far behind where those world-leading targets dictate that we need to be.

Although the 2021 results show a rebound from 2020, that was not entirely unexpected given how much the 2020 position was affected by pandemic lockdowns, and Scotland is not unique in experiencing that. UK emissions rebounded by 4.4 per cent over the period, which compares with a rebound of 2.4 per cent in Scotland. We knew that we should expect an increase in transport emissions as a result of Covid restrictions easing and we also expected that one of the coldest winters in 10 years would see an increase in domestic heating emissions.

The missing of any target is a concern and it is not something that I will ever shy away from. However, we should take heart from the data, which shows continued underlying progress in many sectors such as energy supply and industry. We must also remember that the figures do not yet reflect the 100 new and boosted policies that were included in the Government's climate change plan update that was published in March 2021.

On that note, we are delivering progress right across our economy. Under this Government, Scotland is becoming a renewables powerhouse. We have launched the world's largest floating offshore wind leasing round through ScotWind, which will initially deliver more than £750 million in revenue. Developers have also committed to invest an average of £1.4 billion in Scotland per project, which equates to around £28 billion across the 20 projects.

We are investing £100 million in renewable hydrogen projects over the current session of Parliament and we have awarded an additional £15 million through our energy transition fund to support the development of a hydrogen hub in Aberdeen.

Since launching the young persons free bus pass in January last year, we have seen a new cardholder every minute. Along with our similar schemes for older and disabled people, it means that we are supporting more than a third of the population. With over 3 million journeys every week, we are helping people across Scotland to cut costs, and making sustainable travel more attractive.

On rail services, we continue to develop the decarbonisation programme, building on the pre-pandemic position where more than 75 per cent of all rail passenger journeys in Scotland were electric.

We are encouraging people to change from petrol or diesel cars with the most comprehensive public charging network in the United Kingdom outside London, including nearly 4,000 public charge points.

In our natural environment, more than 75 per cent of all the tree planting across the UK in recent years has happened in Scotland.

Those policies, among many others, demonstrate the breadth and depth of this Government's ambition and indeed of our delivery.

Of course, as the statistics that have been published today demonstrate, it is clear that there is a great deal more to do. That is the nature of the global climate emergency, which demands a unique scale and pace of change. In that context, I am grateful to the UK Climate Change Committee for its December 2022 report. I have responded

today and have accepted or partially accepted 98 of the committee's 99 recommendations, with the remaining recommendation being entirely reserved and therefore not within our gift.

While this Government commits and recommits itself to deep and urgent emissions reductions, it is essential that we do so in a way that is fair, with the voices of those who are most impacted driving our actions. I am committed to ensuring that we listen and act on what we hear from our communities, from workers and their union representatives and from our businesses.

That is why I have, today, published a suite of discussion papers to inform our just transition plans for the built environment and construction, for land use and agriculture and for transport. The discussion papers set out a vision for a fair transition, with broad questions through which we aim to identify key priorities as policies develop. In developing those papers, I put on record my gratitude to the just transition commission for its advice so far, and I look forward to meeting stakeholders over the summer.

I make it clear that this Government is absolutely committed to a fair transition—we are taking workers with us on our journey to net zero. We will never do to our oil and gas workers what Thatcher did to mining and steel communities, and we will always strive to understand the needs of those who are impacted by change. As this year's draft energy strategy and just transition plan set out, we have a clear vision for how we can direct Scotland's enviable skills, talent and natural resources to deliver an energy system that provides

"affordable, resilient and clean energy supplies".

Of course, a just transition is for all of Scotland, not just the north-east. When I recently visited Grangemouth, I saw the work that is contributing to continued progress in the mission-critical project of reducing industrial emissions. Alongside major private investment in the site, we are supporting change at Grangemouth through the Grangemouth future industry board and a site-specific just transition plan.

Before I cover this Government's next steps, I offer a word of warning. We know the race to net zero is one that we must all win, yet it is obvious that we are constrained by the current limits of devolution. I wish—dearly—that this Government had all the powers of a normal independent nation, not least in order to control our own vast energy resources. Not having those powers naturally hinders our ability to institute the transformational change across our economy and society that the climate emergency demands.

The UK Government must act urgently on reserved matters including carbon capture,

utilisation and storage; hydrogen; electricity grid infrastructure; and decarbonisation of the gas network. Similarly, I cannot stress enough how, against the world-leading targets that the Parliament has set, we can ill afford a UK Government that is willing to trash devolution and sabotage policies such as the deposit return scheme, which has been years in the making, was backed by this Parliament and is an important part of our emissions reduction plan. It is clear that Scotland's contribution to global climate action will be significantly enhanced when we become an independent nation.

As I look forward to that day, I also look at our immediate climate plans, because today is a moment to take stock. This is not just about the next year, but about well-informed, ambitious decision making that will shape a generation, and generations to come. We may be halfway to net zero but—as I said—the hardest part is ahead.

We know, for example, that, in transport, we must find ways to put people and not cars first. That is why we are working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to finalise our route map to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres and have commissioned research on equitable options for car demand management, which we will publish in the coming months.

Of course, the most direct levers on the cost of buying or running a petrol or diesel car—namely, fuel duty and vehicle excise duty—are currently reserved. Recent rises in motoring costs underline the unfairness of the current, regressive tax regime. We will continue to press the UK Government for a fair and progressive tax system that better incentivises the transition to net zero emissions.

Along with transport, heating Scotland's homes and buildings is another of the biggest contributors to our carbon emissions. That is why we will consult this year on a proposed heat in buildings bill, inviting views on options for regulating energy efficiency and zero emissions heat across Scotland's homes and buildings.

Those are just some of the matters that we will address as we prepare to set out the draft of our next climate change plan at the end of the year. In the meantime, let us all—as a Government and a Parliament—lean ever further into a bold and ambitious approach, because nothing less shall suffice.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for that, after which we will move to the next item of business. I ask those members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak button.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The report on emissions is a sobering one for the Scottish Government, no matter how much it tries to distract attention away from its many failures. At the top level, it has missed its reduction targets for Scotland-sourced emissions of seven greenhouse gases, for which the figure is 2.4 per cent higher than it was in 2020.

Drilling into that makes for even worse reading. Residential emissions are up by more than 7 per cent. Domestic transport emissions are up by more than 10 per cent. Agricultural emissions are up by almost 2 per cent. What analysis has the minister done of how other countries are meeting their targets—and thus, where the Scottish Government is failing? Is the reason why the Scottish Government has not reported on Scotland's per capita emissions since 2019 simply that the rest of the UK has significantly lower per capita emissions?

Màiri McAllan: If Liam Kerr wants to discuss comparisons between countries, I am quite happy to do so. He is perfectly correct to point out that there has been a rebound in transport activity and therefore emissions between 2020 and 2021, which has created a 2.4 per cent emissions increase in Scotland. However, that compares with a 4.4 per cent rebound across the UK.

I tell Liam Kerr that I am less concerned about how Scotland compares with RUK and other nations throughout the world than I am with making sure that the Scottish Government and this Parliament are setting the right suite of policies to deliver a just transition to net zero against the targets that we have set here.

To be honest, it is extraordinary to be lectured by Liam Kerr on climate change. You would be forgiven, Presiding Officer, for forgetting that the Tories voted for Scotland's 2045 net zero target, because they have systematically stood in the way of virtually every game-changing policy that this Government has tried to pursue in advancing our progress on those targets, whether it is opposing low emission zones, which are good for not just emissions reductions but public health; U-turning on the deposit return scheme; or opposing regulations on heat in buildings. All that is while their colleagues down south are doing everything that they can to continue opening coal mining in the rest of the UK.

The people of Scotland will not forgive the Tories for their apparent denial of climate change, and nor—more importantly—will future generations.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance sight of her statement.

We urgently need our Governments to work together nationally and locally, so the Scottish Government needs to stop using net zero as a constitutional battle and use the powers that it has to the max to tackle our climate emergency. That would include taking measures such as: retrofitting our homes; tackling fuel poverty; delivering the community and co-operative heat and power projects that we need right across the country; providing affordable buses and trains; and fixing broken electric vehicle chargers.

Yesterday, Labour launched its clean energy mission, which Scottish National Party members criticised as being too little, too late. They—not we—form the current Government, yet our plans go way beyond today's statement. Will the cabinet secretary admit that she does not currently have plans in place to meet the Parliament's net zero targets? Is she not embarrassed that 35 per cent of our households live in fuel poverty? Will she commit to replacing the thousands of bus services that our communities have lost, so that we can deliver the just transition that all our constituents urgently need?

Màiri McAllan: I have been quite clear that I am disappointed to have so narrowly missed the 2020-21 emission target: 1.2 per cent is 1.2 per cent too much. I recommit the Scottish Government to doing everything that it can to continue to narrow the gap between our reality and our targets. As I set out in my statement, not the least way in which we will do that will be by consulting this year on heat in buildings, to regulate efficiency and heating systems. I look forward to having Ms Boyack's support on that. She mentioned working jointly. We are currently working with COSLA to finalise our route map to reducing car kilometres driven by 20 per cent.

Notwithstanding that I agree that we have to have a rapid and fair transition away from fossil fuels, and that the unlimited extraction of such fuels is incompatible with climate change, I ask members to forgive me for not having any faith in what Keir Starmer set out yesterday. First, are we supposed to believe that those net zero pledges will not just become the next thing that he flip-flops on, having abandoned a £28 billion green prosperity fund, which has been shredded? Regarding the proposed GB energy company, are we supposed to be grateful that a UK Government will potentially open part of its department to oversee our renewable resources when successive UK Governments of every kind have squandered hundreds of billions of pounds from the North Sea, with very little of it being reinvested into Scotland?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, we need to have succinct questions and answers.

Màiri McAllan: Forgive me, Presiding Officer. I do not have faith in what Keir Starmer set out.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Glasgow's low-emission zone is a great step forward and a boost to the health of Glaswegians who have struggled with poor air quality. Will the cabinet secretary say whether there will be any more such initiatives? Does she share my disappointment that some politicians say that they support the overall targets but, when it comes to practical steps, they oppose them?

Màiri McAllan: John Mason is absolutely right. The low-emission zones in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee represent a number of things. They are an exemplar of close working between the Scottish Government and our local authorities. I am proud of the very close joint working that we did to set up the zones. They are an example of the progress that is being made on emissions reduction for our climate and our environment. They are also an example of a strong intervention in support of public health where we know that young people and older ones, in particular, are susceptible to damage from emissions.

I am proud that the zones are up and running—not least because of the way in which they were brought in but also because of what they deliver for the people of Scotland. The opposition to such zones that we have heard from the Tories—and, perhaps more surprisingly, from Labour—appears like political posturing in the face of something that is really positive.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Reducing energy use to heat houses will be critical if we are to reduce our emissions, as the cabinet secretary has just suggested and will no doubt promote in the heat in buildings bill that will be introduced later. The energy performance certificate system is not fit for purpose and is not supported by industry. Will the cabinet secretary commit to introducing a new system to replace the discredited EPC system in order to help Scotland to achieve its emission targets?

Màiri McAllan: I thank Edward Mountain for his question, which is relevant to much of the work that we need to do this year. In Scotland, 150,000 households already benefit from investment that the Scottish Government has made to support energy efficiency and zero-emissions heating systems, but that approach needs to be scaled up very rapidly indeed.

We have introduced two measures. The new-build heat standard, which has just been introduced, is an excellent initiative. People in my constituency say to me, "Màiri, why on earth are we building new houses with fossil-fuel heating

systems?" The new standard will see to that concern.

On Edward Mountain's direct point about EPCs, I expect all that to be looked at as we consult on a heat in buildings bill and look at efficiency and heating systems. I encourage him and any others who have views about the system to feed into that consultation.

Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Given that Westminster is evidently intent on undermining this Parliament's right to pass legislation in devolved areas, how can we rely on our current devolved powers to pass legislation that impacts on the climate crisis? Does the cabinet secretary agree that the only way to resolve the situation is not for UK Government departments to have Scottish addresses but for this Parliament to have the normal powers of a normal Parliament?

Màiri McAllan: I quite agree that, sadly, the power to take a litany of actions that are critical to responding with the pace and scale that the climate emergency demands of us does not sit in Scotland with this Parliament but, unfortunately, rests in London with Governments that we do not elect. Carbon capture, use and storage is critical to decarbonising industry; it is inexplicable that the UK Government did not support the Acorn project in its track 1, and we still await confirmation of the timing for track 2. Whether we are talking about the gas network or transmission charging, I dearly wish that we had all the powers in this Parliament, not least to deal with Scotland's own resources. As I said in my statement, I very much look forward to the day when Scotland is an independent nation and we have such powers.

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): The largest source of Scottish greenhouse gas emissions is again domestic transport, so it is welcome that, last summer, the Scottish Government finally released new powers under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to enable new publicly owned bus companies to be established for the first time since Tory bus deregulation in 1986. Transport emissions will not change unless we change who owns our public transport.

However, as Friends of the Earth Scotland has highlighted, new powers without funding are in essence worthless. In Greater Manchester—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could we have a question? A question please, Ms Villalba.

Mercedes Villalba: —it is estimated that the total cost of franchising is £135 million. The Scottish Government's community bus fund is just £1 million—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Villalba, I have asked for a question.

Mercedes Villalba: Will the cabinet secretary be honest about her intentions? Does she want our buses to be brought back into public ownership? If so, what funding will she add to the community bus fund?

Màiri McAllan: I am afraid that I did not catch all of the question, although I was listening quite intently. I agree that it was a positive step when legislation devolved powers to local authorities. I understand that, when powers of such importance are transferred, central Government and local government need to continue to work with each other on implementation. My door is certainly always open to local authorities and COSLA if they want to raise with me the implementation of the powers.

The member is absolutely right that transport is one of the highest-emitting sectors. Encouraging people to use public transport—preferably public transport that is decarbonised—is one of the most important things. That is why I am proud that more than 2.3 million people in Scotland can use our bus network for free and that we have invested to allow companies to purchase 548 new zero emissions buses.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): What opportunities are there for Opposition parties to propose alternative ideas to help to inform the next climate change plan? Does the cabinet secretary agree that, when it comes to doing more to tackle the climate emergency—from DRS to the workplace parking levy and low-emission zones—it is simply not good enough for Opposition parties to play politics and oppose for opposition's sake?

Màiri McAllan: I absolutely agree. The threat that the twin climate and nature emergencies pose not just to us in Scotland but to people around the world and particularly to communities in the global south, which are on the front line of the worst aspects, ought to focus the minds of members on—I hope—moving away from political positioning and into a place where we can agree across party boundaries that progress needs to be made.

On that note, I mentioned that we are developing our next climate change plan. I have set up a climate change plan advisory group; I invited members from every party to sit on that group. Several members of other parties attend those meetings. I ask members to bring their ideas to that forum. No one has a monopoly on ideas to tackle the great challenge that we face and I welcome ideas from across the political parties.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement, but I am disappointed that she has once again used the constitutional grievance to

deflect blame for the Government's failure to meet its targets. It has been a repeated failure. The Climate Change Committee has criticised the Government's lack of detailed plans to get us back on track, including in the revised plan from 2021. We are going backwards in the areas of transport and domestic heating.

For the benefit of Stuart McMillan and the rest of the chamber, will the cabinet secretary outline the Government's plans to use the powers that it has at its disposal to take forward a national insulation programme on the scale that is needed to improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions and cut bills?

Màiri McAllan: As I have already said several times, in my statement and in my responses to members, we have taken two significant steps in regards to heating buildings, recognising the contribution to emissions. First, we have the new build heating standard and secondly, there is the ambitious and wide-ranging heat in buildings bill consultation that we will launch shortly. That consultation will speak both to energy efficiency and regulation of heating systems.

On the point about constitutional grievance, my colleagues in the Government and I take our role in delivering this for Scotland—and as our contribution to the world—very seriously. It is not constitutional positioning. How does Liam McArthur expect us to deliver carbon capture, utilisation and storage, which is critical to the decarbonisation of industry, when the powers to do that do not sit in the Scottish Parliament and the UK Government down the road is sitting on its hands?

Jackie Dunbar (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): The £500 million just transition fund for the north-east and Moray is vital to ensuring that our energy transition does not replicate what Thatcher did to our mining and steel communities. Can the cabinet secretary provide any information on whether the UK Government has agreed to work co-operatively and match the fund?

Màiri McAllan: So far, through our just transition fund, we have allocated £75 million of funding to support communities and projects across the north-east and Moray to create new jobs, support innovation and support the highly skilled workforce that we all accept is critical to a just transition. That work is happening right now. The just transition in Scotland is not just words—the Scottish Government is taking action and delivering it right now.

Sadly, despite repeated calls for the UK Government to match our £500 million just transition fund, I have yet to receive a positive response on that front.

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary says that it is not just words

but action—let us find out. One of the Scottish Government's key environmental targets is to reduce food waste by one third by 2025. In order to stay on track, we should be reducing food waste by an average of 33,000 tonnes per year. Will the cabinet secretary tell the chamber what the average yearly reduction has been since the target was set in 2016?

Màiri McAllan: I do not have that figure in front of me—Mr Golden probably expected that that would be the case. I would be happy to furnish him with the answer after this statement.

Once again, I point to the extreme irony of the Tories lecturing me on recycling when their party has not just only in the Scottish Parliament—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Members! We need to hear the cabinet secretary's response.

Màiri McAllan: It was not only the Tory members of the Scottish Parliament who stood in the way of the development of the deposit return scheme but their colleagues in Westminster who are undermining the devolution settlement in an extraordinary way—

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): It is a shambles.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Members! We will not make any progress if members speak at the same time as the cabinet secretary.

Màiri McAllan: Presiding Officer, their hypocrisy knows no bounds.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The cabinet secretary is right to highlight the record investment in active travel and the free buses for more than 2 million people. In addition, with the removal of peak-time rail fares in the autumn, the dial is starting to shift towards a greener and fairer transport future. What more action does the Government need to take to reduce transport demand? What is the role of the UK Government in securing that reduction in transport demand? What is the role for the other parties in the Parliament, which are very quick to sign up to targets and very weak when it comes to taking the action that is needed to tackle the growth in transport demand?

Màiri McAllan: Today's emissions statistics show that car emissions continue to be the largest share of transport emissions, which is why, as I set out, we are working with COSLA to finalise the 20 per cent reduction in car kilometres route map. That is also why we have simultaneously commissioned research exploring equitable options for demand management in order to discourage car use.

The member asks about UK Government actions. The UK Government has acknowledged in its net zero review that revenues from existing motoring taxes will decline sharply this decade as we transition away from fossil fuels and the taxes that are based on them. However, the UK Government has so far consistently not set out how it will address that. Reforms to transport taxes will be critical to meeting net zero targets, and I would not just encourage the UK Government to get on with that but, for the sake of emissions reductions and the sake of Scotland's moral duty to fulfil our climate change obligations, I ask it to very quickly get on with that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: A brief question from Evelyn Tweed, and a brief and succinct response, please.

Evelyn Tweed (Stirling) (SNP): Tree planting forms part of the reduction of greenhouse emissions and carbon capture in Scotland. Although Scotland outperforms the rest of the UK in the creation of new woodland, I understand that industry faces significant challenges in securing contractors to carry out replanting. What steps are the Scottish Government taking to rectify those issues?

Màiri McAllan: I am a significant proponent of afforestation. Not only are trees good for biodiversity, they absorb emissions from our atmosphere, sequestering carbon away and storing it. Evelyn Tweed is right to point out that 75 per cent of planting in the UK happens in Scotland but, equally, particularly as we ramp up the contribution of the forestry industry, she is right to point out that it has been hampered of late in matters including employment. My colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands has been pressing UK counterparts on that matter for some time, and I am sure that she will be happy to update the member on her progress in that regard.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the statement. There will be a short pause before we move on to the next item of business to allow front-bench teams to change position should they wish.

Innovation Strategy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-09594, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the Scottish innovation strategy. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to please press their request-to-speak button now, or as soon as possible.

15:33

The Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade (Richard Lochhead): I am pleased to sponsor another debate in Parliament on Scotland's economic future and the great work that is taking place to shape the future of our economy, country, quality of life and, of course, the planet.

The publication of "Scotland's National Innovation Strategy" and the timing of the debate come at a pivotal moment in Scotland's long and incredibly rich history as an innovative nation, because we all live in a rapidly changing and truly interconnected world. The next decade will be one of profound change, and right now we, along with many other nations, face pressing challenges on climate change—as we just heard at topical questions—health and the cost of living.

At this moment, we have an opportunity to face those challenges head-on and to be a global leader for change. We have the opportunity to build on our achievements of the past, to make the most of our considerable natural advantages, to translate our excellent research base into commercial opportunities and to deliver economic success for every section of the economy and every part of our country.

We must harness the incredible power of and potential for innovation in Scotland. It can drive our nation's journey towards becoming a thriving net zero economy, encourage further international participation to address the pressing global challenges and attract further international investment to Scotland.

We have the opportunity to take our place once again as one of the most innovative small nations in the world and to take our place with European countries that are of similar size, such as Denmark, Norway and Finland, where innovation is a core driver of their national economies.

That ambition is bold, but everyone in the chamber is aware of Scotland's strengths in innovation and of the history of spectacular successes that we have spawned in this country. We have a proud and enviable history and tradition of invention and innovation. For centuries, our people have been known as innovators. Some

of the best scientists and engineers, as well as writers and philosophers, have come from Scotland and have helped to change the world. Scottish innovators and entrepreneurs have been solving global problems in energy, health, manufacturing and engineering, creative and digital technologies, and a range of other sectors and industries.

Innovation is a key priority for the Scottish Government. Over the past decade, we have established multiple innovation centres as well as entirely new bodies such as the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland, which represents a £75 million investment by the Scottish Government in the future of Scottish manufacturing. It is a prime example of how we are supporting industry to innovate. Besides the advanced forming research centre catapult, the cutting-edge facilities include a digital factory, a manufacturing skills academy and a lightweight manufacturing centre. The vision is for it to be a place where manufacturing businesses of all shapes and sizes can explore possibilities, collaborate and find solutions to the challenges that they face.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Does the minister recognise that what he has just outlined and Scotland's absolute potential will be enhanced only if there is a body of economic policies behind it that make Scotland a very attractive place to come to work in and manufacture in?

Richard Lochhead: Yes, I agree with that. That is why I am so delighted by yesterday's statistics relating to the attractiveness of Scotland's inward investment projects, which are absolutely stunning. For the second year in a row we have outperformed the United Kingdom and Europe, and for the eighth year in a row we have been the best performing area outside London. The number of projects in Scotland has increased by 3.3 per cent, I think, compared with a decline of more than six percentage points in the UK. That is a great success story. We have a lot of attractive qualities that allow companies to invest in Scotland, and we have to keep that up.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): The minister will recognise that, although the headline figure is welcome, inward investment is not all created equally. The criticism of silicon glen by economists, for example, was that there was a dependent relationship with multinationals that very quickly moved to other countries. Can we ensure that inward investment is analysed to ensure that it is developmental, deep and value-added investment in Scotland, and not simply about buying Scottish companies to asset strip them and take their intellectual property overseas?

Richard Lochhead: That is a factor that we should take into account, which is why I am delighted by a new phrase that I have recently learned from the tech sectors in Scotland: "sticky jobs". The current generation of inward investment projects is different from those that have gone before. The projects are based on our talent and our university and research capability, and the result is that those jobs, in effect, cannot go anywhere else. They come here and stick here. As a result, other indigenous Scottish sectors and businesses are benefiting, as well. That lies at the heart of the innovation strategy, and I will come on to that.

Scotland is already benefiting from innovation, with success stories across the country and recognised excellence in a number of areas in industry and in our universities. I could give many examples, but I might not have enough time to do so. I will therefore give Kenoteq Ltd as one example. That company was a spin-out from Heriot-Watt University. It produces the world's first 90 per cent recycled brick. With more than 2 billion bricks a year being produced in the UK, there is a significant opportunity to set up more production facilities across the country and internationally. I could give a host of other examples of innovations that are happening in Scotland just now.

Although Scotland's productivity and business investment in research and development have seen significant improvements in recent years, with the gaps between them and those of the rest of the UK having largely been closed, we have work to do to catch up with our international competitors. That is why the time was right to publish "Scotland's National Innovation Strategy". I know that Scottish innovators, entrepreneurs and our innovative companies stand ready to accept that challenge and to return Scotland to a central role on the global innovation stage.

Innovation thrives on collaboration, and it is through collaboration that we get the most value from our investments in Scotland's businesses and world-class research community. In that spirit, the strategy was designed and developed alongside industry experts, entrepreneurs, business leaders and academics, who all came together with a shared vision to make Scotland one of the most innovative small nations in the world, once again.

The development was guided by an expert steering group, which was co-chaired by Professor Sir Jim McDonald—I thank him and his colleagues—and supported by intensive engagement through working groups, round-table and workshop events and an extensive evidence-gathering exercise. I also thank my predecessor Ivan McKee, who is in the chamber today, for all his good work in his previous role on putting

together the strategy and working with those individuals.

The strategy sets out the actions that we will now take to achieve our bold vision through four transformational programmes on cluster building, investment, commercialisation and productivity. Within the next decade, we will have a unified network of high-performing clusters in each of our innovation priority areas and we will provide valuable signposting to attract more international investment, collaboration and talent.

The strategy identifies four key areas in which Scotland has the clear potential to be world leading: energy transition, health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing and data and digital technologies. We will take a European-style cluster-building approach to support those areas to become world leading and internationally facing, thereby driving mutual benefits from international partnerships.

Scotland has a range of established, growing and emerging clusters that can act as a foundation for a vibrant innovation-led economy. Over time, we will develop an approach of developing tailored packages of public support that act as catalysts for growth and which stimulate more private sector investment to support priority clusters to achieve their potential.

Within the next decade, we will also have increased the number of innovation-active businesses—that is one our challenges—and we will have nurtured highly scalable organisations to drive the economy forward.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Will the minister take an intervention?

Richard Lochhead: I will take it, if I can get—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you a bit of time back, minister.

Daniel Johnson: I am grateful—it is an important question. We are already doing well on innovation in relation to many of the things that the minister has mentioned. However, it is clear from the data paper that was published alongside the strategy that business enterprise research and development remains a stumbling block. That is about private sector businesses reinvesting. Does he recognise that that aspect requires further work in the strategy?

Richard Lochhead: Yes, I do. However, we are performing quite well with research and development, particularly in the higher education sector—as, I am sure, Daniel Johnson is aware. The picture is also improving in the business sector. Internationally, Scotland compares reasonably well with many countries, but we must match the best and we must improve. The

innovation strategy addresses that on-going challenge.

We also want to adopt an investor mindset in relation to supporting our most innovative businesses, investing where we have a competitive advantage, providing a comprehensive and co-ordinated package of support and leveraging in venture capital. Through that renewed package of support, we will place our priorities at the heart of our approach, as we increase alignment of funds, reduce unnecessary duplication and, over time, close any gaps in the funding landscape and explore innovative models of investment to support Scottish businesses and clusters to innovate.

Within the next decade, we will see an increase in scaling companies from cutting-edge research by applying innovation to seed the creation of new markets and harnessing new innovations to support increased productivity in existing ones.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you a bit of the time back, minister, but not all of it.

Richard Lochhead: I ask that the intervention be very brief, then. I also note that it will be the final one that I take.

Finlay Carson: The Conservatives consider that the Scottish Government has a misguided attitude—hostility—towards gene editing. A leaked document suggests that the European Union is about to change its approach and that it will align itself more with the position on gene editing in England. I ask the Scottish Government to act quickly on that to ensure that farmers and some of our world-leading institutions in Scotland do not miss out.

Richard Lochhead: We have an open mind to new science—that has always been the Scottish Government's position. We pay close attention to developments in the European Union in relation to the issue that Finlay Carson mentioned and in relation to other issues.

Another issue that we must address is our commercialisation landscape. We must strengthen our research base and the role that that plays in driving economic prosperity in our country.

Working with the higher education system and the Scottish Funding Council, we will evaluate the sufficiency of Scotland's current investment in applied research, knowledge exchange and broader research projects.

Given the time, I will draw my remarks to a close. Over the 10-year lifetime of the strategy, the programmes will deliver an ambitious increase in the level of innovation in businesses across

Scotland, which will result in increased productivity, improved economic outcomes and a more inclusive economy. To ensure that we are making the necessary progress towards achieving our vision through the four transformative programmes, we will track our innovation performance on a number of key metrics over the next 10 years. We will do that through Scotland's innovation scorecard, which will track Scotland's innovation performance over time on a set of key indicators, against other nations.

In conclusion, I want to restate the Scottish Government's ambition, and my ambition, that Scotland will once again be known as one of the most innovative countries in the world, by leading the world in a number of key areas and providing solutions to global problems. I believe that that ambition is entirely achievable and that the strategy will help us, as a nation, to achieve it.

The power of new ideas and technologies is driving global change at an unprecedented rate and scale. Countries can harness that power. We can thrive in the 21st century. Scotland can become a magnet for talent and investment and for exporters of the next generation of products and services, and we can significantly raise our citizens' quality of life. Scotland can take its place among the leading countries on innovation. I look forward to the debate.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of *Scotland's National Innovation Strategy*; recognises its vision for Scotland to become one of the most innovative small nations in the world over the next decade as a key part of delivering a greener, fairer, wellbeing economy; recognises Scotland's potential to become a world leader in four key areas of the economy, which are energy to address the climate emergency, health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and data and digital technologies; welcomes the strategy's four programmes, which are a national network of clusters in key sectors, a renewed investment and support offer for businesses, a new framework for realising the commercial and community benefits of research, and a new programme focused on supporting businesses to become active in innovation and improve their productivity; recognises that the Scottish Government will measure and evaluate Scotland's innovation performance and compare this to similar nations on an annual basis; welcomes the extensive engagement, consultation and joint working with industry, academia, entrepreneurs, investors and the public sector that helped develop the strategy; notes the successful examples of innovation taking place across the country; recognises the important role of enhanced employee engagement and alternative ownership models in fostering innovation, and understands the significant opportunities for Scotland, and its businesses, entrepreneurs, workers, communities and universities, to grow and scale its excellence in innovation and technology to become recognised globally as a world-leading innovation nation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Jamie Halcro Johnston to speak to and move amendment S6M-09594.2.

15:46

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Scotland has a rich history in research, innovation and invention, with contributions ranging from development of the telephone and television to groundbreaking advances in medicine, such as penicillin and the hypodermic needle. Of course, we are also the home of Dolly the sheep.

Innovation should be a key driver of economic growth and societal progress, and no one should fail to recognise the importance of boosting innovation in Scotland within the public and private sectors, and of supporting innovative new ways of doing things.

We welcome the Scottish Government's recently published "Scotland's National Innovation Strategy" because, although there have been notable achievements, there are also real challenges that hinder Scotland's innovation potential. The strategy recognises that Scotland remains below the UK average on all measures of innovation activity, and it also recognises Scotland's poor record on productivity. The strategy accepts that Scotland's efficiency in producing spin-outs from research is 50 per cent of that in the rest of the UK and it accepts the need to improve the number of alumni from Scotland's universities who found venture capital backed companies.

Over the next 10 years, the hope is to make Scotland one of the most innovative small nations in the world and to make Scotland fairer, more equal, wealthier and greener. I am sure that many of us welcome those ambitions, but the Government needs to be ambitious, given some of the issues that I have mentioned previously. With Scotland's economy facing a challenging future, and with unsustainable public finances thanks to 16 years of the Scottish National Party Government, it is vital that Scotland embraces opportunities to innovate.

The strategy identifies four broad innovation themes to focus on: health and life sciences, data and digital technologies, advanced manufacturing and energy transition. The importance of innovation in our health sector cannot be overstated, particularly with the Scottish Fiscal Commission forecasting that in 50 years health spending will rise to 50 per cent of our total public spending. Innovation is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

Only a few weeks ago, we debated the growth of artificial intelligence and the vital role that it will play. We share the ambition that Scotland be a global leader in development in that area and we recognise the role that AI can have. However, we need the infrastructure in place to make that

happen, and too many parts of Scotland are still missing out. Although I welcome the attention that the energy sector is given, it is worth remembering that some of the most innovative work in the energy sector has come from, or has been funded by, an oil and gas industry that the SNP-Green Government wants to call time on prematurely.

Of course, the Scottish Government has blocked the UK Government's attempts to support Scotland's nuclear energy sector, which could have been a significant driver in Scottish innovation, as well as providing reliable zero-carbon energy. Only in March this year, the then Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport, Michael Matheson, made it clear that the Scottish Government is opposed to the building in Scotland of new nuclear fission power stations with current technologies. Scotland, which played a leading role in the early development of nuclear, with sites including Dounreay in my region, will play no part in its future.

We need more than warm words from SNP ministers about fostering of innovation, given the contradiction in approach and the deep-seated issues that have grown under their watch, including a rise in economic inactivity and a drop in business confidence.

Scotland remains the highest-taxed part of the UK, which is making it harder to attract and retain skilled workers. Our enterprise agencies, which could and should play an important role in supporting businesses to innovate, have had another year of budget cuts, which is reducing their ability to provide that support.

In education, we have the lowest number of science entries at higher level in five years. The SNP-enforced student cap makes it harder for Scottish students to enter university and £46 million has been cut from our colleges and universities. Funding that was promised in December is now, reportedly, not available. That all impacts on our ability to train in the numbers that are required the skilled workers that we need to drive and support innovation. I have met people from various sectors who are already struggling to find the talent that they need to fill the roles that they have.

Although most Governments seek a more collaborative approach in this area, the Scottish Government continues to push its obsession with breaking up the United Kingdom, and is intent on cutting off a vital funding source that is valued by universities and other bodies, as well as on putting up a border across the UK single market, which will only create significant challenges for Scotland's businesses' ability to trade and operate.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

I completely agree that we need to look at the broader economic context and things like people studying science, but does Jamie Halcro Johnston not also recognise that we need an innovation policy? Why would the Conservative amendment completely obliterate, in its entirety, all mention of an innovation policy?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: We recognise the importance of that, but we are trying to focus on some of the changes that need to be made.

The Scottish Government would do those things despite recognising in its innovation strategy the role of the UK Government initiatives and funding schemes including UK Research and Innovation, innovate UK, the UK industrial strategy and the UK levelling-up white paper. Yesterday, it was good to see the UK Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, George Freeman MP, whom I met earlier this year, announce £72 million in funding for new infrastructure, including £23 million for the UK's National Wind Tunnel Facility network and £34 million for digital infrastructure.

Here in Scotland, the Scottish Conservatives' 2020 policy paper, "Power up Scotland", advanced the argument for greater innovation spending and increased direct support for innovation. However, it is also important that spending be directed in a positive and structured way. Given the considerable sums of public money that are involved, it is vital that value for money can be assured. Support should also be accessible, while it is ensured that it remains results driven.

I hope that we all want a successful, entrepreneurial and ambitious Scotland, where innovation helps to provide solutions to some of the real problems that we face in terms of the cost of living, an ageing population and the climate crisis. My party believes that successful achievement of that lies in co-operation between Governments across the United Kingdom, not in cutting ourselves off. It believes that it will be driven by economic policies that provide Scotland with a competitive advantage, and not ones that make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK and leave our businesses struggling to attract talent. It believes that proper investment in infrastructure—not projects that are left unfinished and promises that are left undelivered—brings real benefits to businesses and communities, and it believes that we need a Scottish Government that builds confidence in businesses and drives innovation, and not one that is saddled with a militant Green element that is anti-business and has an anti-growth agenda.

I move amendment S6M-09594.2, to leave out from first "welcomes" to end and insert:

“recognises the importance of driving innovation in Scotland, both within the public and private sectors, but believes that the current direction of the Scottish Government is creating barriers to growth and inhibiting innovation; further recognises that high taxes on individuals and businesses risk impacting on growth; regrets the reduction in the 2023-24 budget settlement to the enterprise agencies, which will reduce their ability to support Scottish businesses; acknowledges the challenges faced in the university sector for Scottish students due to high levels of competition and the resulting impact that has on the ability to train, in the numbers required, sufficiently skilled workers to drive and support innovation; believes that leaving the United Kingdom would severely damage Scotland’s ability to succeed by creating a border across the vital UK single market, creating significant challenges for businesses to trade and operate across the United Kingdom, and would cost the Scottish economy billions of pounds, reducing the ability to foster a strong, vibrant and innovative economy, and believes that Scotland’s success lies in cooperation across the United Kingdom, economic policies which provide Scotland with a competitive advantage, proper investment in infrastructure to benefit businesses and communities, and a Scottish Government with a firm grasp on public finances to build business confidence and drive innovation.”

15:53

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

It is really important that we have a clear and ambitious innovation policy and strategy. It is also vital that we have a collective sense of mission about that. That is why, although Labour will be making criticisms of and suggestions on the policy, we ultimately support the publication of the paper.

My main criticism is to ask why it has taken so long. The lack of clarity and of a clear innovation policy was identified and discussed some time ago. Indeed, I remember that, leading up to my election to Parliament for the first time, debate was very much focused on that.

I refer to a paper that I have often looked to, which was published in 2014 by Nesta—the national endowment for science, technology and the arts. It is about innovation in small countries and it identifies five key factors that a successful innovation strategy brings: first, a focus downstream, making sure that you deliver commercial success; secondly, openness and being open to the world; thirdly, a whole-government approach; fourthly, effective and flexible institutions; and, fifthly, a sense of mission. That last one is why I think we have to have a consensual debate.

It is clear to me that the Government has addressed the first and fifth points but, on the third and fourth points—whole-government approaches, and effective and flexible institutions—the strategy is found wanting.

Ultimately, the strategy dodges two big, central questions. The first is on institutional landscape. We still have a cluttered landscape and there are

only oblique references in the strategy to what has to happen to improve that.

Secondly, the biggest issue that we have on innovation is private sector investment. I take slight issue with what the minister said. He is correct that Scotland has good figures if we look at gross domestic expenditure on research and development—GERD. However, if we split that between higher education expenditure on research and development—HERD—and BERD, we see that, on BERD, we are behind the UK on levels of investment and we would be at the very bottom of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development tables.

Yes, we have strong, higher education-led research and innovation, but those fail to translate. The section on productivity in the strategy does a huge amount of work because it is the only place where the spillover is talked about or focused on in any meaningful way. There has to be a great deal more work to improve the detailed plans under the strategy to deliver on that.

To come back to the cluttered landscape, we have only to look at the diagram on page 14 of the strategy to see it. That diagram resembles something that we might see in the optician’s. It is a sea of coloured blobs without any clarity about who is in charge. Indeed, the strategy identifies five different lead institutions on innovation. It certainly does not set up our version of Tekes or Sitra in Finland. We need urgently to learn the lessons from 30 years ago in Finland rather than attempting to paper over the institutional cracks in our own framework.

The other key point that I will make is that the strategy assumes that innovation is something for external organisations to do. It is assumed to be a task for the private sector or higher education sector but, ultimately, the Government needs to internalise it.

I was at the recent Scottish EDGE awards. One of the winners, who has come up with an amazing product to help to use operating theatres in the national health service far more effectively, said that his peers told him not to bother to sell into the NHS because it is too difficult. If that is what entrepreneurs are saying, we have a big problem. Members should couple that with the insight that there has been a massive fall-off in the number of clinical trials in Scotland. We need a public sector that innovates end to end, and does not leave it to the private sector, because it understands that it ought to be a test bed and platform for innovation to help our life science businesses to grow.

In other areas, the strategy fails to understand where we are. It does not deal with the nuts and the bolts. We already have our clusters—they are successful. We do not need to set up new clusters

but to get behind the ones that already exist. That is not about doing fancy things; it is about the nuts and the bolts. If we talk to life science companies, we find that their issues are to do with planning, roads and infrastructure. Those issues are what holds them back from setting up and innovating, but the strategy does not deal with that adequately.

I will touch on skills. I agree with Jamie Halcro Johnston that, unless we develop the mainstream skills in science and other key subjects, we will struggle.

Unfortunately, I cannot support the Conservative amendment because obliterating the innovation strategy in its entirety is wrong. We need an innovation strategy and there are good things in the one that has been published, but it does not go far enough. Ultimately, we need an innovation strategy that joins up with an integrated industrial strategy because it will not and cannot deliver unless we get innovation right and contextualise it within a good, strong, investment strategy and a procurement strategy, along with regulation, planning and skills.

That is why we mentioned the plans that we launched yesterday. They are an example. They have innovation in them, as well as research, delivery and investment in supply chains and delivery. That is the sort of industrial strategy that we need.

I move amendment S6M-09594.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises that ambition alone will not be enough to realise the potential of Scotland’s people, businesses and communities; believes that a genuine coordinated industrial strategy, built on investment, skills and infrastructure, will be central to driving innovation; welcomes the identification of the energy sector as a sector with high potential, and believes that the best chance of realising the potential in Scotland’s energy sector is through the Labour Party’s plan to create a new publicly-owned energy company, which will be headquartered in Scotland and will deliver lower bills, energy security and good jobs for Scotland.”

15:59

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Scots are rightly proud that our country has long been considered one of the world’s most inventive and innovative. John Logie Baird created the first television, James Watt invented the steam engine, Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin and, more recently, Dolly the sheep became the first mammal to be cloned from an adult cell at the University of Edinburgh’s Roslin institute.

The Scottish enlightenment had significance that reverberates down the centuries. In this tercentenary of Adam Smith, we should remember his astonishing global contribution.

Perhaps lesser known is Dr William Cullen, a professor of chemistry and medicine from Hamilton who, in 1755, gave the first documented public demonstration of artificial refrigeration, which ultimately changed the way in which people store and transport food, prolonging the life of perishable items. That example powerfully demonstrates that innovation is the bedrock on which we built the prosperity that is enjoyed today compared with previous generations, and it is a main driver of long-term economic growth.

I therefore welcome the publication of the Scottish Government’s 10-year innovation strategy, which aims to re-establish Scotland as one of the world’s most innovative nations, ranking alongside Denmark, Norway and Finland.

However, we should stop referring to Scotland, let alone Finland and Norway, as small. More than half of the countries in Europe are smaller than Scotland, and we have more inhabitants than New Zealand or the Republic of Ireland, and our population is similar to that of Singapore.

That said, I agree with many of the points that are raised in the innovation strategy, most importantly its focus on encouraging European-style business clusters. Sectoral clusters strengthen collaboration between business, academia and public bodies in areas where we have a competitive advantage. Of course, such clusters already exist in Scotland. Dundee’s contribution to fields ranging from the development of ATMs, comics and video games has long been recognised beyond our borders; the Highlands and Islands are at the forefront of technological advances in areas such as renewable energy and the space industry; and Ayrshire and Renfrewshire have a vibrant life science sector, exemplified by the medicines manufacturing innovation centre at Abbotsinch, the opening of which I had the pleasure of attending last St Andrew’s day, along with Ivan McKee. In Glasgow and Stirling, the knowledge economy has just attracted 500 new pharmaceutical jobs and a £30 million investment from Merck. With more than 700 life sciences companies, Scotland has one of the largest clusters in Europe, which includes GSK and DSM, two major North Ayrshire employers. Indeed, 800 people in North Ayrshire work in pharmaceutical manufacturing—which represents the highest density in Scotland.

The innovation strategy noted, however, that,

“while Scotland has a rich history of invention and a vibrant life science sector, we have a poor record of quickly scaling and spreading innovation.”

We can and must improve.

Government grants can target projects that are likely to have the most long-term benefits, and research shows that grants will lead to more

patents being filed by private firms. The Scottish Government's renewed and consolidated innovation investment programme, to be published in 2024, is therefore eagerly anticipated. The public sector invests in business innovation through enterprise and skills agencies. Given that innovation is known to significantly boost productivity growth, it is vital that funding in the priority clusters identified in the strategy remains at a high level, especially in times of budgetary constraints.

To boost productivity we need young people. Last week's *Economist* discussed research showing that innovation comes disproportionately from young people—in particular completely novel, positively disruptive and discipline-changing ideas. Entrepreneurship is markedly lower in older countries, and Japan, with its rapidly aging society, has fallen far behind in new thinking over recent decades. With demographic decline everywhere, improved education and skills are required to slow the decline in the number of innovative young thinkers.

Innovation is about new ideas, technologies and research—

Daniel Johnson *rose*—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The member is bringing his remarks to a close.

Kenneth Gibson: Sorry—I was just about to conclude.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is about to conclude, yes.

Kenneth Gibson: Innovation is about new ideas, technologies and research, adapted to benefit the economy and society. I welcome the fact that, in its innovation strategy, the Scottish Government reiterates its commitment to the scaled development of clusters, such as Ayrshire's life sciences, which can have a transformative impact on our economic performance and international competitiveness if they are underpinned by robust and targeted public sector innovation funding and an eye to how we tackle demographic decline.

16:03

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): I opened the innovation strategy document with some excitement and hope, but I felt depressed after reading the minister's foreword. In it, he says:

"Too few Scottish businesses are innovating, and some of our most innovative companies struggle to scale."

He goes on to say that, when it comes to research and development,

"we have work to do to catch up with our international competitors."

The strategy reads like a list of SNP failures over the past 16 years when it comes to economic growth and innovation. We are below the UK average on all measures of innovation activity; the percentage of businesses investing in innovation activity is lower in Scotland; Scotland has a poor record on productivity under the SNP Government; and Scotland's efficiency in producing spin-offs from research is lower than in the rest of the UK.

If only we had a Government that was focused on the real priorities of Scotland: growing our economy, promoting innovators and entrepreneurs, investing in business and funding our leading universities and research institutes. Having 16 years of the SNP has left us with a country that is the highest-taxed part of the UK and has the conditions not for growth but for division.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): Will the member accept an intervention?

Douglas Lumsden: Is there time, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The time would have to be subsumed within your allocation.

Douglas Lumsden: I am sorry; I cannot take that intervention.

We were used to seeing huge amounts of innovation, growth and investment in the north-east and, with energy transition, could see that again. However, for that to happen, we must stop the demonisation of the oil and gas industry. Historically, energy companies have spent vast sums on research and innovation and could do that again when it comes to energy transition, but they need the revenue from oil and gas to provide them with the cash to spend on research and development. While there is still a demand for hydrocarbons, we should produce those in this country, not only to protect the thousands of jobs that rely on the sector but to safeguard the huge amounts of cash that will be invested in renewables.

Richard Lochhead: Will the member give way?

Douglas Lumsden: I am sorry; I do not have time. I will come back to the minister if I have time.

The strategy goes on to tell us how much stronger we are as part of the United Kingdom with the financial weight that that brings. The UK Government has invested significant funds to drive up innovation and productivity: it has invested in free ports and in the regional growth deals that much of the life science innovation mentioned in the report comes from and it wants to go further in

developing our nuclear energy capacity, which will bring huge investment in research and development but is, of course, being blocked by the SNP-Green coalition.

Let us be really clear about the facts: the SNP has reduced enterprise agency budgets this year, stifling those organisations' ability to make significant impacts on their regions. The SNP-Green Government talks a lot about higher education in the strategy, but we must remember that it has cut £46 million from college and university budgets this year.

The strategy has lots of warm words about economic growth for our central belt cities, but sets out no roadmap to get there and there is very little mention of how our rural communities will play their part.

I welcome the strategy and its recognition of the strength of being part of the United Kingdom. I have no ambition to be in a leading small country when we can be part of a leading world power with the economic strength that that brings. I welcome the strategy's recognition of the investment that being part of the UK has brought to Scotland at a time when the SNP Government is cutting budgets. After 16 years in power, the minister should be embarrassed to place the strategy before us today. It lets down our rural communities, is an admission of failure by the broken SNP-Green coalition and is a clear indication of how we benefit from being part of the United Kingdom.

16:00

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): We all know Scotland's wonderful heritage of innovation, which goes far beyond the inventions commonly listed on a souvenir shop tea towel. Almost every town in Scotland can point to at least one major invention or innovation that happened there or that is attributable to someone who came from there. That is important, because the past inspires the future. My constituency is no exception. Sir James Dewar, who was educated at Dollar academy, invented the vacuum flask, and George Meikle of Alloa invented a water-raising wheel that was used to drain the moss of Kincardine in 1787.

In creating that reputation for innovation, Scotland benefited from being in the vanguard of the industrial revolution—although, with the hindsight given by history, we should recognise that that period of growth was built on the backs of the working masses and often involved resource-thirsty enterprises being fed at the expense of the peoples of an empire that then covered the globe.

Our search for innovation continues, as it must, and I am pleased to be able to point to a package

of investment in innovation and infrastructure that will help to drive inclusive economic growth in the area that I represent. The city region deal funded by the Scottish and UK Governments, Stirling Council, Clackmannanshire Council and the University of Stirling will invest more than £214 million over 10 years and will deliver innovation hubs specialising in aquaculture, the environment and intergenerational living, each of which will play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of the future.

World-leading technology solutions will be developed in those centres of excellence, transforming the local economy, tackling low job density through the creation of high-quality, skilled local jobs and strong regional supply chains and, at the same time, supporting community wealth building and the wellbeing economy.

Stirling University Innovation Park, which is in my constituency, was established in 1986. Its aims are to assist the regeneration of the local and national economies by providing an environment that facilitates, encourages and promotes businesses with a focus on innovation. Those are the kinds of projects that the national innovation strategy, which is outlined in the motion, can and must support and promote.

The new fields of knowledge on which the future of our planet will depend need the same explosion of innovation that the industrial revolution brought about, and it is essential that Scotland is at the forefront of this new revolution, in which we must, admittedly, play our part in repairing the climatic and economic harms that have been caused by global industrialisation.

Arthur Herman of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC wrote a book, published in 2001, entitled "How the Scots Invented the Modern World". As the *Scotsman* reviewer said at the time, the

"overblown rhetoric invites a sceptical reaction. But I suggest we just accept this extraordinary compliment graciously."

The important thing now—for us and as part of our continued contribution to the world—is that we continue our love of knowledge and our support for innovation and play a leading role in the development of the postmodern world. We could talk about the almost unique achievement of Scotland's universities; the last time that I heard, five of them were in the top 200 universities in the world. The explosion of ideas during the Scottish enlightenment is an inspiration. Perhaps we will not see the Boris Johnson school of philosophy on the nature of truth or the political economy thesis of Kwasi Kwarteng, but there are important antecedents that should inform how we look forward and give us inspiration that Scotland can lead again.

There is a wider message here, too. If we are determined to become a world leader in entrepreneurship and innovation—I know that it will be uncomfortable for some Conservative members to hear this—we must reverse the isolationist approach that has been thrust on us as part of Brexit Britain. Scotland must use all our powers to create an economy that supports businesses to thrive. We will do that by harnessing the skills and ingenuity of our people and by seizing the economic and social opportunities that are provided, but not as part of a delusion about being a world power. We will do it best with the normal powers of an independent nation.

I support the motion.

16:12

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow Keith Brown and his analysis, particularly of industrialisation. Many of our communities have at their heart individuals who have done so much. I extend that to the significant number of communities that have at their heart evidence of the effects of industrialisation. I am thinking particularly of Prestongrange—close to where I live—which, as an industrial centre, has had not just decades but hundreds of years of industrialisation from glass making all the way through to brick making and, of course, coal mining. However, to pick up on one of Keith Brown's points, I note that it is also about the damage that was rendered to the communities that gave so much in the creation of industrialisation.

I welcome much of the Scottish Government's strategy—in particular, its focus on the four key areas of the economy that have been identified. I take the opportunity to pick out a couple of them that raise some questions and comments.

The first is advanced manufacturing. I will draw on energy production—I would feel almost disappointed if the minister did not realise that I would do so. Our history, identity and politics are often wrapped up in the story of energy and where it has come from, how it is moved, how much it costs and who has benefited from it. We need to build the skills, talent and expertise that are already abundant in our energy sector if we are to forge forward to a just and equitable green transition.

I make mention of Torness nuclear power station, near Dunbar in East Lothian, in the south of Scotland. More than 500 people are employed directly by it and it brings in £15 million in wages a year for the community. There are also more than 200 jobs in the contracting workforce that surrounds Torness, driving further tens of millions of pounds into the local authority. On some days,

with that workforce and on just one tenth of a square mile, half of the energy needs of Scotland are met. It is still short-sighted of the Scottish Government to close its eyes to the potential of nuclear power, be it small modular nuclear reactors or others, to give us a green future and to allow for the base-load that is required by the energy systems that surround us.

In the short time that I have to speak in this debate, I will also pick up on the health and life sciences sectors, which have been commented on already. Scotland should be a world leader in healthcare, and we need to lead in healthcare innovation. With the UK Government, we have one of the finest databases in the world to allow for the role of AI, which we have debated in the chamber in the recent past. The database will be invaluable if we can work out access to it and the return that our NHS and, through it, each individual patient should see for that access. That is a powerful prize to look towards, with the requirement to work together.

As Daniel Johnson stated, this future is not just one of words. That could be the result of the strategy, but it also requires planning, infrastructure and joined-up thinking. It requires the Scottish Government to do something that, with respect, it has struggled to do, which is not just to talk but to work with our communities, our businesses, our university and college sectors, the UK Government and other Governments around the world to drive forward what I know Scotland can produce—a confident, innovative future that supports our people.

16:16

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): As a small, outward-looking nation, Scotland is uniquely placed to punch well above its weight when it comes to innovation. We are blessed with a reputation for producing some of the greatest trailblazers and revolutionary thinkers that the world has seen, from David Hume to Peter Higgs and from Rabbin Burns to Robbie Coltrane. It follows that the Scottish Government's newly published innovation strategy is an ambitious document with a clear vision: that we will prosper and thrive alongside other small, successful nations.

While there is much to unpack in this 10-year plan, I am drawn to the emphasis on collaboration, from the primary classroom, where children design and build alternative robust housing structures to help out the three little pigs, to the science labs of our universities and their collaboration across sectors. It is so important that research and innovation are fruitful and that they translate into a tangible end product that ultimately benefits our

society and delivers sustainable growth for our economy.

As an example of that collaborative working, I recall that, during the pandemic, students from the University of Glasgow who were involved in designing face masks teamed up with a small business in Stirling. The result was the creation of a better-looking and better-fitting product.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the University of Glasgow is highlighted in the strategy on account of its exciting partnership with Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow City Council to create the Glasgow riverside innovation district, or GRID. It will act as Scotland's first whole-systems innovation demonstrator. The district will be home to the world-leading clinical innovation zone; the emerging cultural quarter, which is based around the Kelvingrove art gallery and museum; the Scottish Event Campus; and the media hub at Pacific Quay. Increasing channels of communication and collaboration between a range of sectors with diverse skill sets is a bold and welcome move that has the potential to push Glasgow further to the forefront of international industry and innovation.

The University of Strathclyde also sits at the pinnacle of world-class research and innovation. As members have mentioned, we are grateful to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade, Richard Lochhead, and to Ivan McKee before him, for co-chairing the creation of the strategy with the university's principal, Professor Sir Jim McDonald.

The university's success in its collaborations with student start-ups has been showcased by recent break-out stars such as Bellrock Technology, which is an award-winning software company that allows the electrical power sector to use its data more effectively, and M Squared Lasers, which grew from a Strathclyde spin-out company and is now anchoring the quantum industry—an industry that is growing quickly in Scotland. Each of those stories tells us what we already know: the talent is there. However, we need to harness it and clear a path for it to flourish.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mohammed Rashid Iftikhar, who is a pre and post-disasters scientist and inventor of the world's first AI vehicle and property fire or flood damage mitigation system, which was showcased during the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26. I ask members to think of the transformational effect that that technology can have in flood risk areas across Scotland and the world.

I realise how lucky I am to represent a city, and a constituency, that boasts a long history of

innovative success, from the television and the refrigerator to antiseptics and beta blockers, and—let us not forget—a creation so influential and so controversial that it still shocks me to my very core: the chicken tikka masala.

There is much to be envied in our little powerhouse of a nation. I look forward to seeing not only how the strategy will provide the chance to create future jobs in traditional and new, emerging sectors, but how it will open up spaces for conversations that can pave the way towards a more inclusive marketplace.

16:20

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): Scotland has a long and proud history of supporting and nurturing innovators, and I know that we all agree that we want to continue being an innovative nation. At a time of twin crises for climate and nature, increasing global uncertainty and rising inequalities, it is perhaps more important than ever to ensure that we work towards innovation for a purpose. That purpose should be the development of a greener, fairer, wellbeing economy that sustains healthy and happy communities across our country.

We must have a strong topical emphasis on the structural challenges in our society, which innovations in all four areas that the strategy identifies should seek to address. Other members have spoken about the four priority areas that are highlighted, so I will not rehearse those in the time that I have. However, I will say a little bit about what we mean by innovation.

Innovation has that nebulous quality of generally being seen as a good thing. Innovation is driven by change or new knowledge so, as we look at the crises that we face, we need to consider what is changing. One of the obvious areas of change is technology. We also need to consider how knowledge develops. We then need to understand the intersection between the things that have changed or the things that we have newly discovered, and existing processes.

The valuable thing about innovation is quite simple: setting out the problems or issues; identifying the technologies or knowledge we have now that we did not have previously; and working out how those can aid us in dealing with a problem or challenge that has previously been identified.

Let us be clear: innovation is not something that happens only in the private sector, done by the wealthy and focused on digital and new technology, although that is often where the focus is. The challenges that we face cannot be limited to those who have traditionally been associated with that approach. Rather, innovation requires the application of our collective creativity, intelligence

and insight to address the problems of climate breakdown, Covid recovery and social isolation, to name just three.

Mariana Mazzucato has set out clearly how innovation does not stem from the wealthy folk in silicon valley, but rather is driven by public sector research and investment. Her eye-catching observation that almost all of the technology in the iPhone, for instance, resulted from publicly funded innovation is something that we must remember. Her proposed solution to the problem of how to focus our innovation investment is to develop missions and challenges that we can turn the attention, ability and insight of our citizens to addressing.

We have to be clear about what those missions are, and what the challenges that sit within them are, and how we define them, so we can innovate as effectively as possible with maximum impact for our citizens and our communities—that is innovation with purpose.

In 2021, and in different ways more recently, I was pleased to see that the cabinet secretaries were given responsibilities for two of the more important missions that we must address: net zero and Covid recovery. That speaks to the recognition that the challenges that we face are not neatly contained in discrete departments. I welcome that approach, and even the European Commission—not an institution that is known for its embrace of new or dynamic ways of working—has adopted the same approach. Our approach to innovation must therefore go beyond a focus on private sector innovation, and we must mobilise our public institutions and our communities. We need a broad-based approach that gives everybody a clear target and aligns institutions with citizens and communities towards addressing problems, because the real value in innovation is when it is focused on social purpose.

We must also ensure that our innovation strategy is embedded in a broader industrial strategy. We know that manufacturing is often the locus for significant innovation—we have centuries of evidence to back that up. We have to rekindle Scotland's manufacturing potential, of which we know that there is loads, particularly if we think of the opportunities in local supply chains—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Chapman, you are over your time. Please conclude.

Maggie Chapman: Apologies, Presiding Officer.

There are opportunities in local supply chains for the renewables industry.

If we get all of this right, the real beneficiaries will be Scottish businesses, entrepreneurs, workers, communities and universities—

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

Maggie Chapman: —working for all.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that speeches should be up to four minutes.

16:25

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): It is a pleasure to be speaking in the debate and I am delighted to see the strategy, critical and central as it is to the development of Scotland's economy. It has been widely anticipated and a great number of people were involved in putting it together, and it has received a very positive response from across industry and universities as a consequence.

The strategy's key objective is to further commercialise the world-leading research that is coming out of Scotland's universities. We recognise that tackling that challenge is absolutely critical. We have some great and improving numbers on start-ups and spin-outs, but the commercialisation-to-scale piece is the bit that needs the most focus.

Alongside that, we need wider diffusion of innovation across the wider base of businesses—SMEs in particular—and we need to drive up innovation in the public sector.

The strategy identifies what needs to be done, and the hard work starts now. Taking forward the programmes that have been defined, tracking progress against actions and making sure that they are delivered in the months and years ahead will drive forward what needs to happen across Scotland's innovation ecosystem. If the strategy sits on the shelf, we will absolutely fail to do that, so it is really important that it is grasped and driven forward by Government.

I want to highlight a couple of really important points. The first is clusters, areas of focus and accreditation. We recognise that Scotland cannot be good at everything, but we need to be the best in the world at what we are good at. That central concept lies at the heart of the strategy.

The four areas have been spoken about, but, frankly, they are so broad as to be almost meaningless. What is really important are the 11 sub-sectors that are identified in the strategy at quite a specific level, because those are the areas where Scotland can be genuinely world leading and beat all comers. The purpose of the cluster accreditation process is to ensure that that happens and that those clusters are developed to become the best in the world, and that other clusters that emerge over time, in our rapidly

changing technology environment, have the opportunity to do likewise.

The investment piece is critical, and the funding review, lining up behind those clusters. It is really important that we put our money where our mouth is and drive that potential forward.

Wide adoption of innovation activity across the SME base is absolutely central to driving productivity, which has been highlighted by a number of members. The programme to take that forward is absolutely critical.

I want to talk about the public sector and its role, because a number of aspects of that are central to the strategy. As an enabler, the public sector has to make sure that the infrastructure is in place to support the development of innovation at the cutting edge and more broadly. If you only look at one thing in the strategy, Presiding Officer, I recommend that you flick through and have a look at the maps, which are an excellent and handy guide to all the immense amount of work that is happening in Scotland across all those key areas.

Secondly, we need to make the public sector itself more innovative. I would encourage the minister to make sure that that part of the strategy is taken forward, because the public sector is a significant part of the economy. As we all know, a huge amount more can be done to make the sector innovative across all its aspects.

The next point, which Daniel Johnson correctly mentioned, is about the public sector as a customer. That is covered in the strategy, which highlights the work of CivTech, the Scotland innovates portal, the Scottish health and industry partnership group and so on, but more has to be done to leverage our procurement spend.

Finally, of course, measuring is absolutely critical. The annual report or score card, to make sure that everything is on track across that wide range of metrics that are all important to developing and delivering on the innovation strategy, needs to be driven forward.

I am sure that the Government will take all those points on board and propel Scotland to be a leading nation when it comes to innovation.

16:29

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome this debate on the Scottish innovation strategy and the wider issue of driving innovation in the economy. As we have already heard, Scotland has a great history of innovation. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, we were arguably among the most inventive nations in the world, with Scottish innovators and inventors producing world-leading breakthroughs in the fields of science, engineering, mathematics and medicine,

examples of which Kenneth Gibson and Keith Brown gave us in their contributions. There is therefore a great legacy for us to build on.

The focus on innovation at this time is much needed. Economic growth in Scotland is sluggish. We know that our growth here has been roughly one half of the UK average in the years since 2014. Had we grown the economy at even the average rate of the UK in that period, we would today have more jobs, better pay and, crucially, more tax revenue. It is therefore in all our interests to deliver a growing economy.

In that connection, I was pleased to see the innovation strategy state explicitly that the definition of “innovation” includes activity with the purpose of

“helping to solve societal challenges or delivering economic growth.”

We do not often hear the coalition Government talking about economic growth—perhaps because the junior part of it is actively and explicitly hostile to that concept. However, if we are now seeing a new approach from the Scottish Government that is about embracing growth, that is very welcome. However, it will need policies to be put in place to deliver such growth. Too much of what we have seen from the Government in the past has been anti-growth: it has been about hiking taxes in Scotland and stifling economic activity with excessive regulation.

It is not just growth that we have a problem with; it is also productivity—or, rather, the lack of it. That problem is not unique to Scotland. It affects the whole of the UK economy, and indeed most European economies to a greater or lesser extent.

As we have debated in the chamber many times previously, the labour market in Scotland, the UK and across the western world is currently very tight. We know that Scotland is not attracting its fair share of immigrants from the rest of the world, and we lag behind every region of England, apart from the north-east, in our attractiveness to new immigrants, which is particularly important when net immigration into the UK today sits at roughly double where it was prior to Brexit.

Such labour shortages are driving businesses to innovate out of necessity. Let me illustrate that with a short example that involves a pharmacy business in my region, the operators of which I talked to recently. Every week, the work of pharmacists includes producing blister packs of pills for patients, which—particularly for those with complex medications—is absolutely essential to ensuring that they are taking the right pills in the right order and at the right times of day. The preparation of such packs is time consuming and laborious, and precision is absolutely vital. Traditionally, it is done by hand. My local

pharmacy practice was struggling to recruit staff with the skills and the focus required to do that repetitive work. Instead, it has invested in an expensive new piece of equipment, which, once set up and programmed, will now prepare pill packs through a mechanised process with 100 per cent precision.

That represents a real productivity gain through innovation. It comes with substantial up-front capital cost and investment, but it allows the members of staff who are presently employed on that important but repetitive work to be redeployed to fill gaps elsewhere in the business, and it delivers a better and safer service to the patients who are the business's customers. It is a good illustration of how innovation can deliver productivity improvements for a small business, and help to tackle labour market challenges.

I could say much more about the role of universities, but I will conclude by saying that although the new £100 million innovation fund is welcome, Universities Scotland has questioned whether that is new money or simply represents a repurposing of existing investment streams. It would be good to get clarification on that from the minister.

We need to recognise the importance of the Scottish Government's working with the UK Government in such areas. If our ambitions about improving innovation are to be delivered, which is what we want, that will happen only if both our Governments work together.

16:34

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): Scotland has a rich history when it comes to innovation. While we celebrate the achievements of the past, it is important for our focus to be firmly on the future. Neighbouring countries such as Ireland, Denmark and Norway have shown just how successfully innovative small nations can be. It is crucial that we follow their lead and prioritise putting innovation at the heart of a thriving Scottish economy. If we do not do that, we risk being left behind.

The strategy that we are debating is undoubtedly exciting and bold. In Scotland, we have some of the finest research institutes, colleges, universities and businesses in the world. However, what has been missing is a coherent strategy to link all those elements—a proper road map that spells out how to turn research into successful products and businesses and how the Scottish Government can support scaling up.

In Clydebank, we have seen at first hand how innovative technologies bring benefits to a community. For example, the Queens Quay development features Scotland's first major water-

source heat pump system, which will heat water from the River Clyde and distribute it to customers through a district heating network. That project, which was supported by the Scottish Government's low-carbon infrastructure transition fund, is a fine working example of research being turned into a successful product, supported by the Scottish Government, and delivering benefits to my constituents.

I hope that, as the strategy is implemented, more such successes will occur across Scotland. I often hear from businesses with great ideas that their biggest challenge is securing the funding to deliver. I am therefore particularly encouraged by the strategy's focus on routes to invest.

Generating funding from private enterprises alongside ring fencing further public sector spending will be vital if the strategy is to succeed. In my constituency, I have been working with the Malin Group on an ambitious project to deliver a Scottish marine technology park, which would provide a unique environment for world-leading innovators in the marine industry and allow them to create a self-sustaining ecosystem that would reinvigorate shipbuilding and renewable industries on the banks of the Clyde and beyond. The key barrier to development is funding, so I am pleased that the strategy outlines how the Scottish Government will work with such projects to bring the investment that they need and to drive collaboration with key partners.

I welcome the renewed focus on the positive contributions that our colleges make to the innovation ecosystem. Too often, they have been deprioritised, but I am pleased that colleges such as West College Scotland, in my constituency, are at the heart of the strategy. Every business that I speak to talks of skill shortages, so it is important to support our colleges as they work to provide Scotland with the skilled workforce that it needs to drive innovation.

In Scotland, we have the natural capital, talented workforce and sectoral strengths to build a thriving economy, but too many of the powers that are needed to deliver our vision lie at Westminster. We need to be free from Brexit and right-wing immigration policies that harm our economic and social prospects.

Finlay Carson: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is concluding.

Marie McNair: Change is not coming from Westminster, with the Tories' crashing of the economy, and there is no promise of change from Labour, either. Labour's amendment refers to Keir Starmer's pledge on the so-called GB energy company, but we know that that man's pledges quickly disappear into the wind.

To further maximise our economic prosperity, we need full employment, energy and revenue-raising powers to be devolved to this Parliament, which would mean that Scotland was no longer held back by the UK Government.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to closing speeches.

16:38

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): I am pleased to close for Labour and I am keen to emphasise the importance of innovation across our economy. Many members have spoken about Scotland's historical pedigree on innovation, but I am afraid that that picture has faded considerably. Even on patents, for example, Scotland has just a quarter of the European average on patent density.

The root cause of a lot of that comes back to firm generation. We are simply not generating the velocity of firms that are owned and headquartered in this country to allow us to have the sovereignty over industrial growth that we need in order to get back on track with all the metrics that we have talked about, such as productivity, product development, exports and patents, which are all critical and surround the firm.

The joint-stock company was the great innovation of the industrial revolution and of the Scottish enlightenment that gave Scotland a huge global head start. There have been great examples. We have talked about Glasgow. Many members have discussed the engineering genius of Scotland. Engineers, scientists, entrepreneurs and canny investors all came together in close proximity to crack the industrial leads that we needed.

There are many opportunities in Scotland today. The innovation strategy focuses on life sciences and health. The BioQuarter in Edinburgh is certainly a great asset. However, we must not forget the life sciences expertise and innovation potential across the country. In particular, a great ecosystem of innovation is taking root in Glasgow.

I had the pleasure of visiting the University of Glasgow's new Clarice Pears school of health and wellbeing, which has brought together academics who are working to address health inequalities. It will also be a key aspect of the Glasgow riverside innovation district, which was mentioned by Kaukab Stewart.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): I put on record the 450 new jobs that are being created at the West of Scotland Science Park as part of a £30 million investment in molecular science by Merck, which is investing to

make Maryhill a centre of excellence for innovation in that field.

Paul Sweeney: Yes, the Merck investment announcement was great and a good example of high-quality, high-value jobs. However, again, I lament the fact that it is not a Scotland-headquartered company that is driving that investment in Scotland. We cannot deny that that investment is great, but we come back to the fundamental question about ownership. It is an opportunity for us.

There are two practical challenges. Let us take the strategy in the abstract and then drill down into practical applications. One of the most rewarding things that I have been doing, working with several members from across the chamber, is forming the cross-party group on shipbuilding. I have a personal background in the shipbuilding industry. Although we have focused heavily on naval shipbuilding and ferry building, there is a lot more to it than that. The key to that is the opportunity that exists for Scotland in driving those huge procurement into value propositions that can build companies in Scotland.

I am really concerned that we are potentially going to miss two critical opportunities. I will cite them today for the benefit of the minister. I hope that we can work together to capture those opportunities for Scotland.

Ultimate Boats is a company that is already building on the Clyde and needs to expand. It needs to move to a larger site—moving to a larger site on the Clyde would mean that Ultimate Boats could build 500 vessels a year and create 300 high-quality jobs. The current lease runs out in May 2024 because the landlord wants to redevelop the land for housing. Ultimate Boats has identified a couple of suitable sites in Scotstoun and Inchinnan, but it is struggling to engage with landlords to agree a lease.

The current owner of the business has put in £7 million of capital funding but needs £10 million of extra investment. There has been interest from several buyers. As the current lease is up next May, if the company is unable to find the funding, it will not be in Scotland as of 1 January 2024. A move to the United States is possible—the US is willing to invest £10 million for 5 per cent equity and is likely to see a £100 million return within five years. Another possibility is Poland, where there is a European investor who is ready to invest £30 million to £40 million for 30 per cent equity. Similarly, Invest Northern Ireland is keen to bring the company to Belfast, with the promise of various grants.

What is happening in Scotland? Scottish Enterprise seems uninterested and the Scottish National Investment Bank will not support the

business because it is too small. That is not acceptable, minister, and we need to get a grip on the situation urgently. That is a critical, tangible output that we need to secure for Scotland within the next six to seven months.

The cross-party group on shipbuilding has been working to identify opportunities. The products that Ultimate Boats is developing represent huge opportunities. Recent sea trials of a new counter-terrorism craft for Hampshire Police, which leads on counter-terrorism for UK police forces, went very well. Police Scotland diving teams and anti-terrorism units also took part in those trials. Ultimate Boats can build such a vessel in as little as two weeks. The company could be a market leader in that field, but it is likely to leave the UK for the US or Europe unless it can secure the funding—in debt or equity—this year. Time is of the essence if we are to secure those opportunities.

Similarly, there is the Zephyrus project; a tripartite consortium of Aluminium Marine Consultants, an aluminium boat builder, Shift Clean Energy, which makes batteries, and Ecomar Propulsion have agreed to join together to retrofit crew transfer vessels to service offshore wind farms. They are trying to set up a facility in Montrose or on the Clyde. For the latter, they were looking at the Malin Scottish marine technology park facility that is under development at Old Kilpatrick but, unfortunately, timescales for its completion are currently unclear. We must help them to find a facility. Ecomar needs 15,000 square feet, AMC needs quayside access and Shift needs 7,000 square feet for a battery factory. Ecomar needs £2.5 million in equity and £2.5 million in debt to get the propulsion software hydrogen integration factory started. AMC needs £10 million over two years to start to build a yard on the Clyde and create up to 2,500 jobs. Shift requires £5 million to set up a battery facility, but a larger 300MW plant would need £20 million investment in debt.

Therefore, for £30 million to £45 million of investment, the Clyde and Scotland could have a yard, a battery factory and a low-emissions propulsion manufacturer, which would make the area a global leader in zero-emissions crew transfer builds to service the ScotWind project and global export markets.

I urge the minister to meet me and the Scottish National Investment Bank to move the issue on. We cannot afford to wait any longer for those key investment decisions. Zephyrus waited a year for a reply from SNIB. My understanding is that SNIB's focus may simply be on larger companies, but we will miss—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Sweeney, you should bring your remarks to a close, please.

Paul Sweeney: We really need to get on with this, and I hope that we can seize the opportunity for the good of Scotland—time is of the essence.

16:45

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome the document that has been published by the Scottish Government, because it is a much-needed outline of the route map to making Scotland a world-leading small nation for innovation, which we are definitely capable of being. Daniel Johnson made the good point that we have been a long time waiting for this. Nonetheless, we broadly welcome the steps outlined in the strategy, which is necessary to grow the sector. Likewise, we support the decision to develop an innovation scorecard, which will measure the success of the strategy by comparing Scotland's innovation ecosystem with those of other nations. That is very important when it comes to inward investment.

Various members have said that Scotland has, for centuries, punched well above its weight in technological innovation, but the surrounding investment infrastructure is now a problem. Ivan McKee was quite right when he said that that is as essential in the public sector as it is in the private sector.

We have raised some key points this afternoon, but by far and away the most important of them is the need to complement the ambitious innovation strategy with economic policies that make Scotland the most attractive place in which to live, work and invest. To date, despite the Scottish Government's very blunt acknowledgement in the foreword that Scotland's productivity has lagged behind, we simply do not have the economic policies in place to properly address the issue.

The minister referred to stickability, but I hope that he recognises that that has to change to relate to the policies that Murdo Fraser described in his speech, because current tax structures do not bring in the necessary revenue to drive growth, and considerable increases are expected in Scottish Government expenditure over the coming years, especially in health, social care and social security. The current tax structures definitely need reform.

The Scottish Government claims that this is all about progressive taxation, with threats to increase income tax even further. Business, however, will tell a very different story, because it believes that it is about making Scotland less competitive, which is a big worry when it comes to innovation.

Government ministers tell us that looking to Scandinavia for best practice is about innovation. I think that that is true about innovation up to a

point, but it is certainly not true when it comes to tax policies. We need look no further than Norway to see what has happened with its investment potential. Paul Sweeney made a good point about new patents.

As the Scottish Government has acknowledged, not nearly enough of our enterprises are innovating, and those that are find it difficult to expand. The Scottish Government has a really big question to answer about why that is, because it is all very well having a national productivity programme, but that must come alongside the right economic policies to create growth and stability. That includes ensuring that the—

Paul Sweeney: Will the member give way?

Liz Smith: Of course.

Paul Sweeney: Does the member recognise that perhaps one of the big constraints is access to capital? It is simply very difficult for Scottish businesses to organically access capital finance in this country. Often, the only alternative is to put themselves up for sale overseas.

Liz Smith: Yes, I recognise that. The capital aspect of the issue is vital. I hope that the Scottish Government is taking a few lessons this afternoon about what we have to do with capital infrastructure. It is also very important that it listens carefully to what our universities are saying, because, to be quite blunt to Keith Brown and Ivan McKee, it is all very well to talk about the outstanding work that is going on in our universities—that is very clear to those of us who know them—but we have to listen to what Professor Dame Sally Mapstone is saying. When the Scottish Government is clawing back £46 million of promised expenditure in tertiary education, there can be innovation only if there is “well-supported, excellent research”, and she posits the idea that Scottish universities are not there to manage decline—that is a quote from her. Those are strong words from Universities Scotland.

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Liz Smith: Do I have time?

The Presiding Officer: You have three minutes, Ms Smith.

Ivan McKee: Liz Smith says that we need to reduce taxes and, at the same time, calls for more spending. Can she square that circle?

Liz Smith: Yes, I can. We made suggestions at the time of the budget about where we would make some savings, and we will continue to do that.

Success is all about Scotland's two Governments working together. I am not quite

sure why there were some murmurings from the SNP when one of my colleagues mentioned that. I think that that is what the public want to see. Particularly in difficult economic times, the last thing that we want is a divergence of opinion between our two national Governments. It is welcome to see what the UK Government is doing, but it is also welcome to see what the Scottish Government is doing. I am getting a bit tired of the constant constitutional bickering in the chamber. The public want to see success. They want to see us working together, and they want to see delivery in that respect.

We should not underestimate the scale of the financial support that is required when it comes to innovation. That is why it is vital that there is a joint approach.

Economic growth is absolutely critical. I do not understand why the Greens are so intent on opposing economic growth in order to do all the things that they talk about when it comes to social wellbeing and so on. We will not have social wellbeing unless we have the fundamental economic growth that underpins that social wellbeing. I simply do not understand the Green position on that, and I do not think that some SNP members understand the Green position on that either.

To conclude, we very much welcome the publication of the much-needed strategy, but if the Government is to have any chance of making a success of it and harnessing all the vital potential that Scotland undoubtedly has, we have to ensure that it is complemented by economic policies that make Scotland an increasingly attractive place in which to live, work and—most important—invest.

16:51

Richard Lochhead: The debate has been a good one, and I will do my best to cover some of the themes that have been raised by members across the chamber.

I think that we can all agree—indeed, we have agreed this in the debate—that Scotland is a country that is famous for ingenuity, invention and innovation. Over the centuries, we have played a role in shaping the future, and here we are today with a vibrant and innovative sector, research, universities and institutes in our country as well as entrepreneurs once again putting in great work to shape the future. Indeed, in many ways, the future is here already.

We have to be very careful when politics enters the debates, because amazing things are happening in Scotland at the moment. We should be broadcasting that to the rest of the world and talking about them over and over. The James Webb space telescope, which is the world's most

powerful telescope, is now sending back breathtaking images going back to the beginning of time—if we can get our heads round that. One of the key instruments on that telescope—the infrared instrument—was developed in Edinburgh in a project that was led by Professor Gillian Wright. That is what Scotland is contributing to humankind at the moment. Others have cited many other examples of what is happening in the economy, the business community and the health system, for example.

Some of us remember “Scotch and Wry”. I think that the Rev I M Jolly has been reincarnated in Douglas Lumsden. The fact that he delivered such a negative, doom-and-gloom speech in the debate was out of synch with many of the other contributions across the chamber. Members talked up Scotland’s achievements and what is happening in Scotland at the moment.

There has been a lot of talk about productivity, for instance. It is important to note that Scotland’s long-term productivity growth has outperformed that of the UK as a whole. Between 2008 and 2021, productivity in Scotland grew at an average annual rate of 1 per cent a year. That compares with the UK average of 0.6 per cent. The level of productivity in Scotland is now estimated to be 97.6 per cent of the UK average. That means that we now have the gap down to less than 3 per cent. There is more to be done, but we are outpacing the rest of the UK.

Daniel Johnson: I agree that we should not be wholly pessimistic, but nor should we be blindly optimistic. The HERD numbers put us above the UK average, but will the minister address the point about BERD? Will he acknowledge the fact that, in 2020, Scotland had just 251 patents granted? Does he recognise that that is the challenge that we have in front of us? Will he set out what he thinks we will do to drive up the number of patents?

Richard Lochhead: We have set out what we want to do to address some of the challenges—they are outlined in the national strategy for innovation that we are debating today.

In 2020, Scotland’s gross expenditure on research and development as a share of GDP was above that of the EU, which was only 2.19 per cent as compared to Scotland 3.13 per cent. We were also above the OECD average, which was only 2.67 per cent.

In addition, Scotland ranked first among OECD countries for its higher education R and D spend as a percentage of GDP back in 2020, so it was also above the rates for the EU and UK.

The latest UK innovation survey results from 2020-21 show that, in Scotland, 33.5 per cent of collaborating innovative businesses did so with a

university or other higher education institute, which is the highest rate in the whole of the UK.

The European Commission’s regional innovation scoreboard assesses the performance of 240 regions across the continent. Scotland was classified as a strong innovator, with its performance improving. Indeed, we were ranked in the first quintile of that scoreboard.

There are lots of reasons for optimism. As the strategy lays out, there is a lot of room for improvement, too. We do not want to settle for where we are; we want to match the best.

Ivan McKee and others addressed the issue of—

Murdo Fraser: Will the minister address my point about Universities Scotland? I asked whether the £100 million new innovation fund is new money or just a recycling of previous announcements.

Richard Lochhead: We introduced an increase in the research funding for universities, but the £100 million fund is a university initiative, and it is important to bear that in mind.

Ivan McKee and others raised the role of the public sector, because this is not just about private business. It is important to say that Scottish Government’s CivTech initiative is the world’s first successful public sector-focused innovation accelerator. It is already regarded as an exemplar initiative and has been described as a gold standard public sector innovation driver.

We have also got the supply chain development programme, which uses public sector procurement to improve the capability of Scottish manufacturing chains.

One of the Tories had the audacity to say that rural communities are not mentioned in the strategy. That is nonsense. The national innovation strategy recognises the existing expertise across Scotland, including our regional strengths across the Highlands and Islands and throughout the south of Scotland, from harnessing our natural capital assets such as renewable energy to revolutionising dairy farming and agricultural practices, which some members mentioned. The future of all Scotland and our rural communities is at the heart of the strategy.

We are not starting with a blank sheet of paper. This Government has created seven innovation centres. We have got the Data Lab; the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre; the centre for sensor and imaging systems; the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre; a centre on the built environment; the Digital Health and Care Innovation Centre; the Precision Medicine Scotland Innovation Centre; and, of course the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland. Each

year, £430 million is invested in innovation across the whole of the public sector.

We are outperforming the UK in the creation of green jobs, on exports and in a range of other areas. It is clear that all that investment in innovation is paying dividends for the Scottish economy.

Murdo Fraser, Jamie Halcro Johnston, Martin Whitfield and others mentioned the potential for innovation and what it is delivering in health and social care. There are some fantastic examples. Murdo Fraser mentioned one in relation to pharmacy, but there are so many others. For example, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is investigating the potential of using artificial intelligence to detect a variety of cancers from thin slices of human tissue from a biopsy that are treated with chemicals and traditionally examined under a microscope. There is innovation throughout the NHS at the moment.

There is also the private sector. We have got many global challenges being addressed through innovation. One of our companies, Intelligent Growth Solutions, is an award-winning international agritech innovator, delivering indoor vertical farming solutions to people, customers and businesses across the world, as well as contributing towards our net zero targets.

We have got Spirit AeroSystems, which is one of the world's largest manufacturers of aerostructures for commercial aircraft, defence platforms and regional jets. Its facility in Prestwick has been established as a centre of excellence for research and development of advanced materials and digital manufacturing technologies and processes.

Those are just some of the examples of the great innovation that Scotland's capable of by seizing the opportunities that we have.

The space industry, which we debated recently in the chamber, is another exemplar of innovation. We have an ambition to grow the space sector in Scotland to 20,000 jobs by 2030 and to having a £4 billion share of the industry globally. That is a really exciting innovative sector at the moment and it is paying dividends. Just a couple of weeks ago, I was at a space sector event in Farnborough, and I spoke to companies from all round the world that knew what was happening in Scotland. They want to relocate to Scotland or invest here to become part of the cluster here. That is why the cluster approach that is being adopted in the strategy is so important—it will be a magnet to attract companies from around the world.

Paul Sweeney: The minister makes an important point about the clustering effect. One of the big opportunities identified in the debate was about the maritime sector and ScotWind, and I

mentioned two companies in that regard. Will the minister refer to those companies and offer to try to make them succeed in Scotland?

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

Richard Lochhead: I do not have time to address all the sectors, but of course the maritime sector has great potential for innovation.

The space industry, which I just mentioned, is one of many sectors that are exemplars of the benefits of inward investment. Some Tory members said that it is important that Scotland becomes an attractive location for investment. I say to the Conservative Party that we are already a very attractive location for investments. We are outperforming the UK and the European Union on that. As announced yesterday, Scotland's growth in foreign direct investment projects outpaced growth in Europe and the rest of the UK for the second year in a row. Scottish projects were up by 3.3 per cent in 2022, compared to—wait for it—a 6.4 per cent fall in the UK and only a 1.4 per cent increase in the rest of Europe.

The Presiding Officer: Minister, we are over time, and I must ask you to conclude.

Richard Lochhead: We should congratulate all the innovative businesses in Scotland on the work that is leading to those record-breaking results for inward investment projects here.

We can be proud of the new strategy. It is a 10-year strategy and, in 10 years' time, when we look back, we will be proud of all the achievements of Scotland's growing economy and growing high-value businesses, and of the contribution that innovation is making to humankind and the planet and to Scotland's quality of life and wider ambitions.

Motion of No Confidence

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-09607, in the name of Liam Kerr, on a motion of no confidence. I would be grateful if members who wish to speak in the debate were to press their request-to-speak button.

17:02

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): In the seven years that I have been in the Parliament, I have never lodged a motion of no confidence, and I actually hope never to do so again. Events of the past two years, and particularly the past few weeks, have signalled that the First Minister's confidence in Lorna Slater, the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, may be misplaced. I rise to offer Parliament the opportunity to state whether it shares the First Minister's confidence.

I do not know Lorna Slater—our only major interactions have been in the chamber or in committee—and I do not doubt for a minute her integrity. I do not doubt that she strives to do her best in a crucial and wide-ranging brief, and I do not doubt her commitment to the deposit return scheme. All those matters are not in question in my mind, and nor do they fall to be considered today.

My reason for lodging the motion is that, since being appointed to this crucial ministerial role in autumn 2021, with particular responsibility for implementing Scotland's deposit return scheme—a scheme that all parties in the chamber supported and voted for and wish to succeed—the minister has nevertheless struggled. I think that Kate Forbes said it best when she said:

“The idea of the deposit return scheme is sound—it works well in other countries—but we cannot have a scheme that is well intentioned, but fails to achieve its aims and causes economic carnage in the process”.

Indeed not. However, that failure—that economic carnage—is exactly what we are seeing happening, whether it be Lorna Slater's first DRS postponement to August 2023, 18 months ago, or the second postponement to October 2025, just this month, or whether it be her knowing for years that an exemption from the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 was required, yet applying for it only at the 11th hour.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): The Conservatives continue to pursue the line that our request for an exemption from the IMA was made only in March of this year, ignoring the fact that, in February, a document setting out the full and final proposal for the DRS was sitting on Alister Jack's desk, and also ignoring the fact that nowhere in

the common frameworks does it mention the official request for exemption that Alister Jack began to speak about only in March. Could Liam Kerr point me towards the place in the common frameworks where it says that that request mechanism exists?

Liam Kerr: What we have just heard is the concession that, until February—at the earliest—there was no final scheme on which to rule.

Lorna Slater then went on to contradict the scheme administrator, Circularity Scotland Ltd, which insisted that DRS was, nevertheless, very much viable with glass excluded. She chose a further postponement. Did she take legal advice before doing so? She refused to tell me in committee last week and many have concluded that the answer is no. Similarly, she showed disrespect to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee by promising to publish and send a gateway report and then, having failed to do so for months, ultimately producing only a summary.

I asked what the Scottish Government had budgeted for DRS. Lorna Slater was confused on two occasions and told me what had been spent. Then she sent me a letter saying that it was wrapped up in the Zero Waste Scotland budget, but in that letter she quoted the wrong budget figures for the past three years.

She knew what would happen to the fines from the deposit return scheme. She failed to warn Circularity Scotland bosses of the delay to the deposit return scheme in advance. She then told the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee last week that the scheme was fully capitalised and that there was no problem with funding—albeit she also told the committee last week that she did not know the nature of that funding, a statement that was reiterated earlier today.

All that was just a week before today's bombshell—the news that CSL has entered administration and around 60 people are looking for work. Those are people who trusted the minister to speak for them in Government, to command the respect of this Parliament and to answer truthfully and fully and take a collaborative approach. Also, businesses that have forked out hundreds of millions of pounds now face a scheme that is entirely up in the air and the position on compensation is entirely unclear.

That is just the DRS side of the portfolio. Members will well remember Lorna Slater admitting to using a misleading renewables statistic and not only failing to correct the record but walking out of the chamber as I made a point of order specifically to try and highlight that. They will remember the private charter boat that she used to visit Rum rather than using the public ferry, at a cost £1,200 against less than £10, and

remember her having an empty limousine driven from the central belt to the north-east to drive her back to Edinburgh. Indeed, she has used a chauffeur-driven car for 50 journeys in the past year, despite urging Scots to use public transport instead of private vehicles.

Then she confessed, in November 2022, that she did not know the difference between the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Members! I ask that we treat one another with courtesy and respect. [*Interruption.*]

Excuse me, members! We may at times disagree with what is being said. That does not mean that we continue to have conversations or to make sedentary contributions.

Liam Kerr: Lorna Slater also believes that economic growth is wrong, leading Fergus Ewing to describe her as

“the enemy of Scotland’s small businesses”.—[*Official Report*, 1 March 2023; c 47.]

Presiding Officer, those are significant errors of judgment in a portfolio that we all want—no, need—to succeed. I said at the start, and I remind members, that this is not a question of Lorna Slater’s integrity. It is not a question of whether one supports or opposes the Bute house agreement. It is not a question of whether a member agrees with the principle of a deposit return scheme. The only question that is relevant is whether a member believes that Lorna Slater retains their confidence to carry out the duties, responsibilities and functions of the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. If they believe that she does, they will vote against my motion and signal that she retains their confidence; if they believe that she does not, they will vote for the motion that states that they do not have confidence in Lorna Slater to continue as the minister.

In order that Parliament has that opportunity to speak, I move,

That the Parliament has no confidence in the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, in light of the failure of the proposed Scottish Deposit Return Scheme.

17:09

The First Minister (Humza Yousaf): Lorna Slater and I are members of different parties—different traditions, even—but, for the good of our country and our climate, we have chosen to find compromise and to work together in the national interest. Time and again, members in other parties in the chamber have called for action that will tackle the climate emergency, only, time and

again, to shirk their responsibilities when difficult decisions need to be made. Lorna Slater does not do that. She does not shirk her responsibilities.

Today, again, we see the Conservatives engage in tactics that are—let us be honest—aimed to deflect rather than engage on the serious issues that our country faces. Today, we regrettably learned that a process is under way to appoint administrators to Circularity Scotland. That is not a result of the Scottish Government’s or Lorna Slater’s actions. Responsibility lies solely and squarely with a Conservative UK Government whose aim it has been from the beginning to sabotage the DRS. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: Thank you!

The First Minister: In his speech, Liam Kerr said—rightly, of course—that the Parliament voted for the deposit return scheme and for the regulations. The only small bit that he missed out was that it agreed to a scheme that included glass. What do we have? We have a Conservative Administration that, at the 11th hour, torpedoed Scotland’s deposit return scheme, making it impossible to progress. Those actions were taken in the full knowledge of the consequences that they would have for Scottish businesses, the scheme and Circularity Scotland.

Therefore, it is extraordinary that the Scottish Conservatives have lodged a motion of no confidence in the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity despite her unwavering commitment to our deposit return scheme—something that Liam Kerr mentioned in his speech. To be quite frank, it is hardly a surprise that the people of Scotland have given the Tories a vote of no confidence in every election in the past 50 years. [*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: Thank you!

The First Minister: Let me be clear: it is the Conservatives who have destroyed Scottish jobs and investment. It is the Tories who have undermined devolution at every turn. It is the Conservatives who, in bringing this absurd motion to the chamber, show themselves completely unable to take responsibility for the catastrophic decisions of their UK counterparts.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the First Minister give way?

The First Minister: I will in a moment.

It is the wrecking actions of Alister Jack that have put the DRS into jeopardy. Is Lorna Slater expected to be a mind reader? What deposit will the UK Government compel us to charge? It has not told us what that deposit will be, but it expects alignment. It expects alignment when it has not told us what the registration fee will be or what has to be on the labels. Can any Conservative

member tell us what will be in a UK deposit return scheme? I give way to Jamie Halcro Johnston on that point.

Jamie Halcro Johnston: The First Minister has been in the meetings with businesses. He has seen the anger and frustration. He knows the amount of money that businesses have spent on the scheme and he says that—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Can Mr Halcro Johnston please have silence while he puts his question?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: The First Minister said that Lorna Slater takes responsibility for the role that she has played. Has she, at any time, offered her resignation?

The First Minister: That was not worth the wait but, interestingly, Jamie Halcro Johnston was unable to give me an answer to any of the questions that I posed. *[Applause.]*

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, members!

The First Minister: I am proud to have been in meetings with Lorna Slater in which she has engaged with hundreds of businesses. A number of iconic Scottish businesses and brands have told us that the UK Government's interventions would put them at a competitive disadvantage.

The Parliament was set up to serve the people of Scotland, encourage collaboration between parties and deliver a better, fairer Scotland. I am proud to be part of a Government that embodies those values by bringing Green ministers into government for the first time in Scotland or, indeed, anywhere in the UK.

The question that I have is whether Labour and the Liberal Democrats will blindly follow the Conservative whip, giving the Conservatives protection and cover so that they can continue to undermine our democratic Parliament. I would hope not, but we will see very shortly.

Instead of working to deliver a better Scotland, the Conservatives are doing what their colleagues in Westminster are telling them to do. By contrast, Lorna Slater works every day to serve the people of Scotland. She is delivering great progress in efforts to tackle the nature emergency, and she has been overseeing the development of our new biodiversity strategy and the establishment of our new £65 million nature restoration fund. Under Lorna Slater's leadership on the circular economy, we have made one of the biggest investments in a generation to modernise recycling in Scotland through the £70 million recycling improvement fund.

The Tories have spent many months trying to undermine the operations of this Parliament. That is hardly a surprise, of course, from the party that

opposed the creation of this Parliament in the first place. Let us face it: it is no coincidence that they have pressed this stunt just a day after the House of Commons voted to press sanctions on Boris Johnson—sanctions that the soon-to-be Lord Jack failed to support. We know that today is meant to be a distraction from the work that the Government is undertaking and the work that Lorna Slater is undertaking to improve our nation.

I encourage members to flatly reject this Conservative motion and to stand up for this Scottish Parliament and Scotland's devolution.

17:16

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I am personally no stranger to motions of no confidence, having been the second minister to face one.

Until recently, there was another course of action that could have been taken. On 19 April, I wrote to the First Minister, outlining my concerns about the minister's ability to help reset the Scottish Government's relationship with business and to deliver a workable DRS that commanded the confidence of producers, industry and consumers. At that time, my solution was removing ministerial responsibility for the DRS from Lorna Slater—a solution that was sensible and that would have helped to reset the relationship with business and to get us a scheme in place.

I have still received no official reply, although the First Minister's spokesperson said that the First Minister had full confidence in Lorna Slater. I accept that Lorna Slater is not the only minister at fault. After all, it was the Scottish National Party's Roseanna Cunningham who pushed ahead with the legislation, and it has been championed heavily by First Ministers. However, Lorna Slater was in charge of the scheme and is responsible for the mess that we have now. *[Interruption.]* I know that this is difficult to listen to, but I only have a short time in which to speak.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Sarah Boyack: No, I will not.

The minister failed to listen to businesses and stakeholders such as GS1 UK and British Glass, whose representatives told me that they were not given meetings with the minister, despite repeated requests, and local businesses did not get meetings with the minister until MSPs asked for those meetings. Local authorities were left in the dark: they were not seen as potential partners, which left them unable to prepare for the financial impact on their waste services. The Scottish Government has failed to request a DRS exclusion

from the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 for six months.

Last week at the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, however, Lorna Slater washed her hands of all responsibility for the work of CSL. Despite questions from MSPs on viability—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: I ask for all the conversations that are going on across the aisles to cease.

Sarah Boyack: Ms Slater said that those points were matters for industry. In response to my topical question today, we learned that CSL has called in the administrators. I have stated previously that the Tory Government's actions are indefensible, but the Scottish Government must also be held accountable for the decisions that it has made.

Last week I discovered through a freedom of information request that there were concerns in February this year over the viability of the August 2023 go-live date. The Scottish Government's director of environment and forestry emailed officials in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, saying:

"Can we please meet urgently to work out what can be done to fast-track a commitment to an IMA exemption within the next week. If it lingers beyond then we run a very serious risk of compromising our 16 Aug go live date."

In February, Lorna Slater and Nicola Sturgeon toured television and radio studios encouraging businesses to part with their cash and sign up for the scheme and at the end of February, in this chamber, the minister said:

"Scotland's deposit return scheme remains on course to launch on 16 August this year."—*[Official Report, 28 February 2023, c 5.]*

However, while the minister painted a rosy picture for MSPs, her officials were warning that there was a very serious risk that the August 2023 go-live date would not work. Businesses have invested hundreds of millions of pounds in a scheme that, in private, ministers knew was likely to be delayed, but Lorna Slater and Nicola Sturgeon left Scottish businesses in the dark.

Then there was a delay until March next year. Scottish businesses have been under immense financial stress and pressure. The First Minister himself mentioned the hundreds of millions of pounds of investment that have been made but will not now be used. We have had months of chaos and grandstanding. This SNP-Green Government has now failed to deliver on reuse, recycling and tackling litter and someone must be held accountable.

Two months ago, I asked Humza Yousaf to take responsibility and to remove Lorna Slater's

ministerial responsibility for the DRS. At the end of the day, it is not fair for workers to lose their jobs as a result of Government decisions and for Lorna Slater not to lose hers.

17:21

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The motion of no confidence is the most shameless, cynical and desperate Tory stunt that I have yet seen in this chamber. On the very day on which their leadership at Westminster fell apart among Boris Johnson's lies, they lodged the motion in a pathetic attempt to distract everyone from the dying days of their Government.

The audacity of the motion—the absolute brass neck of it—beggars belief, because it is the Tories who have scuppered the DRS scheme by forcing the removal of glass, which the scheme was built around, and by setting conditions on its operation for which it is impossible to plan. Now they are trying to gaslight Scotland into believing that it was somehow Lorna Slater's fault all along. That is absurd.

We can expect that sort of rank opportunism from the Tories, but what about Labour? I urge every Labour and Liberal Democrat member in the chamber to think long and hard about what they are voting for and whom they are lining up with to do that, because this is not just an attack on Lorna Slater—it is an attack on everyone who believes in devolution. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Members!

Mark Ruskell: Sarah Boyack is shaking her head, but if she does not believe me, she should listen to Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford, who recognises the power grab for exactly what it is.

It is important to reflect on the qualities that good ministers have an abundance. The ability to show determination is important, but so is the ability to listen, to understand how policy affects people and business—*[Interruption]*

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear Mr Ruskell.

Mark Ruskell: —and to respond with humility to concerns and make improvements.

Lorna Slater was tasked by Parliament with bringing in one of the most ambitious DRS schemes in Europe. She has spent the past 18 months listening and responding, and revising the scheme, so that we now have a DRS that has been designed and shaped by business itself. It sets the model for the UK, and Lorna Slater deserves huge credit for getting it to the point of launch—*[Interruption]*—only for the Tories to step in.

The Presiding Officer: I am finding it very difficult to hear Mr Ruskell and would be grateful if

we could hear him. Please refrain from commenting.

Mark Ruskell: We can contrast Lorna Slater's actions with the disgraceful actions of Alister Jack, who, as Secretary of State for Scotland, stood up in the House of Commons and completely misrepresented our deposit return scheme. Alister Jack and his fellow ministers have acted with disdain for Scottish business and with contempt for the years of work that have been spent designing and investing in a DRS scheme for Scotland. They have not listened or compromised and they refuse even now to provide the certainty that business needs to move forward. Last night, Jack would not even vote to censure Boris Johnson for breaking almost every rule in the book. Instead he stood right with him to the shameful end. If anyone should be resigning, it is him. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Members!

Mark Ruskell: I am proud of my minister, Lorna Slater. She has not only brought the DRS to the point of launch but has increased investment in nature, banned new waste incinerators and introduced the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill to cut littering and waste. She is also delivering Scotland's first new national park in a generation. She is a doer—a renewables engineer with real-world experience in industry. We are lucky to have her—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear Mr Ruskell.

Mark Ruskell: —yet the disrespect and lack of courtesy that are shown, even now, by some members in the chamber has at times disgusted me. This Parliament needs more Lorna Slaters and so does the Government, so get used to her. She is just getting started and has barely even begun to deliver the transformative agenda of the Greens in government. She is not going anywhere but forward tonight.

17:25

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I take no pleasure in addressing members on the matter that is before us. My party will vote for the motion, because we believe that the situation is too far gone for Lorna Slater to retain the confidence of the Parliament. That is because it is clear that business lost confidence in the minister a long time ago.

There was immense frustration at her failure to answer basic questions about such an important scheme. There was immense frustration at a scheme design that would take Scottish produce off Scottish shelves. If it had been executed with care from the start, as has been the case in other European countries' schemes, it could have

dramatically reduced waste and emissions. Instead, a pig's ear was made of a good idea, and no amount of spin can hide that. Retailers and producers could have worked with a scheme that was coherent and did not throw up barriers, but that is not what the SNP-Green Government put in front of them.

Businesses have been caught in the middle and strung along, thereby incurring costs and desperately struggling to navigate the uncertainty. Staff at Circularity Scotland—60 people—have been left high and dry and are facing immediate unemployment. For months, there has been cross-party pressure, including from Government back benchers, for the Scottish Government to amend the deposit return scheme. We offered good and reasoned debate about why delays and changes were necessary.

However, I must say that if the Conservatives were serious about today's vote, they would have talked to MSPs in the other parties beforehand. They did not. Instead, there is, I believe, an element of deflection from the Conservatives and an attempt to distract from their own—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear Mr Cole-Hamilton.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: There is certainly an attempt to distract from the Conservatives problems in London, and it is no coincidence that the no-confidence vote is what Conservative MSPs were tweeting about last night while MPs backed the partygate report.

My party finds the debate to be wholly depressing, because the problem at the heart of it all is that we have two Governments that are incapable of owning up to their mistakes, that deflect blame and for whom “co-operation” is a dirty word, even if that is what hard—

Ross Greer: Will Alex Cole-Hamilton take an intervention?

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I am sorry, but I am coming to the close of my remarks. I will not take an intervention, I am afraid.

The Governments are incapable of co-operation, even though that is what hard-pressed businesses are crying out for. Businesses lost confidence in Lorna Slater long ago, but they would not have much good to say about either of our Governments, if we are honest.

We are listening to businesses. It is in that context that the Scottish Liberal Democrats will vote for the motion.

17:28

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Today's vote of no confidence is not a matter that anyone would take lightly, but I want to make it clear to Ms Slater that this is not personal. It is about a collective failure in the minister's and her Government's ability to deliver on the promises that they made to Scotland.

Lorna Slater, the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, who travelled to the Western Isles on a chartered catamaran at public expense, pleaded ignorance to the UK minister in the face of questioning on gene editing. She is a minister who failed to warn of the delays to the DRS.

The SNP knew what was on the horizon—wildlife management and a fishing ban in 50 per cent of Scotland's seas—and the party saw its scapegoat for the inevitable calamities that would follow. She was thrown to the wolves and the wolves have had a field day. Fergus Ewing has described Ms Slater as

"the enemy of ... small businesses".—[*Official Report*, 1 March 2023; c 47.]

With Ms Slater in post, Scotland's carbon emissions have increased and biodiversity has plummeted, with iconic species including the capercaillie being on the brink of extinction. The minister has also failed to make any progress on her plans to ban waste incineration.

Like a King Midas in reverse, everything that Ms Slater has touched has seemed to turn to screeching U-turns and lengthy delays—anything but gold. However, I would say that her failures do not need to be a bad thing; we can learn from these mistakes. We can begin to understand the value of proper consultation, of taking our time to get things right and of evidence-based policy making that engages with and listens to businesses and communities throughout the process.

Ideological fervour alone is never enough. It falls short of the expectations that the Scottish public have of us. I feel that that goes to the heart of what has gone wrong here. Rushing policies such as the deposit return scheme and the fishing ban without taking the time to speak to the people whose lives will be most affected by them comes at a cost, and that cost is the people's trust in this Government's ability to do the right thing. We cannot ignore the minister's woeful record on maintaining the trust of the people of Scotland. As Blair Bowman said of the minister's handling of DRS,

"We deserve better than this incompetence."

Can the public continue to trust a minister who misled Parliament over Scotland's renewable energy statistics? Can business trust a minister who does not believe in the concept of economic growth? Can farmers trust a minister who repeatedly ignored formal and informal warnings over the need to allow use of Asulox? Most important, can we trust a minister who promised to deliver a deposit return scheme when the firm that is in charge of the scheme has been put under threat of bankruptcy—[*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: Members.

Rachael Hamilton: —jeopardising jobs and investment? The answer, I am afraid, is no.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on the motion of no confidence. It is now time to move on to the next item of business.

Decision Time

17:31

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-09594.2, in the name of Jamie Halcro Johnston, which seeks to amend motion S6M-09594, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the Scottish innovation strategy, 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.

17:32

Meeting suspended.

17:33

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We will proceed with the division on amendment S6M-09594.2, in the name of Jamie Halcro Johnston.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)

(SNP)

Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)

Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)

Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)

Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)

Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)

McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)

Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)

O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)

Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)

Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)

Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-09594.2, in the name of Jamie Halcro Johnston, is: For 32, Against 69, Abstentions 21.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-09594.1, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-09594, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the Scottish innovation strategy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)

Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)

Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)

Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)

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O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)

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Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)

Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)

Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)

Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)

Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)

Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)

Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)

Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)

Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)

Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)

Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)

Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)

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)

Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)

FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)

Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (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)

Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)

Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)

Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)

Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)

Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)

Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)

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)

Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)

Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)

Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)

Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)

Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)

MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)

Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)

Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)

Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)

McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)

McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)

McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)

McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)

McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)

McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)

Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 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)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-09594.1, in the name of Daniel Johnson, is: For 20, Against 97, Abstentions 3.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-09594, in the name of Richard Lochhead, on the Scottish investment strategy, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of Scotland's National Innovation Strategy; recognises its vision for Scotland to become one of the most innovative small nations in the world over the next decade as a key part of delivering a greener, fairer, wellbeing economy; recognises Scotland's potential to become a world leader in four key areas of the economy, which are energy to address the climate emergency, health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and data and digital technologies; welcomes the strategy's four programmes, which are a national network of clusters in key sectors, a renewed investment and support offer for businesses, a new framework for realising the commercial and community benefits of research, and a new programme focused on supporting businesses to become active in innovation and improve their productivity; recognises that the Scottish Government will measure and evaluate Scotland's innovation performance and compare this to similar nations on an annual basis; welcomes the extensive engagement, consultation and joint working with industry, academia, entrepreneurs, investors and the public sector that helped develop the strategy; notes the successful examples of innovation taking place across the country; recognises the important role of enhanced employee engagement and alternative ownership models in fostering innovation, and understands the significant opportunities for Scotland, and its businesses, entrepreneurs, workers, communities and

universities, to grow and scale its excellence in innovation and technology to become recognised globally as a world-leading innovation nation.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-09607, in the name of Liam Kerr, on a motion of no confidence, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and
 Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse)
 (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine)
 (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)
 (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the
 division on motion S6M-09607, in the name of
 Liam Kerr, on a motion of no confidence, is: For
 55, Against 68, Abstentions 0.

Motion disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision
 time.

Just Transition for Rural Communities

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-09435, in the name of Alexander Burnett, on ensuring a just transition for rural communities. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament believes that what it sees as the Scottish Government's failure to listen to local communities has resulted in an unjust transition to net zero taking place in rural communities across Scotland, including those in the Aberdeenshire West constituency; recognises what it sees as the vital importance of an energy strategy that uses a mix of energy sources to achieve a just transition and protect the livelihood and character of rural communities; acknowledges what it sees as the significant concerns of local communities and local authorities, which, it believes, have overwhelmingly opposed industrial sized onshore windfarm proposals, but have then been overruled by the Energy Consents Unit in Edinburgh; notes the view that the Scottish Government should ensure that local community objections to renewable energy developments are a key factor in considering when approval should be granted; further notes the calls for the Scottish Government to introduce legislation for a mandatory minimum megawatt-hour community benefit contribution rate from renewable energy developments, which would increase in line with inflation; recognises the role that it believes that community benefit should play in ensuring that communities receive fair compensation as part of a real just transition in areas where renewable energy developments are being considered, and notes the calls for the Scottish Government to implement the recommendations of the joint review by the UK and Scottish governments of ETSU-R-97 on all new onshore windfarm developments, in particular, the recommendation that controlling values for noise during the night should not be higher for night-time than during the day.

17:41

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I thank members for their support in bringing my motion to the chamber.

All across Scotland, communities face being under siege from wind farm developments despite strong opposition to them. I have been in touch with groups such as the nae Fare group, Save Our Hills Moffat, and Save Straiton for Scotland, representatives of which I am delighted to welcome to the public gallery.

Chapter 7 of the Scottish Government's onshore wind policy estimates

"that 3400 turbines will be installed in Scotland between now and 2030 ... the equivalent of a new turbine being installed every day between 2025-2030."

However, true to form, the Scottish Government's maths on that point does not add up, as almost 3,500 wind turbines going up in that time would equate to nearly two per day. The plans highlight

the decimation that is faced by our countryside, which is already at saturation point.

It is therefore vital that the views of affected communities are heard and properly considered. At this point I ask members to note my entry in the register of members' interests. I point out that, despite the minister's spin on them, the two 12kW farm turbines built a decade ago are tiny in comparison with the industrial-scale developments in the Cabrach, which are some 45,000 times larger.

There are several wind farm projects in my own constituency, and I am not completely opposed to onshore wind power. For example, my constituents in the upper Deveron valley have accepted and benefited from some of those projects. We need energy diversification, and everyone will need to play their part in achieving a just transition.

However, there is nothing just about developments that are destroying our rural areas. I have met people from communities that are dominated by wind farms, which they have described as being surrounded by a ring of steel. At those meetings I was joined by the minister, Richard Lochhead, to whom I am sure the community was grateful. However, the extensions at Clashindarroch and Craig Watch developments will see the installation of an additional 54 turbines, making a total of 146 turbines within a 10km radius. Perhaps Gillian Martin could ask her colleague whether he listened to the community following those meetings or whether he will just ignore his constituents.

The Hill of Fare proposal is for 16 turbines, each some 200m tall, on a hill that is itself 300m above the landscape. If it receives approval it will be the first on royal Deeside and will set a precedent that will open the floodgates to more industrial-size turbines destroying the landscape, parts of which are protected and which our tourism sector relies on. Last month, the nae Fare group wrote to the First Minister following a survey by eight community councils that found that 71 per cent of residents opposed the development. It is still waiting for a reply, so perhaps the minister could chase a response.

A few weeks ago, the First Minister said that highly protected marine areas would not be imposed on communities that are opposed to them. Will the minister make the same commitment for wind farms exceeding 50MW? Enough is enough. Currently, no elected representative, at any level, gets a vote on wind farm proposals exceeding 50MW. Decisions are made by officials in the energy consents unit, who are far removed from those affected, and who can ignore any council or community objections.

The Meall Buidhe proposals in the Highlands will proceed despite more than 200 objections from residents and Highland Council. The consents unit reporter refused to engage with residents or meet local fisheries to discuss their environmental concerns. I therefore ask the minister today to require the energy consents unit to meet with local communities that are impacted by its decisions.

Furthermore, the current process does not give due consideration to sites of historical and natural importance. Developments can disrupt habitats, endanger birds and impact hydrology, with devastating consequences for our wild salmon.

Last week, I raised in the chamber the risks to Craig Dorney. It is potentially Scotland's largest Pictish find and has partial designated status from Historic Environment Scotland, but it will be destroyed by the development in question. The Hill of Fare also has historical significance as the site of the battle of Corrichie, and the victory of Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1562.

Policy 7 in national planning framework 4 sets out the importance of protecting such sites, yet no ministers have, in written responses to me, provided any reassurance on how or whether that will happen. I ask the minister again what protections the Government will give to our rural communities in order to ensure that those sites are not destroyed by onshore wind farm developments.

It is the case that if a development is approved, those who will be affected are compensated. The Scottish Government recommends a community benefit of £5,000 per MWh. When I was told that the Scottish Government had no plans to review the community benefit, which was introduced almost a decade ago in 2014, I asked it to reconsider uprating the benefit to ensure that it is at least in line with inflation. In England, a consultation is considering benefits such as communities getting a stake in the wind farms, funding for new facilities and a discount on energy bills. I urge the Scottish Government to follow in England's footsteps.

Although the excuse has been that that is a reserved matter, nothing has stopped the Scottish Government pushing through its own strategies and guidance. I ask the minister, therefore, whether the Government will conduct a review of that clearly devolved matter.

Finally, although the issue is not simply about the principle of the ECU forcing through applications in denial of local voices, the fact is that the guidance that it uses is out of date. The ETSU-R-97 guidance on "The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms" regarding noise pollution has been reviewed, and we now have a

situation in which new wind farms that are being approved today will not meet the recommendations once they are completed.

I received a response from the UK Government today, welcoming the research and recognising that short-term updates could be made to bring the guidance into line with the most up-to-date evidence, including in relation to daytime and night-time limits. I ask the minister whether she shares that view, and whether she agrees that there should be a moratorium on new applications until the recommendations have been implemented.

Renewable energy is important in order to meet net zero targets, but this is an unjust transition that is costing local communities, historical sites and the local environment. Wind farm applications are just the start—follow-on development will lead to giant pylons and substations wrecking our countryside, and rural communities are powerless to stop these modern-day Highland clearances.

I urge the Scottish Government to consider the issues that are raised today and take seriously the voices of rural communities that are fighting for local democracy and the protection of our beautiful countryside, before it is too late.

17:48

John Swinney (Perthshire North) (SNP): I congratulate Alexander Burnett on bringing to the chamber this important debate in order to give voice to the views of people in rural Scotland on the crucial role that they have to play, as we all do, in the transition to net zero.

All of us, having experienced what we have done in the past few weeks alone, are living through the visual manifestation of the climate crisis that we face and the significant changes in climate that are taking place. One of the questions at the heart of the debate was highlighted by a Conservative member, Liam Kerr, earlier today, when he raised the issue of water scarcity. I can hardly believe that we are having a discussion about water scarcity in June, when we normally confront such issues much later in the summer period. That is another illustration of the impact of the climate crisis.

It all raises the question of whether we are serious about tackling these issues. We have to be serious about tackling the climate crisis, and renewable energy, as Alexander Burnett acknowledged, has a role to play in that as part of a mix of energy sources.

A number of the calls that Mr Burnett makes in his motion are reasonable. The points about the need for an uplift in community benefit contribution rates, for example, are valid and should be

advanced, and the Government should consider those issues. We must maintain an up-to-date analysis of any societal impacts of renewable energy, and it is important that we reflect on and consider the points about the noise from night-time activity in the decision-making process.

Those are all completely reasonable points. However, we also have to recognise the necessity of ensuring that enough steps are being taken to tackle the severity and gravity of the climate crisis that we face. Onshore wind, along with offshore wind and hydro schemes, and various other measures such as investment in solar energy, are all part of that mix in the transition that we have to make.

My last point relates to the point that Mr Burnett makes in his motion where he criticises the energy consents unit in Edinburgh. With the greatest of respect, I do not think that the wording of the motion in that regard is particularly generous or charitable. I do not think that it is right to criticise public officials who are simply interpreting the law as it is made by this institution. Decisions on energy consents are taken not through some random process by civil servants, but by reference to the legitimate points that Mr Burnett raised regarding the preservation of the natural environment. Historical sites of significance, and a variety of other considerations that Parliament lays down, have to be looked at in that process. In order to build public confidence, those decisions are taken by reference to statute and evidence, which is then published in marshalled information by the consents unit.

Alexander Burnett: I hear what Mr Swinney says, and I would not like to criticise the officials in the energy consents unit, because the work that they do is set out by the politicians and by this place. Their remit to be able to do stuff actually stems from here.

Nevertheless, does Mr Swinney not agree that it is wrong that not a single elected representative has any say in such developments?

John Swinney: I do not recognise that characterisation of the process. Politicians are involved in setting the framework within which those decisions are taken. That is the proper role for politicians: to say what standards should be followed—

Alexander Burnett: Will the member give way on that point?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member really should begin to conclude.

John Swinney: Decisions are then to be taken in accordance with that framework.

I will make one last point, Presiding Officer, if you will allow me to do so.

If a local authority was dissatisfied with a decision that had been taken, it would be free to challenge that decision—as with any decision by the Scottish Government—in a process of law. That option is available if there has been an error in the application of the law, and that is the crucial point that we have to consider.

However, I do not want that issue to prevent me from recognising that there are important calls in the motion to which I hope that the Government will respond constructively. Communities that are making a sacrifice to be part of a just transition must be able to share in the benefits, as many communities in my constituency have shared in the benefits of wind farms that have been approved in their locality, which contribute to enhancing the health and wellbeing of the constituency that I have the privilege to represent.

17:54

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I am pleased to have the opportunity to voice the frustrations of my constituents tonight, and I thank Alexander Burnett for bringing this much-needed debate to the chamber. The issue speaks to the wider contempt in which rural communities are held by this Government, and more specifically to the lack of voice that they have in the planning system—a system that often feels like a sham that is stacked in favour of the developers.

Too often, we see the views and decisions of local authorities discounted and overturned. Communities and local people say no, yet these projects are still imposed. Objectors are treated like second-class citizens whose views count for less than the views of the Government or of developers. That has certainly been my experience, with developers seeking to block my participation in inquiry sessions, asserting that because I am not a landscape expert, the views that I express on behalf of my constituents do not matter, and developers arguing that community concerns are better lumped together into less formal hearing sessions, if they are recognised at all.

It is a system in which slick out-of-town lawyers and consultants rock up in their top-of-the-range gas-guzzling sports cars and tell rural communities that they do not matter; who claim that, for the sake of progress and the planet, we must see our landscapes destroyed while the devastating impacts on wildlife, peat, watercourses and biodiversity are conveniently downplayed.

All the while, local people are told that they should be grateful for the pittance that they are offered by way of return—a so-called community benefit. It is nothing more than state-condoned bribery, which is used to divide communities and

manipulate planning outcomes. It is all the more insulting when it is contrasted with the millions that are banked by the new renewables barons.

On top of that feeling of unfairness, we see a landscape impact methodology that focuses on what are often manipulated viewpoints that overlook what it is like to live and work in the vicinity of these developments, where people intricately know, love and are connected to their landscapes across generations. Linked to that, we also see a very narrow focus on residential amenity, which forgets that the environment around them is exactly why people choose to live in the countryside.

Under the current system, many pockets of outstanding natural beauty are sacrificed because they are too small to merit national protection. Tourism concerns are downplayed, despite developers' own studies showing a loss of jobs in some areas post-build—and of course, the promised new green jobs just do not materialise.

It gets worse, however, because there is something truly sinister going on below the radar. In this life, it is always easier to turn a blind eye, but I tell the minister that our current planning system is being corrupted by cash payments. This is serious, and is turbo-charging rural depopulation. Some people call it the new clearances, but it can be more accurately described as the disappearances.

Secret deals take place, and non-disclosure agreements signing away people's rights to object in the planning process in exchange for payment are now commonplace in Scotland. Others sell directly to the developer or those connected with the project in order to reduce the planning requirements. They literally vanish from their homes, and the only trace that they leave is a letter in the hands of the developer, with a vague statement confirming that the wind farm application had nothing to do with their move. Those murky practices are gutting our rural values and pitting neighbour against neighbour.

We cannot blame people for taking the golden ticket, but in this context, it makes those who choose to make a stand in the David-and-Goliath battle, to stand up for their homes and their communities against attempts to manipulate the planning system, all the more impressive. I pay tribute to those of them who have been in the Parliament today.

We need to act, as those practices are not right in Scotland in 2023. Climate concerns, our environment and our people, not who can pay the most, should be at the heart of our consents regime. I say to the minister: it is time to step in and stop the rot—our communities deserve a fair hearing.

17:58

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Alexander Burnett on lodging the motion and managing to bring the debate to the chamber.

There are parts of the motion that I do not agree with, but I think that it is important that we have this debate, so that people can raise issues from their communities and test them in the Parliament, especially when our constituents are with us in the public gallery tonight.

However, I want to hold to account our colleague Mr Burnett, and indeed every Conservative MSP, because they stood on a manifesto which stated:

"We need to deliver a wholly renewable powered Scotland, and we have the wealth of natural resources to achieve this."

The manifesto went on to say,

"We also support the expansion of onshore wind capacity in Scotland where it is agreed by and benefits local communities, as well as our country as a whole."

I do not think that the motion matches up with that commitment exactly.

I agree with the motion's emphasis on the involvement of communities, and I will reflect on that. We see that in our planning system—it is crucial that communities are involved and treated with respect and that local authorities consult them properly. We need to ensure that our planning system is not a top-down process in which controversial issues automatically go up to the Scottish Government and then get given the go-ahead.

There is a need for a more grounded, local approach. In Scottish Labour's manifesto for the most recent Scottish Parliament elections, we suggested that there should be what we called the third-party right of appeal, so that local communities could appeal against a decision being taken. That would ensure that communities are given more priority, and it would encourage developers to talk to them more.

Alexander Burnett: Will the member give way on that point?

Sarah Boyack: I am not going to give way, as I will try to stick to the four minutes.

I welcome the point that Mr Burnett made in his opening remarks about community benefits. That is a huge, and much underexplored, opportunity. There is an issue with regard to communities that see huge developments taking place while they personally do not get any benefit from them. There is something that we need to change there, as it must be a frustration in terms of not only the view, but their energy bills.

We have designed a grid that incentivises the building of power closest to dense urban communities, and yet the renewables transition is all about ensuring that we have renewables across the country. That needs to be a fair process. There are other solutions whereby communities can work with developers. In Fintry, for example, we saw a fantastic development where people are, to this day, benefiting from the wind turbines in their area.

I recently went to visit Point and Sandwick Trust in the Western Isles and saw its community-owned wind farm. That trust receives an income of nearly £1 million a year, which has been used to support the community and support local people with their energy bills. There is an opportunity here.

The United Kingdom Climate Change Committee, in its “Delivering a Reliable Decarbonised Power System” report, projected that our UK electricity demand will double from about 300TWh to 600TWh by 2050. We need to work together, and we need to test the system, as colleagues are doing today.

We need political leadership so that we can increase our renewables supply, but we need to acknowledge that the just transition relates to members of the public and local communities. For example, why does our planning system not require developers to have a proportion of the development employing local members of the public or requiring developments that are made in Scotland so that we do not simply import all our wind turbines?

Solar is another big opportunity—we could be seeing much more in solar development. I was interested to see that Highland Council is looking at three solar projects. As I understand it, developments with technology mean that you can now have solar and farming at the same time. There are opportunities, and we need to be ahead of the game. That is why we in Scottish Labour are very keen to ensure that Scotland is a clean energy superpower. We need to create the jobs that I have talked about across the country, and we need to cut people’s bills, in particular in rural communities, because at 35 per cent, fuel poverty is much worse in our rural communities, many of which are off the gas grid and have expensive electricity bills.

We need to turn that around and boost energy security, and play our part in tackling the climate crisis, but we need to do so in such a way that we are working with local communities. I see that in the urban areas as well as the rural areas in my region. We need to boost the capacity of communities to work together and to negotiate with developers. For example, the work that is done by the co-operative movement is actually supporting local communities now.

I would like to hear from the minister about how the Scottish Government can do more to work with communities and fund our councils so that we see more local ownership and sensitivity to local developments. We need to think about how we can make the planning system better to ensure that local communities do not simply see a renewables project installed near them without any real consultation or engagement, but get an actual benefit from it—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Boyack, I ask you to conclude.

Sarah Boyack: If we do that, it will be a just transition.

18:04

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate, and I congratulate my colleague Alexander Burnett on bringing it to the chamber.

The route to an effective just transition is an issue that has rightly received much scrutiny in recent years. It is important to remember, however, that failing to achieve the transition in a way that is fair and proportionate will impact on some communities far more than it will impact on others. The motion speaks about the impact of an unjust transition on rural communities. It is important to highlight that, in the view of such communities, the transition that they are witnessing is truly unjust.

The motion also speaks about the way in which many rural communities have overwhelmingly opposed onshore wind farm proposals, only to have their objections overruled through central Government diktat. We have already heard a number of examples of that, and there are others across my region. The Rhodders wind farm development in Clackmannanshire was rejected by the council in 2013, having received objections from several community groups. However, that refusal was promptly overturned by the Scottish Government the following year.

A true just transition for rural communities would be one that works with them and talks about their concerns instead of riding roughshod over them and—as we have heard—imposing large wind farm developments on them. It would ensure that such developments give back to the surrounding communities, which has been touched on.

The motion is right to speak about the calls for a mandatory minimum contribution rate from renewable energy developments. The Burnfoot Hill wind farm community fund, which provides grants for communities across Clackmannanshire, is an example of how such developments can provide compensation for the communities that are most

affected. If rural communities are to experience a just transition, we must ensure that all such community funds give back to their surrounding communities in a way that is truly fair.

There are a number of ways in which the journey to net zero risks hitting rural communities the hardest of all. They include schemes such as the Scottish National Party's workplace parking levy, which will hit people in rural communities who have no choice but to commute by car to the facilities and locations that they require to access.

The Minister for Energy and the Environment (Gillian Martin): Does Alexander Stewart recognise that the decisions about workplace parking levies are devolved to local government?

Alexander Stewart: I thank the minister for her intervention, but I say to her that rural communities will pay the price of those levies because they have little choice in how they are managed. The slow roll-out of electric charging points in rural settings will also make life increasingly difficult for rural commuters over the next decade.

Our rural communities already face tough challenges in the transition to net zero. Despite that, the Government is still forcing them to accept proposals to which they have objected. Alongside my Conservative colleagues, I will continue to stand up for rural communities, whose voices are not being heard throughout the transition process. Only by working with such communities and ensuring that we compensate and understand them can a just transition be achieved for people in every area of Scotland.

18:08

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): It is a pleasure to contribute to this members' business debate. I congratulate Alexander Burnett who, with my assistance, managed to achieve the requisite number of signatures. I support the motion not because I am in agreement with everything that is contained in it but because—as others have pointed out—there are really important elements in it that need to be debated but which we have not had the opportunity to debate. We need to reflect the experience of renewables that our constituents across Scotland have had and the community benefit that they have seen flowing from such projects.

There is something to be said about how, when such plans start, outreach to communities leaves a lot to be desired. There tends to be outreach to certain stakeholders in renewables projects. Sometimes, the individuals within our communities are the last to find out about the plans—frequently from Facebook groups for their villages and areas, which point out that something is happening.

However, we have the academic research and intellectual knowledge to understand that dialogical forms of engagement—when companies, local authorities and the Scottish Government reach out properly, have a two-way discussion with constituents and generate support—mean that people have confidence in what they are being told. They can see the results and the benefit that will come to them.

I can speak of companies such as EDF, Tarmac and Viridor Credits that work closely with communities and share assets, money and experience, so that the communities feel that they are part of the industry. I have, in my experience of offshore wind companies coming onshore and of onshore wind farms, seen how that can be a struggle and challenge. Inch Cape Offshore Limited, which is coming to Prestonpans, has worked incredibly hard to reach out to its communities before the scheme is formally in place and has provided support for the children's gala, holiday clubs and work, much of which needed support because of the cuts that the local authority has suffered, although I will not pursue that point. Berwick Bank wind farm also intends to come ashore close to Dunbar.

We see challenges when a community is expected to deal with infrastructure changes in a range of areas, and people have to take it upon themselves to struggle to identify what the impact of that will be on their community. We then have the challenge of compensation in the future—what it should look like, how much it should be and how much it should be divided.

Communities have the challenge that the shoreline is massive, so who is the community that is being talked about? The local community council was specific in saying to Berwick Bank what the effect of the development on its small community and it coming ashore over a battle site and close to an industrial area would be, when what it wanted could be achieved more easily.

We need to do better in the Scottish Parliament, and companies that hold contracts need to continue to do better and reach out. If we fail and do not take our communities with us—there is a real chance that that might happen—the challenge of reaching net zero will be that much harder. Why should our communities feel that they are being dumped on to help the central belt? Why should they feel that they are the last to know? Why should they sometimes be the last to see the benefit?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we move on to the next speaker, I advise that, because of the number of members who wish to speak in the debate, I am minded to accept a motion without notice under rule 8.14.3, to extend

the debate by up to 30 minutes. I invite Alexander Burnett to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Alexander Burnett*]

Motion agreed to.

18:12

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I congratulate my colleague Alexander Burnett on bringing the debate to the chamber, and I am grateful that I am allowed to speak in it.

I am a South Scotland member of the Scottish Parliament and, as such, I have consistently to deal with onshore wind issues coming into my mailbag. I was struck by Alexander Burnett's saying that he has spoken to communities that are "surrounded by a ring of steel."

In the previous parliamentary term, I had a similar issue in East Ayrshire, where a town ended up being surrounded by wind turbines. In every direction, on every hill, the view was of huge wind turbines, despite consistent rejection from local communities.

There is not enough consultation with our communities and their voices are being ignored when they make their views known. Earlier today, I was in Abington, where a public consultation is being held about putting in an electricity transmission substation near Redshaw.

It strikes me that when we do consultations on wind turbines, local communities do not understand that it is not just the turbines that will be put in—there will also be things such as substations and overhead cabling.

Oliver Mundell: Does Brian Whittle agree that those considerations should form part of the energy consents unit's application process before giving consent, and should not be tagged on afterwards?

Brian Whittle: Mr Mundell has picked up the very next point that I was going to make; it is absolutely true that it should not just be about the wind turbines. The community should know exactly what it is being asked to put up with, and that should take into account things such as substations and cabling. The whole process of dealing with applications for wind turbines must include that.

I have, for the past five years, been dealing with a case in which a wind farm was erected despite concerns about the effects that it would have on local water supplies. The rural houses' private water supplies were, indeed, polluted. New boreholes were established by the contractor, but

the water quality was very poor. Those households cannot get water-quality tests done regularly, as is supposed to happen, which is part of the problem. It is all very well saying that we will deal with such issues after building the wind farm, but we have to make sure that companies and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency are well-enough resourced to ensure that regulations are met.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Does Brian Whittle recognise that often when applications are referred to the Scottish Government for approval, those approvals come with conditions, but local authorities have no capacity or resources to police those conditions? That is a fundamental flaw in the Scottish Government approving such applications.

Brian Whittle: Finlay Carson is, of course, absolutely correct, and that is exactly the issue that I want to raise. It is all very well having conditions during the application, but authorities have to be able to enforce those conditions. Our local authorities are not currently resourced to do that.

I am not against onshore wind—in fact, I see it as part of a potential solution in which wind power could power hydrogen generation, which in turn could create local energy supplies off the grid. However, communities feel that they are being used and are being sacrificed to power the central belt. If we continue to develop onshore wind, honesty is required—not just in respect of erecting wind farms, but in respect of development of substations and overhead cables, which we have talked about.

We need to work on our planning issues, which have been discussed at length by just about every member in the debate. Taking 13 years from application to build is not conducive to our reaching net zero. Perhaps we need to look at how we can set areas aside where there might be agreement about specific presumption of planning. Communities with onshore wind farms on their doorsteps should, at the very least, have lower energy bills, and community voices must not only be heard, but listened to. I will end my contribution there.

18:18

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): I thank Alexander Burnett for securing the debate and for arranging the round-table discussion on the issue earlier today. Many important points have been made in the debate, and I particularly associate myself with Sarah Boyack's contribution on third-party rights of appeal.

I fully support the need for a rapid expansion of the renewables sector but, as has been said, that

needs to be done with the support of local communities and clear benefits to local people. That does not mean that every proposal from every developer should be granted, because there are significant problems, for example, with the ownership of much of the sector and some of the people who are behind proposals.

In North Ayrshire recently, there have been big community campaigns against the Rigghill wind farm and Cumbrae solar farm proposals. We need to make sure that planning law and indeed the national planning framework 6 ensure that local communities' voices are listened to.

I am particularly interested in the motion's reference to the joint review by the UK and Scottish Governments of the ETSU-R-97 regulations on all new onshore wind farm developments because of issues that constituents have raised with me over an extended period about low-frequency noise and vibration not just from wind turbines but from wind turbine testing, drillships and a range of other industrial developments.

I note that the Scottish Government intends to implement the recommendations of the joint review by the UK and Scottish Governments, which I support. However, we need to go further, in particular in relation to measuring the noise effects of wind turbines. The research on that has moved on and the regulations are now out of date. I am disappointed that the review does not seem to recognise the specific concerns about low-frequency noise. Despite the fact that constituents have repeatedly raised that issue with me and other elected representatives for many years, no new guidance has been issued for local authorities. We are still relying on regulations from 2005.

Although local authorities have a duty to investigate complaints relating to noise pollution under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, they are not supplied with updated guidance from either the Scottish or the UK Government. In 2011, the report by the University of Salford for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in relation to the proposed criteria for the assessment of low-frequency noise disturbance highlighted that the individuals surveyed attributed sleep disturbance, stress, headaches, migraines and severe mental health issues to low-frequency noise. Despite the findings of that report, we have not seen action to update guidance.

We need to recognise that this sector is rapidly expanding. We need to ensure that the regulations keep up with that expansion, given the rapid changes that we are seeing. I fully support the Scottish Government in its attempts to see the rapid expansion of this sector. However, this

cannot be the wild west. We need to ensure that the views and concerns of local people are taken into account and that, where developments proceed, the local community sees advantages to them in what happens.

18:22

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I congratulate my friend Alexander Burnett on securing this important debate. I welcome the people in the public gallery who have come to their Parliament from across Scotland to hear this crucial topic discussed. I note for the record that I assume that they will share my disappointment that, in a debate about the environment, renewable energy and a just transition, little over half an hour from being at full strength to support their Green minister holding on to her job, not a single Green MSP could be present in the Parliament to listen to or contribute to this debate. There are two Green ministers and five Green back benchers, and not a single one is in the chamber. I think that that is very telling for a party that claims to put the environment above all else. It is really important that MSPs from across the political spectrum are here to listen to this debate and to the concerns of the communities that they represent.

Alexander Burnett and I met residents from Moray and Aberdeenshire who were worried, and continue to be concerned, about the cumulative impact of wind farm developments in their areas. The Cabrach Trust brought us together because it wanted its politicians to hear the concerns of local people. Like them, I want to state on record my support for a just transition but, for that to happen, we must take people, individuals and communities with us.

Sadly, in many parts of Scotland—including, I think, in my area of Moray and much of the Highlands and Islands—we have already reached saturation point for wind farms and massive wind turbines. As Alex Burnett pointed out, the Scottish Government's policy could demand the installation of another 3,400 new onshore wind turbines in just the next seven years. By 2030, that many more turbines could be approved and placed in Scotland. Where are they going to go? That will have a devastating impact on our landscapes, which are often protected and which bring tourists and money into areas that people want to enjoy.

When I mention tourism, I am reminded that, when I chaired the Moray Council planning committee, an SNP councillor once claimed that tourists would come to the area to view the wind turbines, which is why he supported them in his Speyside Glenlivet ward. I was appalled and amazed by the comment then, and I am appalled

that that type of thinking could still persist. Wind turbines put people off coming to our area.

The 22 turbines that are proposed for the Clashindarroch wind farm extension will be up to 200m tall, which will be an industrial size in a rural landscape of exceptional beauty that is largely undisturbed and particularly attractive to the thousands of tourists who come to the Cabrach every year. The Cabrach Trust is doing more to encourage more people to come to the area, but the attraction of the landscape is at stake if we continue to bulldoze our rural areas to make way for turbines that leave a scar on them for ever.

In some places, onshore wind might be desirable, workable and even agreeable, but that is the point. We are talking about some areas that have local consent and buy-in. Local people must be taken with the applications. They do not deserve to have enormous developments imposed on them, but that is how they feel. They feel ignored, let down and angry about the destruction of their local communities.

As Alexander Burnett highlighted, decisions about turbines are ultimately placed with the energy consents unit. I have seen decisions that I took with my planning committee overturned by the energy consents unit here in Edinburgh. I take John Swinney's point that councils can appeal such decisions, but in fairness and honesty and realistically speaking, they could not because they could not afford a judicial review.

John Swinney: Will the member give way?

Douglas Ross: I will give way if the Presiding Officer will give the time.

John Swinney: I am grateful to Douglas Ross for giving way, and I acknowledge the points that he is making about this particular challenge. I had a case in my constituency where the local authority, which was run by Mr Ross's party at the time, took the Government to judicial review—it was not on an energy consent matter—and failed comprehensively. The court ruled that there was no legal foundation for it. My point is that the decisions that are properly taken by Government have stood up to legal scrutiny and, in the energy consent process, there is an obligation to follow the statutory process to make sure that lawful decisions are taken. I understand that local authorities might not like those decisions, but they are taken in accordance with the statutory framework that we in Parliament have put in place.

Douglas Ross: That is the problem. The policy that the current Government has put in place is to see more onshore renewable energy when councils that are made up of locally elected members who are democratically sent to council chambers to represent their constituents take a counter view and say that it is not appropriate for

their area, and they are slapped down by the energy consents unit here in Edinburgh. That is not a positive way to make decisions.

We can secure a truly just transition to net zero only if local people benefit and feel that they are involved. I therefore implore the minister to look up at the galleries behind us and look at the people who have travelled from across Scotland because this matters to them and to their communities. She should listen to their concerns and objections and take their views seriously. They are not here just to fight for their landscapes in our beautiful countryside; they are here to uphold local democracy, and that is surely important to all of us.

18:28

The Minister for Energy and the Environment (Gillian Martin): I thank Alexander Burnett for bringing the debate to the chamber. It has been a comprehensive debate and I have agreed with an awful lot of what has been said, although I have disagreed with some of it.

I will first point to a couple of things that I particularly agree with. What Martin Whitfield said about the importance of public engagement being done early, even before development begins, is so important. The right thing to do first is to get that buy-in from communities, because it makes good business sense. If wind farm developers have communities behind them and ensure that they can see the benefits of what is being built and feel that they are listened to before decisions are made and the planning process is gone through, that will result in benefits for everyone. Like other speakers, I have seen examples of that happening, with subsequent community buy-in.

I am a rural MSP, so it is not as if I am sat in the ivory towers of Edinburgh and this is all news to me; I know these issues. In my area, we have the Aberdeen offshore wind farm, which is visible to the community of Balmedie and Belhelvie. That community was engaged with early and it is justifiably proud of the wind farm. It was very involved in how the community benefit should be spent. From the get-go, there was engagement by the developer, Vattenfall. Martin Whitfield's point is well made.

I also want to address the point that John Swinney made at the beginning of his speech. I guess that he was alluding to the wild fires that we have seen in the past few days, and he went on to raise the issue of water scarcity. That point puts into sharp focus what we are trying to do in relation to renewable energy and reducing our need to burn hydrocarbons, which is what is causing climate change.

Just a few months ago, the Government had to put in place streams of funding to help families to pay their fuel bills. That shows that our approach to renewable energy is an energy security issue, too, which is particularly important with regard to the geopolitical situation. Energy affordability is an important issue and, as Sarah Boyack rightly said, communities need to see tangible household benefits.

I have been in my job for only about 12 weeks, but I have been repeating this phrase to every developer that I have met: there are only so many times that you can paint a scout hut. Sometimes, community benefits can look a little bit like window dressing. Often, there is not a suite of options available—communities might be involved, but there is no inventiveness about what community benefits can look like.

Martin Whitfield: Again, that speaks to the issue of consultation. If there is narrowed consultation with the community, we might hear people say—rightly—“Let’s repaint the scout hut.” However, through genuine consultation, we can find out what communities need in terms of not only physical assets but on-going support for things such as community kitchens. That goes back to the important point that consultation has to be genuine, honest and two way.

Gillian Martin: I agree. It cannot be tokenistic or led by what the developers—or even the local authority—believe that the community wants; it must be based on what the community that is impacted wants. In my constituency, there is a need for a ventilation system in a school’s technical department. That is an expensive thing to install, but it is important to have it because the department is producing the people who, in future, will be able to weld and build things. Perhaps that is the sort of thing that developers can get involved in if they ask what communities actually need.

Despite the success of community benefits with the generation of £194 million over the past 20 years or so—and a record £25 million last year—I point out that the community benefits system is not a compulsory one for developers. The Scottish Government has called for community benefits to be compulsory for developments, and I have got the sense from members today that that view is shared across the chamber. As energy generation is reserved to the UK Government, I would like to think that, after today, we Scottish parliamentarians could join together to make that request.

Finlay Carson: I think that we are focusing too much on the issue of community benefits. I have never heard of a wind farm company refusing to make the voluntary payment, so I think that that is a bit of a red herring.

Dumfries and Galloway is one of the areas that are saturated with wind farms, and the local authority and communities are waving a white flag when it comes to applications because they do not have the capacity even to meet the legal deadlines. Fifty applications have gone to the Scottish Government, with 11 of them being from Dumfries and Galloway. How will the minister ensure that councils have the capacity and resources to ensure that local voices are heard, whatever the community benefit is?

Gillian Martin: Finlay Carson, as usual, was eloquent, if a little verbose, in his intervention. I was going to move on to talk about some of the contributions from his colleagues in particular. I was concerned to hear some of the criticisms that Oliver Mundell made about the way that he felt pushed out of a consultation when he was trying to make some points to developers on behalf of his constituents. Communities need to be engaged more fully and to be more able to determine not only what they will get, but what will happen in the development.

Oliver Mundell: I will try to be briefer than Finlay Carson. Does the minister think that it is fair that communities have to fundraise in order to get professional support to oppose applications and take part in the planning appeals process?

Gillian Martin: I do not have a view on that. It is something that I will think about.

I suggest that Oliver Mundell writes to me about the specific concerns that he raised in his speech. He might not want to broadcast in the chamber who we are talking about, but I am happy to have that conversation with him.

There is an awful lot more that I want to mention, but time is running out. Katy Clark mentioned the ETSU-R-97 guidance. The Scottish Government provided some money for the short-term review project in collaboration with the Welsh Government and the UK Government. My understanding is that good practice on noise from wind farms is being reviewed because it was set about 25 years ago so it is probably not fit for purpose. The UK Government is going to review the guidance based on its collaboration with the devolved Governments, and we are still to hear back on that. Katy Clark also pointed out some of the mental health issues that are involved in that. That is a serious point that needs to be made.

We have just closed the consultation on our energy strategy and just transition plan. There are many issues with what the impact could be of achieving the goals that we set ourselves for the energy transition. That transition has to happen and it must be meaningful for people.

I have listened to the concerns that have been raised. I will note them and speak to my officials

about them, particularly as regards what engagement with communities happens, where it happens and what locus the community has.

I extend an offer to members who have raised particular issues. They will understand that I cannot talk about live planning applications for projects of more than 50MW, which come to me for the final decision. Beyond that, however, if members have concerns about the practices of companies that could help their communities, they know where I am.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate.

Meeting closed at 18:38.

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