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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 29 April 2025

[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 the Rev Tommy MacNeil, the minister of Martin's Memorial church in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis.

Rev Tommy MacNeil (Martin's Memorial Church): Presiding Officer and members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. It is a genuine honour to do so, and I hope that you are grateful for my bringing a bit of sunshine from Stornoway.

Although our jobs are different, we have several things in common. Every day, we pursue issues of justice, fairness and equality on behalf of our communities and for our beloved nation of Scotland.

There is another important area of work where we are on the same page—communication. Words are important. Words have power. Words can change the world. Listen to some words that have defined history and that will take you back to points in history as I mention them:

"Never in the field of human conflict".

"I have a dream."

"They think it's all over; it is now."

That one is a bit of a struggle.

"For God so loved the world".

"That's one small step for man".

"He is not here. He is risen."

"There shall be a Scottish Parliament."

I want to speak two powerful words to you today but, before I do that, allow me to tell you about my two grandchildren, Haley, who is three, and Noah, who is four months old. They rock my world. As Noah grows and learns, his parents are hoping that his first word will be, "Mummy" or "Daddy". Personally, I am rooting for "Grandpa," but that is just me. After that, they teach their children the importance of saying "please" and "thank you", and I am proud to say that, at three, Haley has already mastered that.

Here is something fascinating for us to consider today. Saying "Thank you" mattered to Jesus. In Luke 17, we have the account of Jesus healing ten

lepers, who lived outside the city, each with a bell around their neck to warn people to keep clear. They were isolated and lonely, yet, as people do today, they found community in their common sense of need. They heard that Jesus was nearby, so they shouted to get his attention. In response, Jesus gave them a simple instruction:

"Go and show yourselves to the priests."

Jesus knew that only the priests could declare them clean. Remarkably, we are told that, as they went, they were cleansed. All 10 were healed, but only one returned to say "Thank you", and Jesus asked that one, "Were not all 10 cleansed? Where are the other nine?" Saying thank you matters.

As members of the Scottish Parliament, you have to listen to many words and requests every day and, as public servants, you do what you can in response to those requests. In view of the sacrifices that you make in your daily work, the two words that I have for you today are simply "Thank you". Thank you for all you do in the service of others. Thank you for acting justly and loving mercy and for working towards a better Scotland for all. Thank you to our MSP, and my friend, Alasdair Allan, for the honour of coming to speak to you today.

Presiding Officer, allow me one more moment to quote the recently deceased Pope Francis, who, when speaking in 2020, said:

"The gratitude that comes from encountering Christ's love and mercy is enough to bring joy and hope to a troubled world. If we are bearers of gratitude, the world itself will become better, even if only a little bit."

Scotland could be revolutionised by our prioritising kindness and gratitude, which I believe are part of our DNA as a people.

In conclusion, I appeal to you using the words of the apostle Paul to communicate something of my heart to you and my heart for you.

"I thank God continually for you and never stop praying for you."

Thank you for listening.

Points of Order

14:05

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I seek your direction and some information from you. This morning at just after 10 past 11, Colin Mackay of STV News put a post on X announcing that oil refining had ceased at Grangemouth, marking the end of oil refining in Scotland. That development was not announced by the company. It was not announced to Parliament. It did not come in a ministerial statement or in a debate. It came in a media leak. I feel that that is a discourtesy to this Parliament. It is deeply disrespectful to treat the workers, families and communities who rely on Grangemouth in that way, and I would go as far as to say that it is quite an insulting way for them to learn such important news.

I am aware that a request has already been made through the Parliamentary Bureau, which met at noon, for both a statement and a debate on the future of Grangemouth. However, this is clearly a fast-moving situation, and given that the information came to light only after 11 o'clock—too late for an urgent question on it to be lodged—I ask you whether you have had any approach from the Scottish Government to provide a statement later this afternoon or tomorrow on this critical matter.

It is vital that Parliament receives an immediate update from ministers. In particular, there are important questions that require to be answered. Has Petroineos given any firm commitment to the redevelopment of the Grangemouth site? Has the company indicated any willingness to invest in any of the nine potential projects that have been identified? Does the Scottish Government still view Petroineos, in the light of this leaked news, as a company that is acting in good faith with respect to the future of the site?

Presiding Officer, the people of Grangemouth deserve clarity, the Parliament deserves respect, and the Government must be held accountable. I would therefore be very grateful for your guidance on how a statement could be secured as a matter of urgency, if not today, then tomorrow.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Thank you, Mr Kerr. I am not aware from whence the information that was reported on social media came, so I cannot comment on that. However, the Minister for Parliamentary Business is liaising with business managers with regard to a statement being made to this chamber in the immediate future. That is my understanding.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. As you will be aware,

on Thursday 24 April, I and other members of this Parliament were in attendance for portfolio questions on education. Members were there to ask questions on school violence, vaping in schools, parents being unable to access childcare, job losses at universities, teacher recruitment and care-experienced children. Those are all important and serious matters for our children and young people, parents and those who work in our schools, colleges and universities.

While I and many other members were in attendance, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills was unfortunately not here to address those important questions. For context, Presiding Officer, I note that that question time took place hours after a serious incident at an Aberdeen school and in the week before pupils start their Scottish Qualifications Authority exams.

A spokesperson for the cabinet secretary told the press that she

“had a mix of government and party meetings and events in the course of the day”.

A source later confirmed that the non-attendance here was

“not due to government business”.

No extenuating circumstances, justifiable reasons or apologies have been given for the no-show. Not only does it set a bad example to Scotland's schoolchildren for the cabinet secretary to skip education questions, which were presumably in the ministerial diary for weeks if not months but, worse than that, it appears that Jenny Gilruth may have prioritised party interests over her responsibilities to Parliament and, by extension, the country.

I make this point of order because it is important that the cabinet secretary is afforded an opportunity to clarify her reasons for not attending her portfolio question time, alongside making available her diary and any changes to it, so that we can ascertain when Government and party business took place and where. Failure to do that can only create the impression that the cabinet secretary has been discourteous and disrespectful to this Parliament.

The Nolan principles of public life are clear. They underpin our standing orders and the ministerial code, which states, at subparagraph 1.4(d), under the “Accountability” principle:

“Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny necessary to ensure this.”

Presiding Officer, can you confirm that, under rules 13.1 and 13.2 of our standing orders, the cabinet secretary can be afforded an opportunity to make a statement in order to issue a clarification—alongside the publication of her

diary—or make an apology to you and the Parliament, because the Parliament cannot and should not simply accept the situation of ministers putting party interests before those of the country?

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Bibby. Our standing orders advise that

“oral questions may be answered by any member of the Scottish Government or a junior ... Minister.”

It is a matter for the Scottish Government to decide who to put forward for a particular session. In the first instance, the ministerial code is a matter for the First Minister.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The business of Parliament is to look after our citizens, including, most importantly, our children. Last week, during education portfolio questions, I asked what support is available to teachers who face violence—a vital question, following the stabbing of a 12-year-old girl. Students across the country—not just in Aberdeen—were shocked and terrified, as were parents, yet, at about that time, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills chose to attend a Scottish National Party photo call rather than attend the chamber to answer questions. That was not a diary clash but a deliberate choice. Violence in schools is rising; pupils and staff are scared; and that deserves the full attention of the education secretary.

I ask that the cabinet secretary apologise to the students, parents and teachers for a failure to answer those questions. Will the Presiding Officer be able to investigate the circumstances surrounding Jenny Gilruth’s feeling that stabbings in schools are not important enough for her to appear before the Parliament? What recourse does the Presiding Officer have to address the issue?

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Dr Gulhane. As Presiding Officer, it is my role to enforce the standing orders of the Parliament. With regard to the particular instance to which the member refers, rule 13.7.1 advises that

“oral questions may be answered by any member of the Scottish Government or a junior ... Minister.”

I say again that the matter is for the Government, and, as I said previously, the ministerial code is a matter for the First Minister in the first instance.

Topical Question Time

14:12

Equalities and Human Rights Commission Interim Update (United Kingdom Supreme Court Judgment)

1. Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the interim update from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission on the practical implications of the recent UK Supreme Court judgment in *For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers*. (S6T-02484)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Government accepts the judgment of the Supreme Court, and work has begun on implementation. I have asked the permanent secretary to stand up a short-life working group to ensure support and consistency across Government on that work.

Following publication of the EHRC’s update late on Friday evening, I wrote to ask the EHRC to confirm that it agrees that no public body, service provider or other association should issue specific guidance before the EHRC code of practice and guidance is finalised.

As the EHRC is the enforcer and regulator of the Equality Act 2010, all organisations must consider and comply with its revised code of practice and guidance to ensure that there is a consistent and clear understanding of the correct application of the law for all involved, in what is a complex area.

Tess White: The EHRC’s update was crystal clear, and there is a vacuum right now. Biological males should not be permitted to use the women’s facilities in workplaces or public buildings such as schools or hospitals. That is compulsory. It is the law, as the Supreme Court ruling and the EHRC have clearly laid out, yet John Swinney said yesterday that public bodies should wait for the “legal certainty” of full EHRC guidance in June before implementing new policies.

The Scottish Government is dragging its feet. Will it now finally stop kicking the can down the road and remove biological men from women’s spaces across the public sector—yes or no?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I have mentioned, work has already begun across Government to consider the implications of the judgment in areas such as legislation, guidance and cost. A working group, led by the permanent secretary, has been established to take that work forward.

We wished, at ministerial level, to meet the EHRC to ensure that our work and its can operate well together. Unfortunately, the EHRC cancelled that meeting at short notice. We are keen within Government to meet it, at both ministerial and official level, as a matter of urgency. I have made clear to the EHRC that I am happy to meet it any time. I understand that officials are due to meet it this week.

In the meantime, this Government is already continuing with its work to implement the Supreme Court judgment.

Tess White: The cabinet secretary talked about that meeting. We all know the truth behind that meeting. Last week, the First Minister stood up in this chamber and said that he would respect the rule of law and abide by the Supreme Court's ruling. This morning, Scottish National Party MSPs voted to keep Green MSP Maggie Chapman as deputy convener of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee after she shockingly attacked the highest court in the land following the verdict.

Maggie Chapman has shown contempt for the rule of law and has brought the committee into disrepute, when it should be scrutinising the implementation of the Supreme Court's judgment. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the SNP's decision to keep her in post on the committee risks undermining trust in Holyrood itself—yes or no?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The First Minister made it absolutely clear—as did I in my statement last week—that we respect the rule of law and the judgment of the Supreme Court. It is important that everyone in this matter is aware of their tone and the temperament of debate during this time.

It is very important that the Scottish ministers do not take a view on what happens within a parliamentary committee, in relation to this and other issues. It is inappropriate for Government ministers to opine in such a manner.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary advise what engagement the Scottish Government has had with the EHRC on the UK Supreme Court ruling, and when it will next meet the EHRC to discuss the matter further?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I mentioned, the Scottish Government had a scheduled meeting with the EHRC for Thursday 24 April, which the First Minister referred to during First Minister's question time. Unfortunately, at short notice, the EHRC cancelled that meeting because it had not yet met or discussed the judgment with the UK Government. I am extremely disappointed by its decision to cancel, and I stand ready to meet it at its earliest convenience. In the meantime, Scottish Government officials will meet the EHRC this week.

Scottish Government officials are also continuing their dialogue with UK Government officials. I await a reply to my letter to UK Government ministers asking for an urgent meeting to discuss the shared interests on the matter.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Those who have been trying to undo decades of progress on LGBT people's human rights and inclusion in society may be keen to carry on doing more as quickly as they can, but does the cabinet secretary recognise the extraordinary level—

Tess White: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. This bears no relation to the topical question in hand.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Ms White, but I am chairing this meeting of Parliament, and I will do that as I see fit.

Patrick Harvie: I was about to ask whether the cabinet secretary acknowledges the extraordinary degree of fear and anxiety that is being caused to the trans community around the country as a result of the update late on Friday night from the EHRC.

I have heard from people who were not even sure whether they should go to work the next morning, because they did not know whether they would be able to do something as simple as go to the toilet. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the UK is now at risk of breaching trans people's human rights—just as it did decades ago, before the Gender Recognition Act 2004 was in place—as well as breaching the freedom of the wider LGBT community to organise in the inclusive manner that the vast majority of our members wish to? When the Government meets the EHRC, will the cabinet secretary make it crystal clear that it is unacceptable to see decades of progress on equality and human rights rolled back in that way?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Patrick Harvie is quite right to point to the fact that the EHRC's update—I stress that it is an update and not guidance—has caused real fear and concern in the trans community. The fact that it landed on a Friday evening added to that. I have read with interest the comments made subsequently, including that of Roz Foyer, who was quoted as saying:

"We are going to have to make sure we protect all parties' rights, but we actually have to find a way forward that makes sure we have some sort of provision for trans men and women in our public bodies, in our institutions."

I agree with the sentiment behind that comment. It is very important that we recognise that such fear and concern exist—and remain—because of the EHRC update. Any concerns that individuals have with the EHRC—and the update that it has issued—are for the body itself, which is

responsible for regulating around and enforcing the Equality Act 2010.

The Presiding Officer: We do not have a lot of spare time this afternoon. The more concise that members can be, the better, in order that I can accommodate more speakers.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I welcome the EHRC's interim guidance, which provides clarity on the Supreme Court's judgment. The law is clear, and the SNP has no more excuses. Will the cabinet secretary challenge lobbying groups and organisations that fail to accurately implement the EHRC's interim guidance? Can she provide assurance that no taxpayers' money will go to such groups or organisations that do not follow that interim guidance?

Patrick Harvie: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I note that the member is interested in accuracy. Is it in order for members to misrepresent that late-night interim update as guidance? "Guidance" has statutory meaning. The update is not guidance. That is an inaccurate statement.

The Presiding Officer: As I said previously, I am chairing the meeting and I will intervene where I feel that it is required.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: It is appropriate for Ms Hamilton to reflect on the exact terminology that the EHRC used. It has issued an update, and not guidance. Direct, relevant requirements are introduced when guidance is implemented. The EHRC's publication is not guidance; it is an update.

Having said all that, it is exceptionally important that, as well as accepting the Supreme Court's judgment, we accept the rule of law in this case. That is exactly why the Scottish Government is continuing its work on the implementation of that judgment. I look forward to discussing the matter with the EHRC at its earliest convenience.

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): The Supreme Court has clarified the law, which is an absolute when compared with our simply having guidance, whether it be interim or otherwise. Having to wait until the summer to tell public bodies that they must act where they are able to do so seems highly risky, given the absolute clarity contained in the Supreme Court's 88-page judgment. What assessment has the Scottish Government made of the risk of further court actions being initiated in the interim and of the associated cost to the public purse?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I have said on a number of occasions, across Government, work has already begun on the implementation of the judgment by assessing matters for review of

guidance, policy, practice and legislation. That work is exceptionally important.

I will give an example of the challenges that the Government faces. In the same way that the Scottish Government was not made aware in advance of the issuing of the EHRC's update, I do not currently know whether it plans to issue other updates before it produces its guidance during the summer. That lack of knowledge about what might or might not happen within the EHRC illustrates exactly the need for us to have clarity as we attempt to move forward at speed.

Sharon Dowe (South Scotland) (Con): The Scottish Prison Service has confirmed that it will not immediately change its policy on housing trans women in the female estate and that, instead, it is still "considering any potential impact" of the Supreme Court's decision on existing policies. However, the judgment made the law very clear by saying that statutory references to sex mean biological sex. Will the cabinet secretary therefore ensure that the SPS takes immediate action to remove any biological men from the women's estate?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As I have said, consideration is being given across Government and by our public services, including the Scottish Prison Service, to the outcome of the Supreme Court judgment and the EHRC interim update. Under the present policy, no transgender women with a history of violence against women and girls who present as a risk to women are placed in the female estate.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): Regulation 24 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 provides as follows:

"Suitable and sufficient facilities shall be provided for any person ... in the workplace to change clothing"

and those facilities

"shall not be suitable unless they include separate facilities for ... men and women where necessary for reasons of propriety and the facilities are easily accessible, of sufficient capacity and provided with seating."

I understand that all 14 regional health boards are reported to be in breach of this absolutely crystal-clear duty. I have raised the issue two or three times in the chamber before, without comment from the Scottish Government. Will the Scottish Government use its statutory powers under the relevant NHS Scotland legislation to get every health board to comply with the law without further delay?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I have already made reference to the fact that the Scottish Government expects all public bodies and agencies to act within the law and to obey the rule of law. That

includes the Supreme Court judgment, but it also includes any other regulations, including the 1992 regulations.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

The cabinet secretary said that she wants to bring clarity to the debate. Following on from Sharon Dowey's question, can the cabinet secretary tell us how many biological men are currently incarcerated in the female prison estate in Scotland? What is the issue with dealing with that right now? The judgment was very clear that there should no longer be biological men in the female prison estate, and the Scottish Government should deal with it immediately.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I referred to some of the information on that in my response to Sharon Dowey. The SPS reports the total number of transgender people in custody on a quarterly basis. The latest figures show that there are a total of 16 transgender women and transgender men located across the male and female estate. That represents less than 0.5 per cent of the total prison population in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. That concludes topical questions. *[Interruption.]* My apologies. We are clearly behind schedule, but that is not the way to get us back on track. We move to question 2 from Martin Whitfield.

Early Years Provision (Affordability)

2. Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure greater access to affordable early years provision, in light of reports of the rising cost of childcare for families with children under the age of three. (S6T-02486)

The Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise (Natalie Don-Innes): Scotland is the only part of the United Kingdom to offer 1,140 hours a year of funded early learning and childcare to all three and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds, regardless of their parents' working status, which puts children first. We have invested about £1 billion every year in funded early learning and childcare since 2021, because that is fundamental to giving children the best start in life.

The Scottish Government continues to work with local authorities to reach more young children through maximising uptake of our ELC offer for eligible two-year-olds. The 2025-26 budget provides up to an additional £8 million of investment for work with our early adopter communities in six local authorities to build our understanding of what models of childcare work best for children and their families.

Martin Whitfield: The 2025 survey by the charity Coram Family and Childcare shows that

childcare costs for under-threes in Scotland have risen by 7 per cent since last year, to approximately £122 per week or £6,300 per year. Meanwhile, fewer than one in three Scottish councils report having enough childcare places to meet the demand for places for the three and four-year-olds the minister talks about. Only 7 per cent of councils have adequate provision for older children. Does the minister accept that, after years of promises, the Government is failing to deliver affordable and accessible childcare and that Scotland's young families are being let down?

Natalie Don-Innes: I do not accept that. I accept that, in the current climate, families are finding things difficult, and childcare costs are a part of that, but in Scotland we are increasing our childcare offer and providing for families. As I said in my first answer, we continue to work with local authorities to reach more young children through maximising uptake of our early learning and childcare offer for two-year-olds. Work in our early adopter communities continues to expand; it has recently included involvement with younger children and the needs of those families. In addition, we are taking a range of other actions in relation to childcare. I will always continue to look for ways to support families, but I believe that our offer in Scotland is positive for children and families.

Martin Whitfield: I am grateful for that answer, but I am disappointed that the Government is not accepting the challenge that exists. Over the past 18 years, childcare costs have risen by nearly 50 per cent, and fewer than one in three councils have enough places to meet demand. In the light of the minister's response, when will all councils be able to meet the demand for childcare for children who are aged three-plus years?

Natalie Don-Innes: We are continuing to work with local authorities to ensure that our childcare offer is what families and children need, as I have laid out in my previous answers. I have set out what the Scottish Government is doing and my willingness to continue to listen to members and to families and providers about what they require.

However, the member needs to reflect on some of the decisions that his United Kingdom Government colleagues have made and the impact that they will have on families. The UK Labour Government's increase to national insurance contributions is creating a financial burden on early years providers in Scotland, and there is deep concern across the childcare sector about those changes. Given the lack of support from the UK Government, it is likely that those providers will have to pass costs on to families because of those decisions. I find the member's response quite difficult in the context of some of

the decisions that his UK Government colleagues are making.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): The Scottish National Party Government increased the provision of free childcare from 412 hours a year under Labour to 1,140 hours now. Can the minister explain, however, the logic in providing childcare for non-working parents of two-year-olds, who clearly have more time to spend with their children than do parents who work? It is a disincentive for them to move into or stay in the workforce, and only 59 per cent of non-working parents currently take up the offer of a place.

Natalie Don-Innes: As I said in my response to Mr Whitfield, I appreciate that costs on families are increasing at the current time, and I want to do what we can to support them, as I appreciate that childcare costs are an issue in that regard.

In Scotland, our offer is for all families with children, and specifically for children who are living in poverty. For children who are aged under three, the picture is quite different, and how much they benefit from ELC is determined by crucial factors such as their family background; what age they start in ELC; the quality of services; and the balance between the hours that they spend in care at home and in ELC settings.

I want to ensure that there is equity for all Scotland's children, and I do not want to further entrench some of the inequalities that exist. I believe that our offer in Scotland does what I described.

Roz McCall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Nurseries are essential in ensuring that children get the best start in life and in helping parents to return to work. However, the SNP Government's refusal to properly address the issues with its funding model has now come back on it, and it is working families who are suffering.

In England, funding is available for working families with children from nine months old. My question is simple: when will the Scottish Government take swift and decisive action, change course and support Scottish working families?

Natalie Don-Innes: I have made it clear that our offer in Scotland is to ensure equity for all Scotland's children. As for the issues that the member raises around funding for providers, I have been clear that paying sustainable rates to funded providers is critical in ensuring that childcare is affordable for families and that private, voluntary and independent providers do not have to pass on any extra costs to families. That is why, in 2025-26, we are making available a further £9.7 million to enable childcare staff who are delivering funded hours in the private and third sectors to continue to be paid at least the real living wage.

We are the only country in the United Kingdom to do so.

I am also taking on further work regarding sustainable rates in our cost collection exercise with the Diffley Partnership. A range of actions are being taken to improve costs for families and to improve our offer in Scotland, and I will continue to look for ways to improve things further.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): None of those actions are working, are they? The rates for under-threes are so high and are increasing because the Government is underfunding private, voluntary and independent nurseries for the provision of the 1,140 hours. Why cannot the minister understand that it is her policy that is costing parents so much?

Natalie Don-Innes: I regularly meet childcare providers and families to discuss those exact issues, so I am not blind to the issues that our providers face, and that is why I am taking further actions. I have listed some of those actions and I have spoken to Mr Rennie about the cost collection exercise, which will be key in understanding the rates that need to be paid to providers. I have been clear that I want as much involvement from our providers as possible, and I have received positive feedback about that. It is difficult to say that that approach is not working when the work is not yet complete. I am positive about the outcomes.

The Presiding Officer: I apologise to members who were not able to ask questions, but I have to draw topical question time to a close so that we can move on to the next item of business.

Supporting Scottish Industry

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-17352, in the name of Kate Forbes, on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times.

I would be grateful if members who wish to speak in the debate were to press their request-to-speak buttons, and I call the Deputy First Minister to speak to and move the motion, for up to 15 minutes.

14:36

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic (Kate Forbes): I will begin by saying that it is a matter of deep regret that Petroineos has closed the Grangemouth refinery. My immediate thoughts—and I am sure that I speak for the Parliament—are with those workers who will be made redundant over the coming months. I reiterate the responsibility that the business has to support the workforce at this time.

The decision will have a devastating impact on hundreds of workers at Grangemouth and across the wider supply chain. We believe that the decision is premature and means that Scotland risks losing skills that are critical to our efforts to deliver a just transition to a net zero economy.

We are already supporting the workforce at this difficult time, and today must fundamentally be about reassuring everybody who is employed at the refinery and in the supply businesses that they have a future.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I agree with what the Deputy First Minister is saying, but does she share my concern and the concern of many members of this Parliament that we learned this news by way of a post on X from Colin Mackay of STV? Well done to Colin Mackay, because he obviously has good sources, but what does it say about Petroineos that that is how it chooses to release that information to the wider community? Does the Deputy First Minister agree that that does, unfortunately, create question marks around its good faith in how it proceeds on the issue?

Kate Forbes: I heard Mr Kerr's point of order earlier. The point with which I agree the most is that having the workforce learn of any such decision through the media does it a disservice, because the priority must always be to inform the workforce first. Subsequently, Parliament has a duty to scrutinise—

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I am grateful to the Deputy First Minister for giving

way and for her answer to Stephen Kerr, but will she clarify whether the Government was given any warning in advance of the announcement via X, to which the member has alluded?

Kate Forbes: With regard to the finer points of timescales, the only reason why I cannot be definitive is that I was in Cabinet this morning and I, too, learned of the decision from online sources. I cannot say whether the wider Government was informed in advance, but, if that was the case, it is highly unlikely that it was by more than a few minutes. I would give a more definitive answer, but Mr Johnson has asked about timescales, and I was certainly not given any advance warning, as far as I know. The team of officials at the back of the chamber might want to clarify that.

The workforce's skills are valued and we want the workers to stay, live and work in Scotland. That is why we have provided up to £450,000 for a skills intervention that is being delivered by Forth Valley College to help to retrain and upskill affected workers. That will enable them to progress to the sort of new jobs that will be created through the project willow proposals and other opportunities across the Grangemouth cluster. The United Kingdom Government must also stand shoulder to shoulder with those who have contributed so much to the Scottish economy. I will have more to say on that later.

This debate could not be more timely. It is an opportunity to recognise the huge contribution that Scottish manufacturing and heavy industry play in our economy and our social and cultural lives. They are the lifeblood of our rich industrial heritage.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP): I know that the Government is aware of a growing manufacturing company, Nova Innovation, which is a leading tidal developer with a manufacturing site in Leith, in my constituency. It is considering starting another site in Grangemouth and is producing tidal power in Shetland. It has secured £100 million of investment, including from the European Union and private investors, for a tidal array in Orkney. Unfortunately, that investment is at imminent risk due to challenges regarding sea bed site access. Will the Deputy First Minister agree to meet urgently with Nova Innovation to help to sort that situation and realise that investment?

Kate Forbes: I am more than happy to meet with Ben Macpherson and Nova Innovation, which is exactly the kind of business that we want to support in Scotland, particularly as it is working in the renewables space. I thank Ben Macpherson for bringing it to my attention and I am sure that we can schedule a meeting as a matter of urgency.

Stephen Kerr: Will the Deputy First Minister give way?

Kate Forbes: I love a proper debate, so I will be delighted to take another intervention.

Stephen Kerr: I thank the Deputy First Minister for being generous in taking interventions. There are issues that should probably be addressed in a ministerial statement or, better still, in a debate. However, will she tell us how many serious inquiries there have been about the willow prospectus? Has Petroineos indicated its willingness to allow the redevelopment of the site, which is fundamental, or to invest in any of the nine potential projects?

Kate Forbes: Those are very good questions. Subject to the decision of the Parliamentary Bureau, I would be more than happy to come back to the Parliament with a statement and give an update on the inquiries, if that would be the best place to go through some of those questions in detail. I think that I answered a question from the member a couple of weeks ago—or last week—to say that we had received far more inquiries than was anticipated, and Scottish Enterprise is very closely involved with that. There may be scope for cross-party updates on the progress of that work.

Scottish manufacturing and heavy industry currently play a key part in our economy and have shaped the nation as we know it today. The manufacturing sector is vital to our nation's prosperity; it accounts for more than half of Scotland's exports, it employs around 178,000 people and it contributes more than £18 billion in gross value added to the economy. We want to see that contribution grow. We will do that partly through investment of £75 million in the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland. We are also working to enable manufacturing companies, large and small, in every region of our country to be the best that they can be as they compete on the global stage. NMIS has a mission that aligns with our own: to make Scotland a global leader in advanced sustainable manufacturing.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): Will the Deputy First Minister take an intervention?

Kate Forbes: Who could resist taking an intervention from Mr Ewing as well?

Fergus Ewing: I entirely share the Deputy First Minister's sentiment, but does she agree that the biggest obstacle and greatest challenge that industry faces, whether in Scotland or the United Kingdom, is the fact that the energy costs for energy-intensive industries are four times higher than in the USA and about 50 per cent higher than in Germany and France? That was arguably a cause—if not the major cause—of the problems at Grangemouth and Scunthorpe. We should

therefore be debating how we solve that problem, whether here or at Westminster.

Kate Forbes: Once again, on that particular issue, I could not agree more. Being clear about the root causes of the issues is vital if we want to support Scotland's manufacturing base.

We are a nation that develops energy sources and that benefits from a surplus of energy in some regards, yet our industrial sites are expressing concern about energy prices. I have raised that reserved matter a number of times with the UK Government. I know that there are on-going discussions about reforms. We need certainty fast, and we need to break the artificial connection between gas and electricity prices.

We are working with centres such as NMIS and the National Robotarium to bring to fruition a number of plans for a deep-tech supercluster, which was one of Mark Logan's original visions. We want Scotland to be a maker, not just a consumer, of world-leading products and innovations. By helping some of Scotland's most cutting-edge technology businesses to grow and scale up their manufacturing operations here, that programme will surely be a welcome boost to our long-term economic resilience.

That is all the more important as we look to deliver those things in the midst of very turbulent economic times. Just last week, the International Monetary Fund highlighted the damaging economic headwinds from the tariff increases that the US has imposed. In Scotland, we are already seeing concerns in key sectors such as food and drink, machinery and life sciences.

The First Minister recently held a round-table meeting with representatives from Scotland's business community to hear at first hand the impact of US tariffs. It is inevitable that there is concern, and some companies with stock in the US are taking decisions to pause further shipments until the position is clearer.

The First Minister spoke to the Prime Minister and made it clear that we need to see bold and decisive action from the UK Government that takes into account Scotland's particular needs and strengths. A conclusion should not be reached without extensive engagement with the Scottish Government. I know that business wants to see that, too.

In recent weeks, the UK Government has taken action to protect the British Steel plant in Scunthorpe. Fergus Ewing outlined some of the reasons why that was required. The UK Government's decision provides some hope that it is prepared to act when vital national interests and assets are at stake. We welcome that action. It protects the only plant in the UK that can make crude steel and will, I hope, be part of a

comprehensive future strategy for steel-making across the UK.

Daniel Johnson: Will the Deputy First Minister give way?

Kate Forbes: Presiding Officer, will you remind me how much time I have?

The Presiding Officer: Fifteen minutes.

Kate Forbes: Oh, wonderful. I give way to Daniel Johnson.

Daniel Johnson: Thank you, Deputy First Minister—I will be brief. Despite today's tragic announcements, does the Deputy First Minister accept that the UK Labour Government came forward with proposals, including quite substantial funds, for Grangemouth within weeks of taking office?

Kate Forbes: I accept that the UK Government's engagement was good from the very beginning, but my concern is that, if we compare it with the action that it took in relation to the British Steel plant in Scunthorpe, we cannot conclude that it took an equally decisive and interventionist approach to Grangemouth. The secretary of state answered questions in the UK Parliament on that, making the point about the number of refineries. However, at the end of the day, where there is a will, there is a way. On the scale of intervention that would be required at Grangemouth, that did not happen in the way that it happened at the Scunthorpe plant. I do not think that anybody is in any doubt that it would have required intervention by the UK Government at that level and at that scale.

Although we welcome the decision to intervene at British Steel, in decisive recognition of the need to protect an industrial asset that is so critical to the UK economy, it stands all the more in stark contrast to the UK Government's willingness to listen to calls from this Government, trade unions and Labour MPs for decisive action to protect the future of Grangemouth.

We have moved quickly to establish a £25 million Grangemouth just transition fund, which is aimed at catalysing near-term opportunities arising from project willow and sends a clear signal that we will work with businesses to make low-carbon projects at Grangemouth.

We welcome the UK Government's confirmation that £200 million has been ring fenced in the national wealth fund to support the deployment of projects at Grangemouth.

However, many of the proposals that are outlined in project willow might not meet the criteria that are currently being applied by the fund, and we must not find ourselves in a position

in which good intentions are not translated into meaningful practice.

I take this opportunity to repeat the call for the UK Government to work with us to leave no stone unturned in efforts to mitigate any future job losses on the site. I call on UK ministers to take that action to ensure that the £200 million commitment is deployed. There must also be clarity; it needs to be made clear, with the same urgency and decisiveness that we saw in relation to Scunthorpe, that the money will be available for Grangemouth as soon as business needs it.

We cannot risk losing those opportunities, because underpinning the future success of Grangemouth is the development of carbon capture and storage. We need a firm commitment from the UK Government on a timeline and funding for the Acorn project, in order to provide investors and workforces with the confidence that Scotland can capitalise on our comparative advantage.

Just last week, the UK Government finalised a £2 billion deal for carbon capture in England. That is why it is even more vital that the Acorn project, which is essential to delivering a just transition and economic growth, is given the green light in the spending review on 11 June. I will continue to lobby UK Government ministers on that. I hope that Parliament can join us so that we speak with one voice on the vital importance of the carbon capture and storage scheme. I know that the Secretary of State for Scotland in particular understands the urgency of that matter.

As I close—which will be somewhat of a miracle, considering all the interventions—let me provide some assurances about the way in which we are working to ensure that businesses, workers and the economy navigate the current international headwinds.

Despite our limited devolved powers, we are working with enterprise agencies and partners to tackle the barriers to investment, to support our exporters into international markets and to provide assistance and advice on the impact of the national tariffs.

There are opportunities ahead, despite those headwinds. This Government has always been, and will continue to be, one that takes action. We want to see positive decisions on awards to Acorn and the Scottish cluster to further enhance Scotland's international reputation, and we do not want to see decisions being taken on behalf of our industries without consulting those industries, not least in relation to a trade deal with the US.

I look forward to the debate and commend the motion to Parliament.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the value of Scotland's heavy industrial and manufacturing sectors, and the significant contribution that they make to the national and regional economy; notes recent developments in global trade policy and their potential economic impact; welcomes the UK Government's intervention in British Steel to support the continued resilience of the supply chain, and believes that the UK Government should give similar consideration to its engagement with the Grangemouth oil refinery, given its significance to national resilience and high-quality job opportunities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): Thank you, Deputy First Minister. Before I call the next speaker, I alert members to the fact that we have no time in hand and that, therefore, interventions will need to be accommodated in the allocated time.

I invite Murdo Fraser to speak to and move amendment S6M-17352.3. You have up to 11 minutes, Mr Fraser.

14:52

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I very much welcome this afternoon's debate on supporting Scottish industry. I also welcome my good friend Jamie Greene to his new position as the economy lead for the Scottish Liberal Democrats, which is a very welcome and encouraging lurch to the right on the part of the Liberal Democrats. I am sure that we will hear a lot of good sense from Mr Greene shortly.

On Friday, along with a number of colleagues, I attended the business in the Parliament conference, which was held in this chamber and the Parliament's committee rooms. That conference is always a valuable opportunity to bring together members of the business community—both those in leadership and those who work at the grass roots—and MSPs. I was pleased to sit on a panel in the well of the chamber with the Deputy First Minister, Michael Marra and Lorna Slater and take questions from the audience. Those questions were, as members would expect, wide ranging, but they gave us a useful insight into some of the pressures that the Scottish economy and the business community face at this time.

One question that came up in that discussion that is relevant to this debate was on the cost of energy, and electricity in particular. At the heart of the issue that we are discussing this afternoon—the decline of heavy industry in Scotland and across Great Britain, including Britain's steel industry—lies the high cost of energy in this country. In that respect, I agree very much—not for the first time and probably not for the last time—with the intervention that Fergus Ewing made a few moments ago.

I recall that, more than two decades ago, when I was first elected as an MSP to represent Fife, paper making was a major component of its economy. Over the years, we have seen that industry shrink and almost disappear, as have other sectors, such as metal production and steel making. All those sectors are high users of energy. Rising electricity costs have been a major factor in the deindustrialisation of Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Daniel Johnson: I agree with Murdo Fraser on the fundamental importance of energy costs for the industrial strategy, but does he accept that the previous Tory Government's selling off of our gas resilience—our gas storage—was one of the direct contributors to the fact that the UK has had higher electricity costs over the recent period compared with comparator countries?

Murdo Fraser: I am afraid that the member is wrong, and I will come on to explain why in just a moment.

Daniel Johnson: I look forward to that.

Murdo Fraser: Thank you.

On the point about steel, just last week, I read in the media that the current UK Government is considering importing coal to support our steel industry. That is a significant departure and is perhaps indicative of some of the choices that we have made as we try to achieve net zero. The issue is that we have not stopped using those products. We have not stopped needing steel for construction and we have not stopped needing metals and paper. All that is different now is that we purchase those products from other countries, which do not have the same commitment to meeting net zero as we do.

Therefore, the overall carbon emissions from producing those materials have not been reduced; all that we have done is export them to other countries. We can feel virtuous about the fact that our carbon emissions have reduced but, overall, they have not gone down.

Fergus Ewing: On that point, does Mr Fraser agree that, since the UK produces 1 per cent of the world's carbon emissions and Scotland produces one tenth of that, we are responsible for one out of 1,000 of the carbon emissions and that the other 999 are emitted by other countries? Therefore, does he agree that what we do in terms of cutting is almost irrelevant to solving what is a global problem, and that we would be best focusing on areas such as supporting our oil and gas industry to produce oil and gas with the lowest possible carbon footprint and to export those skills throughout the world, so that we can all move more effectively towards a global solution?

Murdo Fraser: I thank Mr Ewing for that intervention. I struggle to disagree with much of anything that he has said. He makes his points very well.

To come back to my basic point, the high cost of energy—specifically, electricity—must be addressed if we are concerned about the future of heavy manufacturing and industry in this country.

I turn to the point that Mr Johnson made. He reflects a point that has been made by the current UK energy secretary, Ed Miliband. He says that we have high electricity prices because we are overreliant on gas. I thought that I would examine some of the data. I am grateful to the latest edition of *The Spectator* magazine, which has some helpful information that compares the situation internationally.

In the UK today, the cost of our electricity per kilowatt or equivalent is 25.85p. We derive 34 per cent—just over a third—of our electricity from gas. Ireland has a lower price of 22.55p, yet it derives 50 per cent of its electricity from gas. Italy, which has a price of 21.82p, derives 45 per cent from gas. The Netherlands has a price of 16.28p and derives 38 per cent from gas. Greece has a price of just 15.31p and derives 32 per cent from gas. The US, which derives 42 per cent of its electricity from gas, has a price of just 6.48p, which is less than a quarter of what we currently pay.

Each and every one of those countries, which derive more of their electricity from gas than we do, has lower—and, in some cases, substantially lower—costs, which suggests that the issue lies elsewhere. The Deputy First Minister said in her remarks that we need to be clear about the root causes. I agree, and it is very clear that the root cause is not the component of gas in electricity production but lies elsewhere.

Kate Forbes: All that said, does the member accept that one of the greatest hurdles to industrial expansion is access to the national grid? The long delays to upgrading national grid infrastructure mean that my inbox is often full of messages from businesses that want to expand and major companies that want to relocate, some of which have been told that they must wait five to 10 years to get access to the grid. Does he accept that there are some things that are more within the control of the UK Government that will make a difference?

Murdo Fraser: I should clarify that I was not criticising the Scottish Government's energy policy, because I entirely accept that those are largely reserved matters. I do not disagree with the Deputy First Minister's point.

Yesterday, in the area that I represent, I met a house builder who expressed concern that it could take three or four years to get a power connection

to deliver 44 much-needed units of affordable housing in an area where there is huge demand. The only constraint on that happening is the time that it takes to get a transmission upgrade from Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, which I hope to meet shortly to discuss the issue.

We are seeing massive investments in the green economy, such as in renewable energy, infrastructure projects, transmission and pylons. Those investments are welcome because they are creating jobs, but they all have to be paid for, and they are being paid for by the levies that all of us—consumers and industries—pay on electricity bills. We should not pretend that that is not a factor in the high cost of electricity here—it is not down to the volume of gas in the energy supply.

We also need to recognise the importance of oil and gas, which is a point that Fergus Ewing made. Today, Gary Smith of the GMB union was quoted as saying that there is

“a growing sense of betrayal”

among workers about the approach that the UK Labour Government is taking towards oil and gas. In his words, it is “absolute madness” not to grant licences for oil and gas. That is from somebody who is at the heart of the labour movement, and I hope that Labour colleagues will listen to what he has to say.

To come back to the Scottish Government, in the past few days, we have seen what looks like something of a shift in Scottish Government policy when it comes to zonal pricing. In July last year, when interviewed on “Good Morning Scotland”, the Deputy First Minister suggested that zonal pricing could actually deliver free electricity for consumers in Scotland. This morning, I listened back to that interview with great interest. In October, she told the “Holyrood Sources” podcast that zonal pricing would right

“the greatest injustice of our day.”

It seems that she might now have changed her tune. On Friday, she told the business in the Parliament conference that zonal pricing could scare off investors. Some clarity from the Deputy First Minister on where exactly she and the Scottish Government stand on that particular issue would be welcome.

Kate Forbes: I would be interested to hear those interviews. I will go back and listen to them to check whether I specifically referenced zonal pricing, because I have long called for market reform. The point that I made on Friday is really key: cheaper bills could be delivered if investments and developments happen. If they do not happen—say, in the Highlands—people miss out on cheaper bills. That is the dynamic that I was referencing on Friday.

Murdo Fraser: I thank the cabinet secretary for that intervention, but it does not really answer my question, which was about where the Scottish Government currently stands on zonal pricing. Is it for or against it?

I will happily give way again if she wants to clarify that point.

Kate Forbes: I have raised that with the UK Government a number of times. We support market reform and think that it needs to be concluded quickly in order to provide certainty, and we are open to looking at the analysis on whether zonal pricing will deal with the point that I have just identified. We are not yet convinced that it will.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could you bring your remarks to a close, Mr Fraser?

Murdo Fraser: I think that that was a maybe.

I have taken lots of interventions and time is escaping me, but I will make two more brief points. First, the Government is entirely right to recognise the importance of the Grangemouth site. Today's news is extremely distressing for the staff there. I would very much welcome a Government statement on what wider action it can take.

There is a lot in my amendment that I have not even had a chance to touch on, such as what the Scottish Government should be doing better in order to support business in the areas of taxation, regulation, planning and so much more. That is all covered in my amendment, which I am happy to move.

I move amendment S6M-17352.3, to leave out from "welcomes" to end and insert:

"condemns the UK Labour administration's increase to employer national insurance contributions, which broke an explicit manifesto promise and put a large additional burden on industry in already challenging circumstances, putting jobs at risk; regrets that the Scottish Government's Budget chose to keep Scotland as the highest taxed part of the UK and failed to pass on business rates relief in full, hitting workers, consumers and businesses; calls on the Scottish Government to prioritise common-sense policies for economic growth that develop skills in the workforce and ensure that the tax system is competitive, efficient, simple and fair; notes that the UK Government's intervention in British Steel provides necessary support for the resilience of a strategic supply chain; recognises that the Grangemouth oil refinery is also part of a strategic supply chain that is important to both national resilience and high-quality job opportunities, and invites further consideration by both the Scottish Government and the UK Government of means to preserve this important national asset."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sure that Mr Hoy was taking notes for the wind-up speech. I call Daniel Johnson to speak to and move amendment S6M-17352.2.

15:04

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I begin by associating myself with the comments that the Deputy First Minister made about the really shocking and tragic news about Grangemouth today, which has come out of the blue. Our thoughts must be with the 400 workers whose future now looks decidedly bleak. The trade unions have been very clear—they have pointed the finger at all politicians and accused us of failure. In so far as we have not secured continuity of production, we need to reflect on that very seriously indeed.

I welcome today's debate in the round, because we live in a time of profound economic change. We have war in Europe, the return of protectionism and trade wars, all at a time when we are attempting to make an energy transition of a scale and at a pace that has never been attempted previously. The security of our industrial base and our supply chains is vital in the context of those three factors. Many of the assumptions that have been made in recent decades have been altered radically, if not upended, in recent months and years.

In that context, I welcome the opportunity to discuss the new UK Labour Government's approach to British Steel. That Government will always do what is necessary to keep the UK secure at home and strong abroad. The Labour Government is doing what previous Governments have failed to do. I almost feel that I have to remind Murdo Fraser that, until last July, his party had been in government for 15 years. If he wants to examine why the energy structure is as it is, perhaps he should reflect on his party's time in government. Ultimately, his party failed to plan for the future by allowing steel production to collapse by 42 per cent, thereby putting our global standing at risk. The Labour Government refuses to make the same mistakes, so it has acted in the national interest to secure UK steel making.

The new UK Government also moved quickly and decisively in relation to Grangemouth. Within weeks, it made the decision to accelerate project willow and commit hundreds of millions of pounds to secure Grangemouth's transition to a more sustainable future.

Both situations demand Government action, and the Labour Government has acted. However, the nature of the action has been different because of the different circumstances in the two situations.

Fergus Ewing: I welcome Mr Johnson's general arguments, but the UK steel industry, which is represented by the association with which I spoke yesterday, has two main asks on energy. The first is that the compensation that is payable for network charges be increased from 60 per cent

to 90 per cent, as is the case in Germany and France. The second is that there be a two-way contract for difference that pegs the UK energy price to that pertaining in Germany and France. Will Mr Johnson address whether the UK Labour Government will meet those two requests that have been made by the main UK steel trade body?

Daniel Johnson: As much as I would like to, I cannot speak for the UK Labour Government from this chamber, but Fergus Ewing's point about ensuring the competitiveness of our energy costs is absolutely fundamental. Although we might disagree on the route to get to that point, that fundamental assumption is vital.

Let me set out the distinctions between the situation in Scunthorpe and that in Grangemouth. The first relates to the fundamental nature of the industrial process. People who know anything about blast furnaces will know that they cannot simply be turned off and on again, but there was clear evidence that the owners of the plant in Scunthorpe were about to do just that. The blast furnaces in Scunthorpe are the UK's last blast furnaces. If they had been allowed to close, the UK would have been left as the only country in the G20 without the capability of producing primary steel.

The second distinction relates to the nature of the product. Steel is the backbone of a strong economy. It is one of the most, if not the most, important primary manufacturing products. Steel builds our railways, our airports and our homes. In these insecure times, it is important to point out that it also builds the tanks and warships that keep this country safe and secure. It underpins growth, prosperity and security, and we will be reliant on the product for decades to come.

That stands in contrast with Grangemouth, because the product from its refinery needs to change. We are seeking a transition away from fossil fuels and internal combustion engines—the very articles and machines that the plant seeks to supply and service. Many of us would have preferred that change to have been carried out in a more planned, gradual and deliberate way, but change must happen as we transition away from oil and gas.

Therefore, in my view, although they are both strategic sites, it is clear that the situation in Scunthorpe is different from that in Grangemouth.

Kate Forbes: I say for the record that the arguments the member makes for why the UK Government intervened in Scunthorpe are accepted and that we agree with them. He makes a compelling case.

However, does he accept that, even though the UK Government did not proceed with a so-called

nationalising approach to Grangemouth, there were interventions that could have been made in the past six months regarding sustainable aviation fuel—funding for the development of which went elsewhere—and carbon capture, and that those interventions could have turned the direction of travel at Grangemouth?

Daniel Johnson: I invite the Deputy First Minister to reflect on the actions that her Government could have taken and that are very clearly set out in project willow. That is the argument that our amendment makes.

We must genuinely and candidly reflect on the circumstances that have led to today's announcement, but I argue that that reflection should go in multiple directions. It was in the context of the threat of the Scunthorpe blast furnaces being turned off that the Government acted quickly, using emergency legislation to ensure that those furnaces kept running.

The reality is that the Scottish Government has known of the challenges facing Grangemouth for at least a decade and its actions have been scant. It has been clear for a decade that the plant's future was uncertain, and that was made explicit to the Government by the plant's owners five years ago. That is a matter of public record.

Even without that information and context, the Government's own policies should have prompted it to act, because, correctly, it is Scottish National Party policy to move away from the internal combustion engine—indeed, it brought forward the target for ending the sale of vehicles with internal combustion engines, making that sooner than the UK Government's target date. Therefore, it is simply not credible for the Government to act as though what has happened in Grangemouth is a shock or surprise, because it knew that that was coming and, frankly, it failed to act.

The consequences of that inaction are stark. On the SNP's watch, jobs and investment have been exported from Scotland and foreign countries and Governments have benefited from our natural resources. That point goes way beyond the energy sector. From ferry contracts to the failure to make good on the promise of 130,000 green jobs and new bridges being built with Chinese steel, the SNP's track record on industrial policy and supply chain security is not good. The Government has tended to be reactive rather than proactive, has a poor track record on delivery and has completely failed to recognise, let alone support, our strategic supply chains.

Kate Forbes: Will the member take an intervention?

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

Daniel Johnson: I am in my final minute—had I not been, I would have given way.

Critically, we have had five different energy ministers since the Scottish Government was made aware by Petroineos, the owner of Grangemouth, that it was likely to close the plant in coming years, but none of those five ministers produced a plan. Conversely, the new UK Labour Government acted within weeks on Grangemouth and acted promptly and expeditiously on Scunthorpe. The UK Labour Government's actions speak for themselves.

I move amendment S6M-17352.2, to leave out from “, and believes” to end and to insert:

“; further welcomes the swift action taken by the UK Government following the General Election 2024 in recognition of the importance of the Grangemouth oil refinery, including its support for Project Willow and the commitment of £200 million to invest in the industrial future of the site, and calls on the Scottish Government to commit to publishing a detailed timeline setting out how and when it will implement the policy and regulatory changes needed to attract investment into the technologies identified by Project Willow.”

15:13

Lorna Slater (Lothian) (Green): The theme of my amendment is transition. We speak a lot in the chamber about the transition away from oil and gas, and I believe that most members accept the scientific consensus that humanity must urgently reduce its carbon emissions if planet earth is to remain habitable.

The projections about what our home planet will look like if we approach 3° or 4° of warming are terrifying, and it is unclear how much life our planet could support past 6°, although our civilisation would certainly have collapsed by that point. Anyone who thinks that I am exaggerating the risk has not read enough climate science, and anyone who thinks that the cost of preventing climate collapse is too high has not understood the cost of the collapse of earth's biosphere.

It is, naturally, in the interests of multinational capitalist corporations to try to extract as much profit from a declining industry as they can. After all, they exist for the sole purpose of making profits and it is not in their interest or remit to consider what the future will look like in 30, 50 or 100 years' time. However, that is in our remit. We have this one dwindling chance to prevent the worst of this building catastrophe—this one chance to do the right thing by future generations by phasing out the fossil fuels of oil, gas and coal and to do the right thing by present generations by investing in a different future.

Some have called our dependence on fossil fuels an addiction. As anyone who is seeking to tackle addiction knows, the first step is to

acknowledge the problem and recognise that change is necessary, but here is where I find frustration in the chamber. We hear everything from denial that climate change is happening to denial that daily life is going to need to change if we are to reduce the impacts of climate change. We cannot pretend that we can continue to extract oil and gas and burn it forever. We need to admit that we cannot do that and put in place the plans and strategies for how we are going to phase them out, changing our economy to one that is based on clean energy and clean heat.

A denial that transition was needed until it was too late is exactly what happened to the workers of Grangemouth. There was a sort of collective imagining that things could go on indefinitely until it was too late for so many jobs and for the community. Clearly, the challenge of Grangemouth was increased by the fact that it is owned by a billionaire who has no interest in the wellbeing of the community or the long-term prospects of Scotland's economy. There is also a big question here about letting key infrastructure be owned in that way, which allows our environment and our people to be treated with such callous disregard.

Both the Scottish Government and the UK Government need to acknowledge the changes to our energy infrastructure and wider society that will be needed to tackle climate change. Part of that is about identifying the infrastructure sites, our future energy needs and the changes that are going to be needed to get the country on track to meet its net zero goals. We need a clear plan and not just hand-waving that signals that we are okay to carry on as we are, with people saying, “Don't worry—carbon capture will sort it out.” We are not, and it will not. It is clear that, for there to be a just transition, substantial Government investment will be required that is far beyond the means of the devolved Scottish Government.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): I accept that we are on the path towards a just transition, but does the member not realise that that transition also has to be realistic? Would it not be better to use the products of the North Sea here, in this country, rather than importing from other countries? That makes no sense.

Lorna Slater: Once again, the member seems to misunderstand the nature of the international market for oil and gas. The oil in the North Sea oilfields is being extracted not by public companies that can decide to sell the oil beneficially to the UK or to Scotland, but by international corporations that will sell it to the highest bidder. That may or may not be the UK, but in no way does that protect the UK's energy needs. It simply does not do that.

The Scottish and UK Governments need to work together proactively and strategically to plan the

transition and not simply deal with disasters after they happen. The changing climate is not the only external shock that is coming our way. Having Donald Trump in the White House means that more shocks are coming. It is likely that his on-again, off-again tariff policies will lead to recession and damage the global economy. It is possible that American support for Ukraine may be withdrawn, leaving Europe and the UK to have to support Ukraine ourselves, with the consequential costs. Those shocks will require additional Government intervention, which will require additional Government resources.

The UK Government, with its full suite of powers, will have to think carefully about how to raise those resources. Cutting public services further is a self-defeating strategy. Growth in the face of global economic slowdown is a mirage. Those resources will have to be found by taxing the very wealthy and the polluting corporations and reducing the tax breaks and subsidies for fossil fuel extraction and use. I encourage the UK Government to investigate those measures urgently, because it is going to need them.

I move amendment S6M-17352.4, to leave out from “the Grangemouth” to end and insert:

“Grangemouth as it transitions to supporting Scotland’s journey to a low-carbon economy, protecting the jobs of the highly-skilled workers at the site, and demonstrating how Scotland’s industrial sites can implement the recommendations of the Climate Change Committee, in the understanding that a just transition requires substantial public funding and support that private, profit-driven owners of energy infrastructure cannot be trusted to provide.”

15:19

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (LD): I thank Murdo Fraser for his kind comments in welcoming me to my new place. I am very happy to be keeping the seat warm for him for next year, when he moves over to this side of the chamber—*[Laughter.]* Indeed, it might be sooner—there is a chair right next to me.

I am delighted to be making what would presumably be classed as my maiden speech from the Liberal Democrat benches. The economy underpins everything when it comes to Government. From this side of the chamber, the view is different, but some things have not changed, including the challenges that are faced by Scotland’s economy. As my amendment states, they also include the Scottish Government’s lack of industrial strategy. I hope that we will find some agreement on that across the chamber.

Of course, that is nothing new. Last year, the Auditor General for Scotland was firm on the issue, stating:

“The Scottish Government’s 10-year economic strategy ... lacks collective political leadership and clear targets.”

It was also warned as far back as 2021 by the Fraser of Allander Institute, which said:

“Without a coordinated strategy, interventions risk being tactical fixes rather than strategic investments that build long-term economic capacity.”

The Government was also warned by the Parliament’s Economy and Fair Work Committee in 2022, when it said:

“The absence of a clear industrial strategy has contributed to reactive, piecemeal interventions that lack coherence and long-term vision.”

I say to the cabinet secretary that that is pretty damning.

In 2023, Audit Scotland repeated the same warning:

“There is a continuing need for the Scottish Government to ensure robust planning, value-for-money assessments, and exit strategies when considering financial interventions in private companies.”

The Public Audit Committee, on which I am happy still to be sitting, has made it clear that

“Taxpayers must be confident that government investments are made with a clear purpose, sound financial judgement, and a credible plan to exit at the right time.”

The problem is that none of those warnings has been heeded—

Kate Forbes: Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Greene: I say to the cabinet secretary that they have not been heeded, which is why the coal, shipbuilding and steel industries, which used to employ more than 400,000 Scots, now employ just under 50,000.

Rightly, the Scottish Government’s motion asks the question: if the UK Government can intervene in Scunthorpe, why can it not intervene in Grangemouth? It is a fair question, but it entirely misses the point. Grangemouth has been around for more than 100 years—it is the oldest oil refinery in the UK. However, across decades, very little has been done to help the site move on in the transition away from fossil fuels. We have known for years that we need to tackle climate change and that there would be a shift away from oil and gas. Yes, the refinery may have been in private ownership, but that does not mean that there is an absence of responsibility for the Government—or Governments. Instead, the question is whether public ownership will just fill in the existing financial gaps, or will it lead the industry to a glorious new future.

I get that Governments intervene to stop the immediacy of job losses. However, the Scottish Government has spent £0.5 billion on financial interventions in private companies in recent years.

Where has that led it to? Let us look at some of investments.

The Government has spent £55 million of public money on Prestwick airport.

Kate Forbes: It is making a profit.

Jamie Greene: Do not worry—I am coming to that.

The Government has spent £50 million of public money on Burntisland Fabrications and £300 million to £500 million of public money on Ferguson Marine. The GFG Alliance, albeit on different terms, exposed the taxpayer to potential risk in the amount of another £0.5 billion pounds. That is the point of my amendment.

Kate Forbes: Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Greene: I will make some progress, then I will take the intervention.

Chucking money into private companies will save jobs in the short term, but it is an entirely reactive approach to intervening in business. Members can call me a cynic, but the photo opportunities for ministers to stand outside the gates of some of those companies have been far more successful than the turnaround activity in the businesses themselves. That is presumably why the Confederation of British Industry Scotland is now calling on the Scottish Government to remove barriers to economic growth, tackle the skills shortages and create a competitive business environment. Those are fair asks.

I understand why the UK Government stepped in on British Steel. It was a critical situation. Scunthorpe and Grangemouth highlight the importance of domestic ownership in our energy sector, rather than the sector being controlled by foreign powers—and we all know where that leads to. However, bail-outs alone are not the answer—they are not the solution. That reactive, firefighting approach to the Scottish economy does not and should not replace a long-term industrial strategy.

Businesses are adept at changing in tough circumstances. That is what they do best. The private sector has been doing it for years. However, when a business cannot survive, the Government, if it chooses to intervene with public money, must use exceptional due diligence during and after those interventions, because lessons are not being learned.

I have seen that first hand on the west coast. Prestwick airport was bought by the Scottish Government in 2013, and it is still in public ownership, with no vision in sight of how to return it to the private sector. The same is true of Ferguson Marine, which was bought back in 2019. How is that going? The yard is losing out on much-

needed contracts for new ships, and the private sector is going to Liverpool.

I have no problem with any Government intervening in private business if the purpose is to save jobs and prevent the collapse of industries. We all want to see good people in good jobs. However, when the Government uses public money to do that, it needs to demonstrate prudence and honesty to the taxpayer. It needs to be honest about the risks involved and the robustness of its exit strategy, if there is one. That is the point of my amendment, which I urge the chamber to support.

I move amendment S5M-23324.5, to insert at end

“; notes that over many years, several industrial interventions have been made by the Scottish Government necessitating significant public funding, as seen at Prestwick Airport, Ferguson Marine, the steelworks at Dalzell, the Bifab fabrication yards and the Alvanse smelter at Lochaber, which have resulted in hundreds of millions of pounds of written-off loans and cash injections, unclear futures for many of these businesses and a perennial struggle to return the businesses into private commercial ownership; regrets that there appears not to exist any long-term wider industrial strategy in Scotland, and believes that, where and when the Scottish Government intervenes in business in future, it should adopt a proactive, not reactive, approach to industrial interventions that ensures value for public money and robust exit strategies are prime considerations.”

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

15:25

Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): My thoughts are also with the workers and the wider Grangemouth community today.

It would be remiss of me, as a Canadian citizen, not to use this opportunity to congratulate Mark Carney on becoming Canada's new Prime Minister last night, on a platform that was defined by one simple but effective statement: “Canada strong”. In the face of hugely turbulent economic times, with the threat of a tariff war between the United States and Canada dominating over the past few months, that message united the majority of Canadians who—to quote a much-loved and much-used Canadian hockey term—put their elbows up to defend and promote team Canada.

We must do the same here today. Regardless of political persuasion, all of us in this place recognise the huge potential in Scotland and see that we often punch above our weight when it comes to innovation and securing inward investment. A record number of foreign direct investment projects were secured in 2023 in Scotland, the only part of the UK to see growth for five consecutive years, taking it to its highest level

in a decade. Scotland is the top destination in the UK, outside London, for foreign direct investment, according to EY's latest attractiveness survey.

Scotland's economy grew by 67 per cent in real terms between 1990 and 2022, at the same time as we cut our greenhouse gas emissions in half, which shows that tackling climate change and growing a thriving green economy go hand in hand.

Scotland is open for business. Support in the UK for business cannot stop at the border. There is no denying that Scotland has the potential to lead in high-growth industry sectors such as advanced manufacturing, net zero industries, life sciences, innovation and artificial intelligence. On the world stage, it is recognised that there can be no better investment than an investment in Scottish innovation, because we have the talent, skills and resources in abundance to be a major player in the energy transition and secure a prosperous and sustainable future.

However, it is abundantly clear that we need co-operation between all spheres of government in the UK to realise the potential that we have in spades. Westminster has repeatedly failed to equitably spread opportunities for investment, employment and prosperity across the United Kingdom, and the UK Government must urgently develop a collaborative industrial strategy for the whole of the UK and recognise all that Scotland has to offer.

Many here today will speak about Grangemouth and project willow, or the north-east and Acorn. I will spend the small amount of time that I have left speaking about the sleeping giant that is Ayrshire, where my Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley constituency is. Ayrshire has long been recognised the world over for producing the very best engineers, who have innovated and pushed the envelope—my own father being one of them. However, sadly, due to the economic downturn in 1980, he took his family and his skills to Canada.

Recently, the Ayrshire growth deal, with more than £250 million of public money investment promised, signalled to the region that all three local authorities and both Governments were committed to waking the giant from its slumber. The deal is also expected to secure a further £300 million of private sector investment for the area. Covid has played a role in stalling some of the projects, and we have seen the vision being redeveloped over the past couple of years. It is crucial that we pull out all the stops so that Ayrshire can realise its potential and we bring a halt to the depopulation that always accompanies deindustrialisation.

In my constituency, I have innovative go-getters such as the Emergency One Group in Cumnock,

which is a world-leading provider of innovative firefighting technology solutions, with customers right around the globe. It was the creator of the first all-electric fire appliance, which is an absolute sight to behold. It continues to nurture and develop the local workforce, helping to keep folk local.

Global wood panel expert Egger is massively expanding its operations in Auchinleck to include a lamination line, ensuring that the work stays local. Every time that I have an employment fair, there is a massive queue at its stall, because it has a much-sought-after apprenticeship scheme—which, again, nurtures local talent.

As other members have mentioned, the Scottish Government stepped in to save Prestwick airport. Thank goodness for that, as it is home to more than half of Scotland's aerospace workforce. In excess of 3,000 highly skilled employees are located in the cluster, and there is a pressing need for many more. The aerospace campus has long-established and strong links with academia, and some of the UK's leading aerospace-related training courses are delivered close by. It is also important to recognise the role that Ayrshire College plays in supporting and developing that strategically important workforce. Those jobs are extremely well paid and, in turn, can help to stabilise local populations and stop outward migration.

Both Governments must urgently realise the enormous potential for Ayrshire to become one of Europe's leading centres of aerospace activity, in a location that is perfectly placed and strategically connected. There has been heavy private investment there to ensure that low-carbon and "factory of the future" standards are met while the necessary diversification and evolution takes place in Scotland's rapidly growing aerospace sector. Global aviation companies can see what Prestwick offers not only in manufacturing but in maintenance, overhaul and repair operations. We need to see that, too. There must be a rebalancing of the UK's economy if Scotland's extraordinary economic potential is to be met. I urge both Governments to put Ayrshire firmly on their maps and at the forefront of their minds.

15:31

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): I remind members of my entry in the register of members' interests, which relates to my ownership of property.

In his contribution, my colleague Murdo Fraser eloquently addressed issues relating to heavy industry. I want to address the pressing issue of Scottish businesses struggling in our turbulent economy and how decisions taken by the Labour

and Scottish National Party Governments have significantly contributed to such challenges.

I will start with the UK Labour Government's policies. Businesses across Scotland are grappling with the impact of the employer national insurance contribution rate increase that it has imposed. This month, the rate rose from 13.8 per cent to 15 per cent. The increase is expected to lead to a 2 per cent rise in employers' payroll costs, which will add to their financial burden and so make it harder for them to sustain operations and retain staff. Many businesses have already said that they will not be able to bear that extra cost, which will lead to job losses and business closures. David Lonsdale of the Scottish Retail Consortium has said:

"Scotland's retailers will face a £190 million increase in their tax bill"

and

"Such stark increases will increase the cost of operating a retail business and are unlikely to be absorbed by businesses".

Closer to home, the SNP Government's approach to taxation has not helped either households or businesses. Scotland remains the highest-taxed part of the United Kingdom, thanks to the SNP's so-called progressive income tax regime. That high tax burden is unfair and detrimental to our economy. It discourages investment and drives talent away, as individuals and businesses seek more favourable conditions elsewhere in the UK. The widening tax disparity between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom could deter top talent from relocating north of the border. Businesses that depend on senior executives or specialists might need to offer additional incentives or higher salaries to offset that discrepancy. In addition, the freeze on higher tax thresholds has created a fiscal drag, pushing more employees into higher tax bands without there being corresponding increases in their disposable income.

Let us not forget the further damage caused by the SNP through its business rates policy. Talk about rubbing salt in the wound—as if businesses were not already struggling. Despite successive UK Governments providing funding for business rates relief, the SNP has not fully passed on that support to many businesses. That has resulted in many challenges for them, particularly small retailers and those in the hospitality industry, where soaring costs have forced many to reduce their operating days and to freeze hiring, which has led to job losses and reduced economic activity.

Professor Mairi Spowage, director of the Fraser of Allander Institute, said:

"Economic conditions in 2025 are turbulent and uncertain, and are likely to remain so throughout the year. Therefore, the picture is still one of subdued growth. Many of the challenges businesses faced in 2024—from rising costs to policy uncertainty—have not gone away."

I emphasise that stability is crucial for businesses to make long-term plans and investments. However, under the SNP, businesses face uncertainty and unpredictability. According to the latest Scottish business monitor survey, three quarters of businesses expect Scottish economic growth to remain weak or very weak in 2025. The lack of a coherent strategy or consistent support means that businesses cannot confidently plan for the future, hindering growth and innovation.

Skills play an important part in growing the economy. However, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has reported that our universities' struggles due to funding shortages are creating a ripple effect that is being felt across the business sector. The funding shortfall means fewer resources for research, development and student support, which in turn affects the overall quality of the skilled workforce.

The availability of apprenticeships depends on the number of businesses. If the proper fiscal environment is not in place, there will be fewer businesses and thus fewer apprenticeships. That is why the Scottish Government must listen to businesses, so that businesses can equip themselves with the right skills.

The policies of Labour and the SNP are failing Scottish businesses. National insurance increases, inadequate tax relief, budget constraints, a lack of stability and high taxes are all contributing to the struggles faced by businesses in our turbulent economy. It is time for change. We need bold, commonsense solutions that support the aspirations of families and businesses across Scotland, allowing them to keep more of their earnings and invest in their future. Only then can we create a thriving and prosperous economy for all.

15:37

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP): I congratulate the cabinet secretary on her contribution and I welcome the fact that we are debating industry. We should perhaps debate all sectors of industry separately, because I will not have time today to talk about the Scotch Whisky Association's briefing and the 10 or 12 points that it has raised—for example, extended producer responsibility being eight times the cost of what is applicable in other countries if the UK Government goes ahead with it, which I hope that it will not. I do not have time to cover the briefing that I have had from Liberty Steel, which has pointed out, as other companies have done, that there should be

an obligation in the UK to purchase UK steel. That is perfectly deliverable. I also do not have time today to go over the briefing that I obtained from Tom Uppington—who, as the cabinet secretary will know, heads up operations at Lochaber, with which we are both acquainted—except to say that in that briefing, Tom said:

“Current energy market prices do not make it financially economical to produce primary aluminium in the UK.”

That brings me to the underlying central question of this debate, which is not just a general discussion about industry. Unless the high energy costs in the UK are addressed, it is difficult to see, even as an optimist, any other scenario than the inexorable and almost inevitable decline—and, sadly, death—of industry in Britain. I use that pessimistic phrase because I have thought about it deeply and read about it fairly widely.

It is very simple. If a business is producing industrial manufactured products such as steel, aluminium, chemicals, fertiliser, paper or cement, and if its energy costs are four times higher—perhaps even 50 per cent higher—than those of competitors in Germany and France, that business, which is producing a commodity that can be produced in many advanced countries, is going to lose custom because it is pricing itself out of the market, and it will make a loss.

That is why we are here on this very sad day, which sees the termination of oil refining in an oil-producing country. It is a dreadful and ghastly day for the workforce, and for everybody who is proud of Scotland and our magnificent oil and gas industry. However, unless the problem is addressed, there will be more Grangemouths and Scunthorpes. There is simply no doubt about it, and one does not have to be Warren Buffett to understand it; anyone with a rudimentary understanding of business can only come to that conclusion. Diagnosis, however unpleasant, is no use—

Murdo Fraser: Will the member take an intervention?

Fergus Ewing: I certainly will.

Murdo Fraser: Given that we have established that it is not the level of gas in the energy mix that causes high electricity prices, to what does the member attribute that, and what is his solution?

Fergus Ewing: With regard to electricity generation, the answer has been put best, and will never be bettered, in the statement by Winston Churchill that, when it comes to electricity supply, the solution is “variety, and ... variety alone.”

In the past 48 hours, we have seen blackouts occurring in Spain and Portugal, which, incidentally, have initially been estimated to have cost €4 billion. On a similar event in Britain, Daniel

Yergin, who is arguably the world’s most informed energy expert, said:

“The near blackout in Britain in January this year, caused by the conjunction of cold weather, low wind production and unavailable cross-border transmission lines, demonstrated the glaring imbalance between rapid growth in renewable energy on the one hand and insufficient infrastructure and lack of alternative supplies on the other. Natural gas is an essential component of an electric power system that is heavy on intermittent renewables that depend on wind and sun.”

Moreover, although I am not an expert or scientist, I highlight that the combined-cycle gas turbines are now more efficient because they use the hot exhaust from the gas turbines to heat water, creating steam to drive a second turbine, producing more electricity. They are 50 per cent more efficient than ordinary gas turbines. They can be built in four to six years, rather than 10 to 12 years, as is the case for a nuclear power station. They can be built on budget, unlike nuclear power stations, and there is no waste to dispose of at the end of the process. That is why Britain should go for more gas, and more gas storage. We have only a few days of gas storage in the UK—in Germany, they have months.

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

Fergus Ewing: I will take an intervention from Mr Carson.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You will not, Mr Ewing, because you will be winding up very shortly.

Fergus Ewing: I will wind up then—I say sorry to Mr Carson.

UK Steel has put forward very clear ideas for a two-way CFD that would peg our energy price to that in Germany and France, and for the compensation levels that are currently provided to business for the network costs, which are the other element, other than wholesale costs, to be equalised. That is a solution and a prognosis. Let us all, in all the main parties that are serious about the matter, work together to deliver such a solution for Scotland and Britain.

15:43

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): There is no doubt that these are turbulent economic times. Global instability, shifting trade policy and the urgent need to respond to the climate crisis are reshaping the way in which industry must operate. The question today is not about recognising challenges, but about rising to meet them. That is what the UK Labour Government did in acting to support British Steel—not just protecting jobs at the site of our last blast furnaces, but safeguarding the very future of domestic steel making.

That matters in Scotland. Hundreds of skilled jobs at Dalzell, and in the future—I hope—at Clydebridge, depend on the success of British Steel. Our infrastructure, our defence and our manufacturing and resilience all rely on having a steel industry that we can call our own. When the Labour Government saw a risk, it acted urgently, decisively and strategically. I only wish that when the then UK Government and the current Scottish Government were first made aware of the risk to the refinery at Grangemouth, we had seen that same urgency.

As we have heard, production has now ceased at the refinery. Our thoughts are, first and foremost, with the workers and their families. Those workers kept the national asset running for decades and deserved better. They should have been at the heart of a proper plan for transition years ago. Instead, they have been let down and left behind.

In evidence to the Economy and Fair Work Committee in November last year, Petroineos told us that it had approached the Scottish Government more than five years ago about the need to transition the Grangemouth site. When the former energy minister met Petroineos in February 2022, he was warned about the likely closure of the refinery. That was more than three years ago.

However, when the committee published its just transition report on Grangemouth in 2023, we said:

“There is no evidence of a clear, joined-up approach across government. No timeline. No worker-led strategy. No plan.”

We had two Governments asleep on the job.

Since then, we have seen a change of UK Government and, within months, a commitment of £200 million to support a clean industrial future for Grangemouth through project willow, which involves biofuels, hydrogen and sustainable aviation fuel, and is a road map to protect skills and secure investment.

When it comes to the delivery of project willow, we cannot afford a repeat of the drift and delay that defined the past five years. We need urgency to attract investment, change regulation, develop infrastructure and secure the jobs that remain at Grangemouth and, crucially, those supply-chain jobs across the country.

The situation with the refinery at Grangemouth is not an isolated failure of the Government to turn warm words on a just transition into reality; it is part of a pattern of inaction, and I see that in my region of Dumfries and Galloway. That area should be at the forefront of Scotland's net zero future, because we have the land, the wind and the water. However, we do not have the investment. Dumfries and Galloway is home to

more than 11 per cent of Scotland's wind turbines, but members would struggle to find a fair share of the renewable jobs in the communities that host them, and they certainly would not find any communities there that manufacture them. We have the highest level of fuel poverty in Scotland, the lowest wages and a population that is declining, with too many of our young people leaving because they cannot access the apprenticeships, housing or opportunities that they need to stay.

How has the Scottish Government responded? With a 22 per cent cut to the budget of the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency; reduced funding for colleges, which forces them to turn away young people who are desperate to train; and a continued failure to invest in crucial infrastructure, such as the A75 and the A77, which are vital links for business to Northern Ireland and the EU.

The Just Transition Commission could not have been clearer in its recent report on Dumfries and Galloway. A lack of housing is stifling economic growth; poor transport is holding back investment; and a lack of skilled workers is putting at risk the region's ability to play its part in the transition.

That situation cannot go on in communities across Scotland. If we are serious about delivering a just transition, we need to back it with action—a proper industrial strategy that is rooted in Scotland's strengths. There should be no more exporting of renewable energy supply-chain jobs abroad and no more bridges built with Chinese steel, turbines manufactured in Indonesia or ferries built in Turkey. We should be creating those jobs here, in Grangemouth, Motherwell, Stranraer and Dumfries.

I welcome much of what is in the Scottish Government's motion today, but the fact that it is silent on the Government's role speaks volumes.

Labour's amendment recognises the importance of the action that is needed at Grangemouth and of a proper delivery plan. We owe it not just to the workers at Grangemouth, but to the young people across Scotland who are wondering whether they have a future in their home towns, and to the communities in every part of the country who are still waiting and hoping for the just transition that this Government promised them. Let us not let them down in the way that workers at the Grangemouth refinery have been let down today.

15:48

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): Grangemouth oil refinery was of economic importance to Scotland, just as Port Talbot was to Wales and as Scunthorpe is to England. Unfortunately, Petroineos announced today that refining has ended.

The Labour Government was right to intervene quickly to save the steel jobs in Scunthorpe, but the same should have applied to Grangemouth as the last oil refinery in Scotland.

The importance of Grangemouth was highlighted in the run-up to the general election, when Daniel Johnson referred to it as a key economic asset and said that its closure would undermine our energy security, which could be damaging for this country.

Anas Sarwar promised that a Labour Government would step in and save jobs at the refinery, but, despite promises of change, the Labour Government has repeatedly prioritised investment in England, including £200 million for Old Trafford, as reported by the *Financial Times* on 13 March.

How do we save the skilled refinery jobs? The UK has positioned itself as a leader in sustainable aviation fuel, and the Labour Government could have announced that Grangemouth would be one of the additional eight production sites to receive funding. However, under Labour, it is only jobs south of the border that are worthy to be saved by Government intervention.

Another example is the £800 million supercomputer that was promised for the University of Edinburgh by the previous UK Government. In 2024, Labour shelved the plans to build a state-of-the-art supercomputer at the university that would have been 50 times faster than any current computer in the UK. That cancellation was after the university had spent £31 million on a purpose-built facility for the supercomputer as part of the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal. The university has been at the heart of research and development in AI for the past 60 years and has been the host of national supercomputing services for the UK for the past 30 years.

Then, in January 2025, Labour launched the “AI Opportunities Action Plan” to make the UK a global leader in AI. The AI growth zones will start in Culham in Oxfordshire,

“where approval planning for data centres will be accelerated and access to the energy grid improved. The plan also includes a pledge to build a new supercomputer and increase the UK’s compute capacity 20-fold by 2030.”

Is that another example of investment in England taking precedence over investment in Scotland?

Despite that setback, the Scottish Government is investing £321 million through the current budget in Scottish enterprise agencies that support emerging tech, including AI and robotics, and in programmes such as the ambitious Techscaler programme. It is just a pity that Labour has once again turned its back on Scotland.

Manufacturing faces challenges relating to automation, shifts in global supply chains and the need for greener production processes. One such sector is the whisky industry, which in 2024 alone accounted for £5.4 billion in exports and was ranked as the world’s most internationally traded spirit. Yet, the Labour Government’s industrial strategy, “Invest 2035,” with its ambition to drive economic growth by targeting high-potential sectors, does not include food and drink among its eight key growth sectors. That is despite the global significance of Scotch whisky, which is a major economic powerhouse for Scotland and the UK. The industry contributes £7 billion in gross value added to the UK economy and supports 41,000 jobs in Scotland.

The UK Labour Government also has an industrial strategy advisory council, which is there to ensure that the needs and interests of industry across the UK are represented in the Labour Government’s policy-making processes. Yet, there is a lack of representation of the food and drink sector on the industrial strategy council. As Diageo pointed out in evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee:

“Food and drink is a large, important sector that is economically important to the UK and has strong domestic support. We believe that this must be recognised via representation on the Council and the formation of the wider strategy.”

Once again, a key Scottish industry is being ignored by the UK Labour Government.

Universities Scotland also has concerns about the industrial strategy advisory council, given its cross-UK remit. It has called for

“a transparent framework or formal mechanism to ensure the Council connects to the Devolved Administrations and other stakeholders in the devolved nations on a regular basis.”

It went on to state:

“We note and understand the inclusion of Skills England on the Council. Whilst it makes sense to have a strong connection into strategic skills policy, this is another body in which Scotland is not directly represented, nor is it yet clear whether Skills England will set strategy for England only or cover cross-UK agendas. This gives us cause for further concern that the UK scope of the Council will inadvertently but inevitably be steered in the direction of the needs of England and its regions.”

Scotland has shown stronger economic performance than the UK. Our gross domestic product growth was higher; we now have more people in employment and a lower unemployment rate. In January 2025, Scotland’s private sector economy climbed from 11th to sixth among UK nations and regions, which was driven by strengthening services activity and slower decline in overall activity compared with other regions. Despite that, Scotland faces challenges such as the UK-wide impact of US tariffs, rising energy

costs and increased employer national insurance contributions. We can combat those challenges only with the economic levers that other countries have to protect their economy. Labour has shown that its focus is on the south of the border, not Scotland. Therefore, only independence will deliver the support that our industry needs in these challenging times.

15:55

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I come to this debate from a slightly different angle. The war in Ukraine, the vagaries of a flood of Trump executive orders on tariffs, and, indeed, the folly of the UK coming out of the EU, despite Scotland voting to remain by 62 per cent, have all exposed the fragility of the UK economy, particularly UK manufacturing capacity. That flows from decades of successive UK Governments, at least from the 1960s onwards, slipping happily into an importing nation, at least of goods, and relying on being a service economy. That vulnerability will take major change at a UK level to undo.

I recall when the label on goods “Made in China” and “Made in Taiwan” provoked scorn and even laughter. The same goes for Skoda and Lada. We are not laughing now, are we? Practically every device that we use has Chinese components. As for Taiwan, which I visited many years ago, it is impressive. With so little in the way of natural resources and with the looming threat of China just across the water, it has invested in research and development with great success. To protect itself from patent theft, it invests just as heavily in legal protections and it licenses the production that flows from its patents.

Across my Borders and Midlothian constituency, the wool industry is now a shadow of its former self and most of the jobs have gone, although its products are of high quality. Coal mining in Newtongrange, Gorebridge and Penicuik are consigned to the museum and memorials. Penicuik’s famous paper-making site has been redeveloped into residential housing. Those industries all sustained entire communities.

Some of the change was the result of the natural evolution of the international manufacturing landscape, and I accept that. However, we—that is, the UK—missed the boat in anticipating modern manufacturing requirements. Take, for example, the many wind farm developments across my constituency and elsewhere. Which companies manufacture the turbines? I understand that the two main manufacturers are Vestas, which is an American company that is based in Portland, and Siemens Gamesa of Madrid, Spain.

Siemens Gamesa’s company history states:

“40 years ago, we saw limitless potential in wind, from powering factories to illuminating homes around the globe. Our technological leadership has accompanied us all these years, from our first wind turbines to our powerful offshore projects ... From the very first wind generators to the world’s largest wind farms.”

Forty years ago, the company saw limitless potential. What was the UK doing then?

That illustrates my point. The nine largest public owners of wind farms in Scotland are foreign. That includes the Danish wind company Ørsted, the Swedish power company Vattenfall, the Norwegian Statkraft and Munich’s municipal energy company. The UK Government does not own one. To rub salt into the wound, we have high energy costs domestically and commercially. In Norway, although 69 per cent of wind farms are owned by foreign companies, Norwegian companies at least own 31 per cent.

The UK Government failed Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s by selling off the oil and gas industry and failing to build from its oil and gas revenues something similar to the extraordinary Norwegian Government pension fund global, which now amounts to \$1.7 trillion. Members will say that we are where we are. Indeed, but it is worth saying how we got where we are and whether lessons have been learned by the UK Government. After all, it has the economic power; that is not here. I would say that it has not learned lessons.

Support is needed, but let us be clear that the Scottish Government can only tinker at the edges. Given the huge constraints of devolution, we should not say otherwise.

I return to the example of Taiwan, from which we can learn to invest in and value research and development in our universities, as Gordon MacDonald referenced in his comments. We can also look to protect our produce with the “Made in Scotland” label, which has worldwide value. Those are just two areas where the Scottish Government can make fundamental interventions.

However, to be clear, it is successive UK Governments, with their substantial reserved powers, that have failed—as I hope that I have illustrated over the decades—to provide the UK, let alone Scotland, with an industrial strategy.

16:00

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con) : I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I will be supporting the amendment in the name of my colleague Murdo Fraser.

The Scottish Conservatives are always happy to champion the needs of Scotland’s industrial and manufacturing sectors, and these are undoubtedly

challenging and turbulent times. Right across the United Kingdom, those industries face the stark reality of challenges, such as rising energy costs because of the on-going war in Ukraine, which continue to have a significant impact on prices for businesses across Scotland and the United Kingdom.

As Scottish industry faces turbulent times, it is also facing uncertain times. The announcement from Grangemouth today confirms that. The loss of jobs and of the refinery in that location will have a massive impact on Scotland and its economy. In addition, disturbances of international trade and distribution that are taking place because of tariffs have made conditions more difficult for Scotland's exporters, even though Brexit has allowed the UK to avoid the worst of those tariffs.

As Murdo Fraser's amendment highlights, decisions that have been taken by both of Scotland's Governments have made the situation even more difficult and volatile, including decisions that were taken by the Labour UK Government in its autumn statement. Labour's broken promise on national insurance contributions will inevitably have a huge knock-on effect in the form of difficulties for businesses in hiring and retaining staff.

I would also like to talk about the difficulties around decisions that are made within industry. The CEO of PP Control & Automation has warned that tax hikes will burden the manufacturing sector at a time when it is already dealing with high operational expenses and skill shortages. We have skill shortages in many sectors, and the national insurance contributions rise will only exacerbate them. The director of S&P Global has warned of the impact that it will have on manufacturing: it will ensure that jobs are lost

"at a rate not been seen since the pandemic months of mid-2020".

The Labour Government has said that it wants to make growth a priority. If it does, its actions need to make that the reality. Instead, the reality is that its decision to raise taxes will make growth more difficult to achieve for industries across Scotland and the whole of the UK. The fact that the tax increase is happening at the same time as Labour's new Employment Rights Bill is before Parliament will only make a bad situation worse.

It is evident that the reforms are already causing instability, falling confidence and further uncertainty for the businesses community across Scotland. It is also clear that aspects of the reforms will have a real impact in practice. The Law Society of Scotland has said that the new provisions around zero-hours contracts are

"overly complicated and lack clarity".

That alone will cause real issues for individuals. Furthermore, Labour's own impact assessments suggest that the reforms could cost businesses an extra £4.5 billion across the United Kingdom and will impact industry in every sector.

However, for businesses in Scotland, the biggest challenges have been created by the SNP. Perhaps the most obvious example is the high-tax agenda that the Scottish Government continues to follow. On that issue, leading economists have warned that the SNP's approach to income tax is "not working" and that tax divergence from the rest of the UK risks shrinking the Scottish tax base. Higher Scottish taxes are making it more difficult for leading industries to attract and retain top talent, which is a difficulty in the heavy industry and manufacturing sectors. According to Scottish Government data, the average salary in the Scottish manufacturing sector is significantly different from the average in Scotland, which means that workers are far more likely to fall into the SNP's higher tax rates and lower thresholds. Given the importance of the sector to the Scottish economy, the Scottish Government should be careful that its policies do not end up clipping the sector's wings.

The motion is right to talk about the turbulent times that industries face right across Scotland. Although the Scottish Government can see the problem, it is not always offering real solutions. Scottish industry should not be dealing with the higher tax burden or with lower long-term growth, which has taken about £800 million out of the Scottish budget. Businesses need a sense of common purpose and commonsense policies that aim to grow the economy and empower business, so that all sectors can thrive. Instead of increasing the contributions that we receive from hard-working Scots, the SNP should listen to the calls to cut taxes and reduce the burden that people are having to endure.

It is time for both of Scotland's Governments to invest in a competitive pro-business environment that empowers Scottish industries to survive and thrive for the future. We are truly capable of achieving that and will do so if that is offered.

16:06

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): The past decade or so has been very challenging for the economy of Scotland and the UK. We have had the self-inflicted wound that is Brexit, which the new Labour UK Government is fully signed up to; the Covid-19 pandemic, which understandably caused much of our economy to shut down; and, more recently, the cost of living crisis, which has impacted consumer spending and confidence and which was caused at least in part by the Tory party's disastrous mini-budget. All those things

have created huge economic stress, which translates into real difficulties in people's lives.

Brexit, Covid and the cost of living crisis have also been a toxic mix for businesses the length and breadth of the country, and they will rightly be wondering when they will get a break. Unfortunately, due to a combination of external factors, it does not look like that will be any time soon. According to the respected Fraser of Allander Institute, the beginning of 2025 has seen growing unease as firms prepare for rising costs and escalating geopolitical tension, most notably as a result of the introduction of trade tariffs by US President Donald Trump.

The talk of tariffs can seem abstract, particularly given that they are being introduced on the other side of the pond and reciprocated in countries such as China, but they will have an impact on communities across Scotland. I have had the pleasure of visiting many manufacturing businesses in my constituency that export to the EU and the US, and I have heard countless times how Brexit has made doing business all the more difficult—it has cut profit margins or impacted on their ability to grow their workforce and operations. There are companies that provide highly skilled and well-paid jobs in my constituency, and the impact of tariffs on them, like the impact of Brexit, will be very real indeed.

We know that, post-Brexit, many businesses sought closer working relationships with companies and consumers in the US, and the President has now imposed harsh tariffs on them. Although I deeply disagree with many of President Trump's policies, the US is a highly important market for Scotland, and the Scottish Government continues to support a positive transatlantic trading environment that boosts Scottish industries.

Additionally, weeks of tough talk on trade from the White House have caused market volatility across the world, with the US tariffs sending the cost of UK borrowing skyrocketing. That, in turn, has led to fears that further UK tax rises could be on the cards. It is absolutely right that the Scottish Government is working with key partners in the business community and trade unions to map out the actions that are required in Scotland and, indeed, the UK as a whole, to respond to those emerging economic challenges and ensure that the needs of the devolved nations are at the heart of UK decision making.

Those tariff challenges are being imposed on Scottish industry externally, but we need to do what we can to respond to them and to protect Scotland's interests. As the First Minister said in his Bute house press conference earlier this month:

"There is a need to challenge ourselves on policy to make sure the policy interventions that we take are commensurate with the scale of the challenges that we now face."

I look forward to hearing more from the Scottish Government as the discussions with industry bodies and trade unions proceed, particularly as the programme for government is to be published next week.

Crucially, given that most of the relevant powers are reserved, we need the UK Government to take action to minimise the potential harms that are being caused by the current volatile economic situation. If Scotland's extraordinary economic potential is to be achieved, we need a fundamental rebalancing of the UK economy, including removing the self-imposed economic straitjacket of the chancellor's fiscal rules, working more closely with the EU and reversing the increase in employer national insurance contributions, which are a tax on jobs that is stifling growth.

The Fraser of Allander Institute's most recent Scottish business monitor survey shows that 94 per cent of firms expect cost pressures to increase in the first half of 2025, with three in four businesses highlighting national insurance changes as a significant concern. In my constituency, I have heard from businesses across almost every sector, from childcare facilities and general practitioner surgeries to service sector companies and manufacturing businesses, that are deeply worried about the tax hike. The reality is that the national insurance increases are still to fully bite businesses, so the economic outlook could potentially worsen as tax bills start to land.

The UK Labour Government's intervention with British Steel in Scunthorpe is welcome, as members across the chamber have said. However, we need the same urgency for Grangemouth, which is sorely lacking from the Westminster establishment, as has been evidenced today. UK industrial interventions cannot stop at the border. The UK Government needs to get serious about protecting key Scottish industries, whether that is at Grangemouth, through the Acorn carbon capture and storage project or through wider industrial projects. As part of that, the UK Government must develop an industrial strategy for the whole of the UK, working with the Scottish Government as it does so.

As the First Minister said in his Bute house press conference earlier this month, independence is "a way around" the "damaging" impact of Brexit on the country's finances and trade. Until Scotland has the full powers of an independent nation in the EU, we need to work with the UK Government, which must use its powers to spread opportunities for investment, employment and prosperity

equitably across the UK. The people of Scotland, and businesses in Scotland, deserve no less.

16:12

Foyso Choudhury (Lothian) (Lab): Heavy industry and manufacturing are woven into Scotland's economic and social history, from shipbuilding in Leith to brewing on the site of this Parliament, and Edinburgh's history of manufacturing and industry continues today, with life science businesses in the BioQuarter creating life-saving drugs.

The manufacturing sector is vital to Scotland's economy: each year, it adds more than £15 billion in value, and it employs more than 150,000 people. Those industries are also strategically important, now more than ever given international events. Although I was not able to attend last week's debate on the international situation, I was able to read some members' remarks, such as those of my colleague Daniel Johnson regarding globalisation. Donald Trump's tariffs show that it is clear that the game has changed. I will not go as far as to say that globalisation is dead, but our strategy should reflect the new reality.

That requires taking action to protect manufacturing and industries that are based in Scotland and are creating resilient supply chains for our businesses, which have seen shocks in recent years. In that regard, I welcome the action that the UK Government has taken to protect Grangemouth and to save British Steel at Scunthorpe. It has kept the blast furnaces running, saved skilled jobs and prevented another one of our industries from being moved abroad.

Had that not been done, the UK would have been the only country in the G7 without steel-making capabilities, which, during a time of growing uncertainty in which we are increasing our defence capabilities, would not have been good for our autonomy or for Scotland's industry.

The UK Labour Government's investment in Grangemouth and support for project willow also shows how state intervention can protect industries. The £200 million of investment to secure jobs and ensure that Grangemouth is fit for the future should not be scoffed at. That is decisive action to support the industry in the long term, whereas the SNP knew about the issues for years but did nothing. Standing by as all that happened and then turning round, after all the work is done, and calling for nationalisation is simply not serious. With project willow, we have an opportunity to protect jobs, grow new industries and deliver a just transition. Governments should be working together to achieve that, not creating grievance where there was none.

As changes in global trade happen, we need not only to protect our manufacturing and industrial base but to take advantage of changing trade flows in order to expand it. In decades past, businesses offshored their manufacturing to other countries, moving jobs away from Scotland, but times have changed. Previously, it cost £4,500 to ship a 40-foot container from China, but it now costs £18,000. Supply chains are vulnerable to shocks—members will recognise the number of shortages that we have had in recent years.

In the new global trading environment, manufacturing might begin to return to where customers are. A report from Medius shows that 58 per cent of manufacturers have started to reshore their supply chains and move production back to the UK. In addition, a PwC survey of senior manufacturing executives found that 57 per cent said that they would increase investment in the UK in response to a long-term industrial strategy. The Scottish Government should look at how we can take advantage of those trends and reverse the decades-long decline in manufacturing, rather than offshoring ferry contracts to Poland.

Given the global situation, we should be protecting Scottish industry. I am pleased that the UK Labour Government stepped up to that task and secured Grangemouth's future. I hope that the SNP will work with the UK Government to deliver project willow and take advantage of the global situation by bringing manufacturing to Scotland through a real industrial strategy.

16:18

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Everyone has to start their speech in this debate by talking about today's announcement about what is happening at Grangemouth. My heart and soul go out to the families involved, because I know what it is like to be in an industrial town and for the industry that people use to be destroyed and devastated by an uncaring UK Government. I know exactly how that feels, because that happened to us in Paisley. The scars will run deep for a while, and the people in those communities will remember what the UK Labour Government did to them. I am absolutely sick of hearing from Labour members how much of a difference will be made by the £200 million for the transition at Grangemouth, given today's announcement. It is, at best, a fig leaf.

I want to be absolutely clear: Scotland is feeling the shock waves of instability. They are not of our making, but they are very much affecting our people and our economy.

Some of those people who are affected are those from the MS Society, some of whom who are here today because this is multiple sclerosis

awareness week. Members will be glad to hear that Stacey Adam is not here this week—although she still has access to email and will be hassling them on issues. If you ask those from the MS Society what is affecting their members, they will talk about the brutal attack on their community's benefits by the UK Labour Government.

That is one problem, but it is not the only one that we are dealing with. Across the globe, the forces of chaos and aggression are tightening their grip as the people of Scotland look on in fear and trepidation. Russia's brutal and barbaric invasion of Ukraine rumbles on, displacing families, killing innocents and disrupting energy and trade routes across Europe while, in Palestine, the humanitarian tragedy deepens every day, with thousands dead, the infrastructure obliterated and no end in sight. Those are not isolated horror stories. They are seismic global crises that ripple through every household here in Scotland because we are not insulated from them; we, along with the rest of the world, are interconnected with them. Rising fuel costs in Renfrewshire and the inflation that is hitting local businesses in Paisley have an impact that is keenly felt by everyone.

Now, more than ever, Scotland must be a voice for peace, co-operation and fairness across the world stage, which brings me to the issue of Trump's tariffs and the economic mayhem of his isolation. As if global conflict was not enough, we have another storm to deal with: Trump's tariffs, because he is back and has brought chaos with him. His economic policy seems to be, if it moves, tariff it; if it does not move, tariff it anyway. We now live in a world where even the poor penguins of the McDonald Islands are subject to a Trump tariff. I do not know what the penguins did to him, but perhaps when he heard "McDonald" he thought that it was a good business opportunity for them. Frankly, they would probably still make better economic decisions than the man himself.

Trump's isolationist trade tantrums are disrupting our supply chains and damaging Scottish exporters, especially in food, drink and manufacturing. On top of all that, Scotland is isolated because we are no longer in the EU or at the top table, thanks to a Brexit that we did not vote for. We are standing outside the world's largest single market, nose pressed to the glass, while the UK Government hands out trade deals like novelty tea towels and calls that global Britain.

Westminster has let Scotland down time and time again. We have painfully and repeatedly seen how successive UK Governments have failed Scotland. Grangemouth, Scotland's only oil refinery, is critical to energy security and a major source of high-quality jobs. The Labour Government was quick to nationalise British Steel

in England—good job, guys—but, when it came to Scotland, Grangemouth was suddenly a private matter. Anas Sarwar stood in front of TV cameras and promised to save Grangemouth but then performed the biggest backtrack ever. That is just not good enough.

What about project willow, which would be a clear and viable path to transform Grangemouth into a sustainable aviation fuel hub? It is funded jointly and backed by experts but was, once again, ignored in favour of sites in England. Let us not forget carbon capture. Peterhead was shelved and the Acorn project has been delayed again and again while Teesside gets the green light and the money.

Daniel Johnson: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The member will be bringing his remarks to a close very shortly.

George Adam: Down in Westminster, they have found the cash to redevelop Old Trafford but have not found a penny for Scotland's industrial future. Enough is enough. Scotland deserves better than to be treated like an afterthought.

Here is the thing. Despite all of that, Scotland is outperforming the UK. Our economy is growing, we lead the UK in foreign direct investment and we are a hub for high-tech, green tech, AI and life sciences—you name it, we are good at it. Towns such as Paisley are filled with talent, innovation and resilience, so just imagine what we could do with the full economic powers of independence.

That brings me to my closing point. In these turbulent times, rattled by war, tariffs and broken promises, Scotland needs more than sticking plasters. We need the powers to shape our future. Westminster has had its chance but, decade after decade, promise after promise has been broken. It is time that we had the powers, because the best people to make our decisions are those who live here in Scotland. That is why the only way forward for our country is to be in control of our own destiny as an independent country at the heart of Europe.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the closing speeches. I note that a member who spoke in the debate is not present, which is discourteous to all the other members who spoke and to the chair, so I expect an apology.

16:24

Jamie Greene: As the Deputy First Minister said in her opening speech, this debate could not be more timely. As has been well rehearsed today, the news from Grangemouth is a warning to each and every one of us that time is simply not on our

side when it comes to supporting Scottish industry. I am actually surprised that so many people are surprised by today's news, because it has been a long time coming. The business warned both Scotland's Governments for many years of its pending potential doom. The reality is that, if our Governments do not prepare Scotland's historic industries for the economic landscapes of both today and tomorrow, they are failing in their duties.

It is not good enough to maintain the simple line that it is up to the private sector to make do and survive. That is an unsustainable position, particularly when Governments manage the levers that accommodate and nurture industries. Murdo Fraser mentioned the costs of regulation of the energy market, and we must also consider business grants and loans, corporation tax, other business incentives and the shortages in education and skills, which Alexander Stewart mentioned. Some of those areas are reserved and some are devolved, but businesses and their workers do not care about that; they just want support.

The debate has been both insightful and productive. We will support the Government's motion because we agree on the value of Scotland's heavy industrial and manufacturing sectors. I hope that that is a shared view. Equally, we will support Labour's amendment, which calls on the Scottish Government to publish a detailed timeline relating to the implementation of the project willow recommendations. There are also many things in the Conservative amendment that I agree with, including that party's support for Grangemouth and the fair point that condemns Labour's national insurance hike.

The one amendment that I cannot bring myself to support is the Green amendment, and that is simply because I believe that private industry is needed for Scotland's just transition. By that, I mean that private businesses need to be seen as part of the solution and not solely as the problem.

Lorna Slater: Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Greene: I will not. I have a lot to get through.

By its nature, industrial strategy means different things to different people. In today's context, we are talking about the sheer magnitude of intervention, particularly financial intervention, that will be needed in the oil and gas sectors.

Deindustrialisation and the continuous loss of big local employers have had an absolutely devastating effect in other parts of Scotland. Places such as Inverclyde, which is my home community, have suffered decades of neglect by successive Governments. Over many years, Inverclyde has lost major local employers,

including Amazon, Berry BPI, EE, IBM, National Semiconductor and RBS, that have simply closed up shop, packed up and gone. In the past 18 months alone, 1,200 jobs in the local economy have been lost, which is just as devastating to that area as what is happening in Grangemouth is to the economy there.

No matter how resilient people are—and people in working-class communities generally are resilient—we all face the same issues, including the ageing population and lower or sluggish economic activity, which are the root causes of so many of the societal issues that we debate in this place. I would go as far as to say that the compound effect of flagging local economies, such as those in the region that I represent, is tantamount to a national economic emergency. It is a silent economic crisis about which nothing is being done.

However, the decline of our economy is not inevitable. I talked about the CBI's policy calls on us in my opening speech, but I will repeat them for the benefit of those on the Government benches. The CBI wants the Scottish Government to use the full range of policy levers at its disposal to address long-standing barriers to growth; to improve infrastructure and connectivity, which involves digital, new homes and key roads; to ensure that Scotland's economic strategy puts long-term growth ahead of short-term revenue raising; and to announce a skills strategy and a plan on how we will develop the workforce of tomorrow's labour markets. I agree with all those points. I believe that the last one is the most important, because Scotland urgently needs to address its labour and skills shortages.

Recently, Scottish Engineering produced a report that talked about the "stark situation" that is faced by the engineering sector. Half the engineering companies in Scotland are facing difficulties due to the lack of skills in the marketplace. That is not how to create a vibrant and flourishing economy. In fact, both of Scotland's Governments need to knock their heads together and come up with a long-term industrial strategy that works for all our communities. Scotland punches above its weight in many industries, but that plan must include a strategy on how we will meet the needs of tomorrow.

Our five key growth areas are renewables, life sciences, financial services, creative industries and the digital and technological sectors. Those five industries alone currently employ more than 300,000 people and contribute more than £27 billion of GVA to the Scottish economy, alongside AI, biotech, satellite, space, precision medicine and—yes—defence. All those industries will

advance Scotland's economy and restore our place in the world on an industrial scale.

Today, every small, medium and large business needs a message from a Parliament that is unified in voice and which says to them, "We are on your side, we will help you thrive and we will facilitate your growth—no ifs or buts." I assure members that, on the Liberal Democrat benches, those businesses will have a listening ear on my part, because towns such as mine can ill afford anything less than a laser-sharp focus on rejuvenation and growth.

16:31

Lorna Slater: The debate has revealed quite a lot in common across parties. There seems to be a consensus that a proactive industrial and energy strategy is required and that we would like the return of high-value manufacturing to Scotland. I do not think that anyone wants the Trumpian vision of hordes of Scottish people assembling shoes and small electronics, but high-value manufacturing is a possibility.

Members will recall from my entry in the register of members' interests that I used to work for Orbital Marine Power. It—we—built in Scotland the world's largest tidal turbine, in the port of Dundee. Its components were assembled in Scotland and were launched and are now operating in Orkney. Many of the high-value components—gearboxes, generators and so on—were sourced from Europe. They were not manufactured in Scotland, which is a shame. Some of the components were manufactured in Ireland and some in England, but not in Scotland. However, we assembled them here.

There are big challenges to shifting a whole economy, as Donald Trump is trying to do, back to manufacturing, but there are areas in which Scotland is already good. I have previously spoken, as I did at the Business for Scotland conference, which Murdo Fraser referenced earlier, about scaling up already successful Scottish businesses. In Scotland, we already have—*[Interruption.]* I will come to the Deputy First Minister in a second—or was that an accident?

Many successful small and medium-sized enterprises in Scotland already supply components to the renewables industry and to the oil and gas industry and have the scope to scale up. It seems to me that the piece of the economic puzzle that we are missing in Scotland is support for those SMEs—I am thinking specifically of engineering-related businesses, because that is the industry with which I am most familiar—to scale up to supply not only Scotland but countries that are further afield.

There seems to be substantial agreement across parties that increased UK Government investment is required and that the cost of energy is a major barrier. Unlinking the artificial connection between gas prices and electricity prices in the UK would go a long way to resolving some of those problems.

I feel a great deal of dismay at Fergus Ewing's intervention, which ignores the UK's historical emissions and contribution to climate change in the world. At least Murdo Fraser acknowledged the offshore component of our emissions.

Fergus Ewing rose—

Lorna Slater: I will come to the member in a moment.

Tackling climate change is a collective endeavour. Our individual emissions are trivial on the global scale, but every one of us around the world needs to do our bit to meet the collective challenge. Saying that we should get away with bad behaviour while expecting others to behave well is cynical and will not resolve the problem of climate change, as is needed.

Fergus Ewing: The point is that it is good behaviour. For example, the analysis of Rosebank shows that it will emit 14kg of carbon per barrel and that, if electrification of the platform—another innovative method of cutting carbon emissions—takes place, that will go down to 4kg. President Trump's fracked gas produces 78kg of carbon. Not all oil and gas is equal. Surely it makes sense to use the methods of production that reduce to an absolute minimum the carbon emissions from production. Why does Lorna Slater consistently ignore those facts?

Lorna Slater: The member consistently ignores the facts of the international market. We do not control American policy on gas extraction, but the Americans sell that on the market to our gas suppliers here, based entirely on price. I absolutely am sceptical about the ability of capitalism and global markets to tackle climate change, but the member cannot suggest that that is a way to reduce carbon emissions, because our energy suppliers in the UK will buy the cheapest gas available. If he is proposing that the UK implement some sort of law requiring gas providers in the UK to buy lower-carbon production, that would be interesting to contemplate. However, he is not doing that. He is still a proponent of the market-based energy system, and so that is what will happen.

The way that we manage our emissions is to reduce demand for gas in Scotland through, for example, insulating our homes properly, getting people out of cars and taxing aviation. Those are all things that we could do in Scotland to rapidly reduce our dependence on oil and gas.

In fact, I would agree with many members about the importance of steel production and the importance of unlinking that from fossil fuels. A feasibility study undertaken by British Steel and EDF in 2022 on using hydrogen for steel production had good results. It said:

“A full conversion of TBM’s furnace to hydrogen could reduce its direct CO2 emissions by 94% or 71,000 tonnes based on 2021 emissions data.

Indeed, the main challenge noted in the conclusion was that of a mature and reliable supply of hydrogen, which is clearly a significant opportunity for Scotland. The production of green hydrogen requires cheap electricity and water—something in which Scotland is abundant.

Many of the problems noted with Scotland’s challenges in industry could be resolved by our rejoining the EU. It is about access to research funding, access to labour and skills, access to the results of research, and access to the European common market—all of which would improve our economy and our industrial strategy. If the UK cannot be prevailed upon to rejoin the EU, Scotland should be given the choice and allowed to do so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Daniel Johnson to close on behalf of Scottish Labour.

16:37

Daniel Johnson: I will begin my summing-up contribution in the same way that I began my opening one. We all need to think about the 400 workers at the refinery at Grangemouth: this will be a very difficult day for them, as operations cease. Indeed, I wonder what those workers would make of today’s debate. *[Interruption.]* It will perhaps ring a little bit hollow, and we need to be mindful of that. *[Interruption.]* I am very happy to take interventions, but it is a little bit distracting if people speak in my left ear from a sedentary position.

To go off on a bit of a tangent, I would also like to reflect on what Elena Whitham said at the beginning of her speech. I know that Alex Cole-Hamilton never likes it when I claim that the Liberals are in some sort of pact with the Labour Party, but the Liberal result in Canada is something to hold on to as we hope for more enlightened and progressive forces in politics. We can all reflect on the fact that Mark Carney has done far better than any of us in becoming Prime Minister and being elected for the first time all in the same day. That is a very strong political performance.

Let me attempt to draw the various strands of the debate together, because there are some points of consensus as well as some points of disagreement. Despite the fact that Lorna Slater

and Fergus Ewing might be in disagreement, some of the most important points were made by those two members.

Fergus Ewing is absolutely correct to say that, if we want our industry to be competitive, we must look very seriously at electricity prices and energy prices more generally. As long as those prices remain higher than those of our comparator economies, our business and industry will struggle to compete. That is, and has always been, a fundamental point.

The reason that Britain was so successful in the 19th and early 20th centuries was that it had access to coal. The reason for the US being so successful throughout the 20th century, and the 21st century to date, is its access to cheap and reliable oil supplies. I agree with Lorna Slater that our future economies will be built by the countries that secure the most reliable and robust renewable energy supplies. Those matters are not in dispute. The question is, how do we get there reliably? We should make no mistake: such a transition is vital.

Fergus Ewing: Does Mr Johnson agree with, for example, Daniel Yergin, who has said that there is no chance of achieving net zero by 2030? Most Governments in the world, and most commentators, agree that, for a series of very practical reasons, any chance of achieving it by 2050 is also receding.

Daniel Johnson: We must look at that very earnestly. First, let us be clear about the target for 2030, which is decarbonisation of our current electricity generation. We must also recognise that each household currently consumes three times as much energy in heating its building by gas as it consumes in electricity. The challenge presented by electrification, which is fundamentally what the transition is about, is huge. We must look very seriously at our plan to deliver it, because we have to do so.

I will accept the temptation to go down the rabbit hole of electricity prices, as Murdo Fraser invited me to do. First, he is right that the issue is not simply about electricity. However, he ignores the point that I have just made, about our gas consumption coming not only through electricity generation but through heating our buildings. That is a fact. Other countries are less reliant than the UK on gas to heat buildings. Secondly, the analysis shows that we mainly use the marginal cost of the last generating unit of power as the fundamental benchmark for the cost of our electricity. That means that the most expensive bid is the one that sets the price for everyone. Gas has been the most expensive source. Therefore, the fact that we have that structure in place is one of the reasons for our difficulty.

The other aspect is infrastructure, in which we have failed to invest. The point that I was trying to make in my intervention on Mr Fraser is that, in 2017, we sold off our gas storage, which meant that we were more exposed to fluctuating gas prices than any other country in the western world. We had no resilience and no ability to smooth those prices. Taken in turn, those factors are the reasons we now find ourselves in the electricity price review. I remind Murdo Fraser that his party was in government between 2010 and 2015, when it could have done something about that but did not. The energy market review that is being undertaken by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is examining that.

I do not want to go down the other rabbit hole of zonal pricing, but the reason for mentioning it is that DESNZ is looking at such things. That is important, but the main point is that we all need to acknowledge the roles that various Governments play. *[Interruption.]*

I do not have time to take an intervention.

The fundamental question that has been posed today is whether we should have considered the same factors in the case of Grangemouth as we did in relation to Scunthorpe. I have set out why I think that there are salient differences. However, I also gently point out to the Government that, if it had been so serious about the issue, it should have raised it with the UK Government. My understanding is that it has not raised it once in the dozens of discussions over the many months that our ministers have been discussing the future of Grangemouth. Beyond that, it has not even asked for it to be put on the agenda.

If that is incorrect, I am very happy to be corrected by either the Deputy First Minister or Tom Arthur in summing up, but that is my understanding. If the Government wants the issue to be taken seriously, it needs to take it seriously itself. The fact that it has not put it on the agenda probably gives an indication of whether it is making a serious point or taking a bit more of an opportunistic approach, which has been foisted on it by the party's leader at Westminster.

Kate Forbes: Will the member take an intervention?

Daniel Johnson: I will be happy to give way to the Deputy First Minister.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please be brief.

Kate Forbes: For clarity, what is Daniel Johnson saying that we did not put on the agenda? I am sorry—I did not quite follow that.

Daniel Johnson: My understanding is that, at no point in the many meetings between the two Governments regarding Grangemouth did the Scottish Government request that the possibility of

nationalising the facility be discussed. We know that both Governments and the relevant ministers—Michael Shanks and Gillian Martin—have met dozens of times in recent months. They have had a number of discussions, which have been described as constructive. If the Government wants us to take its point seriously, perhaps it needs to explain why it has never raised the issue in its discussions with the UK Government. Those are the facts, as I understand them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Craig Hoy to close on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives.

16:44

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): This has been a full debate. It is increasingly clear that business confidence in Scotland and in the UK has slumped in recent months. As this debate has illustrated, we now have two Governments that, by their actions—or sometimes by their inaction—are failing Scottish businesses, including SMEs, the retail sector and light and heavy industry.

On the substance of the motion and our amendment, I share Murdo Fraser's cautious welcoming of the intervention in support of British Steel. I also share in the lament that we have had across the chamber for the loss of oil refining at Grangemouth, which surely undermines our national resilience and which is in part a result of the SNP's contradictory energy and economic policies. In pursuing net zero with such aggression, the SNP is hampering Scotland's economy and industrial base, most notably our precious oil and gas sectors. On Grangemouth, for example, the SNP's response was too slow, and it was lacking in ambition and agility. In some areas, the SNP is going too fast, and in other areas, it is going too slow—for example, in relation to the development of a coherent industrial strategy.

Both Governments must now do more to save Grangemouth and to give the workforce a future, whether in alternative energy technologies or something else. I therefore urge both Governments to drive project willow forward as timeously as possible.

I welcome the contribution of my colleague Pam Gosal, who made it clear that businesses across Scotland are grappling with the effects of the national insurance increases that have been imposed by the UK Labour Government. At a round-table discussion with retailers that I attended recently, the devastating effect of the national insurance increases became blisteringly obvious. Those increases are hitting all sectors across the Scottish economy, but, as Ms Gosal made clear, the Scottish Retail Consortium has said that

"Scotland's retailers will face a £190 million increase in their tax bill",

which will inevitably lead to a rise in the costs of operating a retail business. Those increased costs will not simply be absorbed by businesses; they will be felt by consumers, they will be felt by businesses further along the supply chain and they will be felt by workers in their pay packets. Wage growth is likely to be held back because of Labour's tax on jobs. There will be an impact on investment across all industries.

I also welcome the contribution of Alexander Stewart, who pointed to the other storm clouds that are hanging over commerce and industry, including Labour's employment reforms, which will put a further burden on businesses when many are already struggling. He was right to point out that Labour's own impact assessments suggest that those reforms could cost UK businesses an extra £4.5 billion—something which, he correctly noted, will impact Scottish industry.

Murdo Fraser was also right when he warned of the pressure on input costs, whether labour costs or energy costs. I welcome his comprehensive knocking down of Labour's claim that we pay more for electricity because of our reliance on gas. That was yet more false testimony from Labour's Cabinet, which now has a reputation for broken promises, particularly in relation to the energy sphere, where Scotland was promised low energy bills as a result of the creation of GB Energy.

I also welcome the sage and characteristically correct statements from Fergus Ewing. I share his concern—it is a very real concern—about the fact that, as an oil-producing nation, we now have no oil-refining capacity.

I congratulate Jamie Greene on his first speech from the Lib Dem benches, and I welcome a lot of what he said. I see that since his move to the Liberal Democrats, he has retained the beard—I am just not sure, as of yet, whether he has acquired the sandals. I could not see that from my vantage point.

In Scotland, it is time for ministers to act robustly and comprehensively to reduce the burden of regulation and red tape. That includes in the planning system, where delays are due in part to the pressures that are faced in council planning departments. Business says that that is choking off investment around Scotland. I accept that there are areas where the UK Government must do more or where the past UK Government should have done more—in particular, as was mentioned, on delivering grid connections. Delays to those are holding back industrial development and investment.

Turning to some areas of the macroeconomy that have not been touched on today, it is no

wonder that, since Labour's budget, the IMF has slashed UK growth forecasts for this year and the next. Inflation is set to rise and GDP per capita will barely budge this year. Borrowing—and, more importantly, the cost of borrowing—will soar under Labour.

It was—as I think that Daniel Johnson may now accept—a bizarre form of economic masochism for Labour to talk down the economy. Labour did wilful damage to our economy and our investment prospects, and it will reap the results of that now and into the future, whether that is in our light or heavy industries, in retail or in areas such as banking and finance. The budget and the spring statement have slashed business confidence—that is clear.

At the recent retail round table that I attended, another important issue arose, as it does in all my outreach with businesses, including in industrial and manufacturing forums, which was that preserving and strengthening skills in the workforce is one of the most important ways in which a Government can support industry. With a more well-educated, highly skilled workforce, our industry can be more resilient to potentially damaging international shocks, and it can take on more opportunities for growth.

Apprenticeships are a vital part of developing workforce skills. On paper, that is why Scottish businesses pay an apprenticeship levy: to help to renew workforce skills and benefit everyone, including themselves. Unfortunately, however, the SNP Government has a very poor track record on ensuring that those funds go towards benefiting our industry through apprenticeships. Instead of the levy being used as it should be—namely, to deliver apprenticeships—it appears to be disappearing into Government coffers.

Earlier this month, the trade body Select called for all revenue from the apprenticeship levy to be ring fenced and for further incentives to be introduced for employers to invest in accredited training, because that will drive growth. The question that I now have for ministers—perhaps the minister can amplify this in summing up—is, where are the proceeds of the Barnett consequential for the apprenticeship levy going? It looks as though the money is being pocketed by the SNP, leaving businesses to pay for apprenticeships and skills development twice.

If the Government is serious about wanting to support Scotland's industry, it should heed those entirely reasonable calls and ensure that apprenticeship levy funds are actually being used for apprenticeships. If the Government is planning on reforming the system, it must make sure that that is a central aspect of any new approach to apprenticeship funding.

To return to the main thrust of my party's amendment and our argument, the Government does not understand how to deliver growth—green or otherwise. That is not just my view, but the view of Michelle Ferguson, the director of the Confederation of British Industry Scotland, who warned:

"Scotland is underperforming in areas crucial to our long-term prosperity, such as business investment and businesses desperately lack access to the people and skills that they need to succeed."

I will close on this. The CBI's call is clear. It wants

"more competitive tax policies and business working with the Scottish Government to co-create policy that protects Scotland's competitiveness and avoids short-changing our long-term growth ambitions, especially in green jobs and offshore wind."

It is now quite clear that the Government's interventions in industry, whether in Ferguson Marine or in BiFab, have all but extinguished any confidence that is left that the Government understands the principles and drivers of business. It is a sorry state of affairs, and one that will be reversed only by a healthy dose of commonsense Conservatism, through a pro-growth and pro-business economic and industrial strategy.

16:53

The Minister for Employment and Investment

(Tom Arthur): At the outset of my remarks, I express my solidarity with, and thoughts for, the workforce at the Grangemouth refinery on what I know will be an extremely challenging day for them, their families and the wider community. I reiterate the Scottish Government's commitment to securing a long-term and sustainable future for the site by progressing the proposals that were identified in project willow through our £25 million to establish a Grangemouth just transition fund to take forward those proposals as well as other opportunities across the industrial cluster.

I will now turn to the contributions from members on all sides of the chamber. The debate has been very worth while, and, although there are clearly differences of opinion, there is a broad degree of consensus. We have focused on some very specific and hugely important practical matters—in particular, the cost of energy, and specifically electricity. Murdo Fraser raised that point, and Fergus Ewing spoke about it at some length. The cost of energy is central to the debate and, more widely, to the cost of living pressures with which the UK and other countries have been wrestling.

Implicit in some of the contributions that we have heard, including from Christine Grahame, have also been wider questions about whether there is still the same broad consensus on

globalisation that existed a decade or two ago. Those questions are reflected not just in the reaction to the developments around tariffs, but in concerns over how we relatively prioritise domestic industries, whether as a matter of purely economic security or because of concerns about geopolitical security.

Jamie Greene: I am sure that there is a lot of consensus around the geopolitical issues that all western economies face.

The one thing that came out very clearly in today's debate is the continued critique of the Scottish Government's lack of a coherent industrial strategy. That came across in multiple independent reports and pieces of analysis. Will the minister respond to those criticisms?

Tom Arthur: The Scottish Government has set out its clear priorities through our national strategy for economic transformation and our recently published green industrial strategy. From engagement with investors and business more widely, I know that those publications are welcome because they provide clarity on the Scottish Government's priorities and reflect where our comparative advantages lie.

Let me touch on some of the contributions in turn. Murdo Fraser highlighted the business in the Parliament event, which I had the opportunity to participate in last week. I commend the Parliament for its work, and I commend you, Presiding Officer, for your leadership in that. The event is an example of what is required to ensure that we collectively, as an institution, reflect the economic priorities of the business community in Scotland and the country more widely. It is only through that type of close listening and engagement that we can ensure that our collective policy making is aligned.

Daniel Johnson spoke about this being a time of profound economic change. Of course, the end destination remains highly uncertain, as we can recognise from the pace of policy developments internationally over recent weeks. As per the motion, there has been a clear focus on the UK Government's intervention in Scunthorpe. The Scottish Government welcomes the recognition of the strategic importance of that site as well as the opportunities for Scottish sites to benefit directly from it. However, the central point that I and others have been seeking to articulate is that we lack a commensurate intervention with regard to Grangemouth, which would have been on a par with the commitments that the Labour Party gave ahead of the general election in 2024. I reiterate that the Scottish Government is committed to doing all that we can to secure a sustainable future for the Grangemouth site and will work constructively with the UK Government and other partners.

Lorna Slater spoke about the key word being “transition”. She also raised an important question—it was implicit in her remarks—about our time horizons. The time horizons that are involved in the transition transcend any individual parliamentary cycle, which creates a challenge around policy making. It is important that, when addressing such issues, we do not regress into thinking in very short-term timeframes. That will not enable us to achieve the strategic change that we ultimately have to realise if we are to meet our obligations in 2045 and meet the need for energy security and the geopolitical security associated with that.

Elena Whitham touched on an important point that a number of members covered in their speeches, which is the primary importance of regional economics. In the UK as a whole, we have a significant challenge of economic imbalance, which creates economic instability, which begets social instability, which begets political instability, which begets further economic instability. In seeking to understand the political instability in the UK today and more widely in the world, we must understand the question of regional economic imbalance. Ayrshire is an outstanding example of a region in Scotland that is seeking to address that imbalance through the work of the Ayrshire growth deal and the community wealth building that has been taken forward there.

Colin Smyth’s speech also highlighted the south of Scotland and the need to have regard to all parts of Scotland if we are to see the country flourish as a whole. Gordon MacDonald spoke of the imbalance in the UK economy. Christine Grahame touched on the lessons of history and took into account the constraints that we operate under as a devolved Parliament.

Alexander Stewart spoke about the role of tax, and Clare Haughey made an important point about the need to understand the context in which we are operating, which is a series of challenges going back to the financial crash of 2008, Brexit, the global pandemic, the cost crisis and the current instability of the global trading environment.

Overall, this has been a worthwhile debate. There is much consensus to be found from it, and I look forward to engaging with colleagues constructively as we take forward the shared agenda.

Business Motion

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-17398, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on changes to the business programme. I call Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move the motion.

17:01

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Jamie Hepburn):

This motion is to add a statement on the disappointing news that emerged this morning about the cessation of refining at Grangemouth. The statement comes on the back of a request that was made by the Conservatives; it was sent by their business manager to me at 11.33 am and then discussed at the Parliamentary Bureau at midday.

It was disappointing that Stephen Kerr felt the need to make a point of order ahead of topical questions that implied that the matter was somehow not under active consideration or, at least, ignored the fact that it was. Mr Kerr should have more faith in his business manager’s ability to bring matters forward in the usual and correct way. Mr Kerr should also have faith in the Parliament’s process to schedule things, such as this afternoon’s debate on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times. I understand that many members took the time in that debate to raise their concerns about Grangemouth; I am unclear whether Mr Kerr availed himself of such an opportunity.

I had intended to schedule the statement for Thursday, because I recognise that tomorrow is an Opposition party business day. I like to try to ensure that, where that is the case, the Opposition has its day in Parliament. However, given Mr Kerr’s earlier remarks that he was very keen that we have the statement at the soonest opportunity, and given that it is his party’s business day tomorrow, I propose that we schedule the statement for tomorrow, which will result in a slightly later decision time of 5.40 pm.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for Wednesday 30 April 2025—
after

2.00 pm

Portfolio Questions:
Deputy First Minister Responsibilities,
Economy and Gaelic;
Finance and Local Government

insert

followed by

Ministerial Statement: The Cessation of Refining at Grangemouth

delete

5.10 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.40 pm Decision Time

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motion S6M-17373, on committee membership, and S6M-17374, on substitution on committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Mark Ruskell be appointed to replace Ariane Burgess as a member of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Ariane Burgess be appointed to replace Mark Ruskell as the Scottish Green Party substitute on the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.—[*Jamie Hepburn*]

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

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Murdo Fraser is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Daniel Johnson and Lorna Slater will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S6M-17352.3, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S6M-17352, in the name of Kate Forbes, on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times, 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.

17:03

Meeting suspended.

17:05

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Murdo Fraser is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Daniel Johnson and Lorna Slater will fall.

We come to the vote on amendment S6M-17352.3, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S6M-17352, in the name of Kate Forbes, on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (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)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don-Innes, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)

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

Abstentions

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-17352.3, in the name of Murdo Fraser, is: For 30, Against 84, Abstentions 5.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Daniel Johnson is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Lorna Slater will fall.

The next question is, that amendment S6M-17352.2, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-17352, in the name of Kate Forbes, on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app would not connect. I would have voted no.

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

For

Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)

Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (LD)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, 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)
 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-Innes, 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)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (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)
 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)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-17352.2, in the name of Daniel Johnson, is: For 22, Against 98, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-17352.4, in the name of Lorna Slater, which seeks to amend motion S6M-17352, in the name of Kate Forbes, on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app would not connect. I would have voted no.

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

For

Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)

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)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don-Innes, 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)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (LD)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)

Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-17352.4, in the name of Lorna Slater, is: For 7, Against 111, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-17352.1, in the name of Jamie Greene, which seeks to amend motion S6M-17352, in the name of Kate Forbes, on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (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) (LD)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (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)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foysol (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don-Innes, Natalie (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)

Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 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)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-17352.1, in the name

of Jamie Greene, is: For 34, Against 86, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-17352, in the name of Kate Forbes, on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don-Innes, 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)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 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) (LD)
 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)
 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) [Proxy vote cast by Rona Mackay]
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP) [Proxy vote cast by Jamie Hepburn]
 McCall, Roz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (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)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 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)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

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

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-17352, in the name of Kate Forbes, on supporting Scottish industry during turbulent economic times, is: For 103, Against 17, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the value of Scotland's heavy industrial and manufacturing sectors, and the significant contribution that they make to the national and regional economy; notes recent developments in global trade policy and their potential economic impact; welcomes the UK Government's intervention in British Steel to support the continued resilience of the supply chain, and believes that the UK Government should give similar consideration to its engagement with the Grangemouth oil refinery, given its significance to national resilience and high-quality job opportunities.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motions S6M-17373, on committee membership, and S6M-17374, on substitution on committees, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Mark Ruskell be appointed to replace Ariane Burgess as a member of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Ariane Burgess be appointed to replace Mark Ruskell as the Scottish Green Party substitute on the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Testicular Cancer Awareness Month

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-16803, in the name of Marie McNair, on testicular cancer awareness month. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I encourage members who wish to participate to press their request-to-speak buttons.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises Testicular Cancer Awareness Month, which runs throughout the month of April 2025; notes that this takes place to raise awareness about testicular cancer and educate people about early detection and treatment; understands that this disease most commonly affects people aged between 15 and 45, and that, if detected early, testicular cancer has more than a 95% cure rate; further understands that approximately 220 people in Scotland are diagnosed each year, with the most common symptoms being a lump or swelling in a testicle, or dull ache, pain or heaviness in the scrotum; recognises what it sees as the importance of this month in raising awareness of the symptoms, tackle common myths and encourage self-checking; commends the tireless work done by Scotland's only dedicated testicular cancer charity, Cahonas Scotland, based in Clydebank, and thanks it for the significant work that it has done to raise awareness, from its "Check Yer Bawballs" campaign, which garnered significant media attention, to its educational talks and free resources, and for its work supporting men beyond diagnosis with cancer care packs, a podcast and peer support programme, and hopes for a productive and successful Testicular Cancer Awareness Month.

17:17

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): I am grateful to have secured the debate and to end the month of April by discussing testicular cancer awareness. I thank colleagues across parties for supporting my motion and for speaking in tonight's debate. I hope that everyone will join me in welcoming to the gallery Ritchie Marshall and Jennifer Hardie from Cahonas Scotland. Members will know that Cahonas is Scotland's only dedicated testicular cancer charity, but they may not know that it is based right next door to me in Clydebank.

Testicular cancer may not be the most talked-about form of cancer, but that does not make it any less important. That is why I feel that it is important to speak on the matter. Testicular cancer awareness month, which runs throughout April, takes place to highlight the disease and educate people about early detection and treatment. It is also a time for tackling common myths and encouraging self-checking.

The disease most commonly affects people aged between 15 and 45, with approximately 220 people in Scotland being diagnosed each year. If it

is detected early, the cure rate is more than 95 per cent, so awareness of the key symptoms is vital. The symptoms to look out for are an ache or swelling in the testicle, or a dull ache, pain or heaviness in the scrotum. If you notice any of those symptoms, please see a doctor. Do not wait: testicular cancer does not wait, and neither should you.

I was keen to hold the debate after meeting Ritchie Marshall and Paul McCaffery from Cahonas. As I mentioned, the organisation is based in Clydebank and I know how much work it has done, so I am keen to highlight it in the Parliament. What struck me most about our conversations was how little attention that type of cancer has received. Unfortunately, far too many people do not know the signs or are too afraid or embarrassed to discuss them. Awareness is vital but, currently, most young people leave school without knowing how to self-check or what symptoms to look out for. I therefore call on the minister to address what further work can be done, working with Cahonas, to ensure that testicular cancer awareness can be further implemented at school level.

For context, Cahonas was set up in 2009 by founder and chief executive, Ritchie Marshall. Since that time, it has been at the forefront of men's health education, working to break down stigma, encouraging early detection and ensuring that no one in Scotland faces testicular cancer alone. Cahonas has been driven by personal experience and is built on the belief that education and support save lives. I whole-heartedly agree about that.

I am always keen to show the good work that is happening in my constituency, and Cahonas is a great example. Its work has achieved international recognition. It offers various vital services, such as education sessions, which are led by its community engagement officer, Paul McCaffery, whose personal story brings real-life experience to the organisation's messages.

Paul discovered a lump 10 years ago, after seeing one of the Cahonas self-check guides, which led him to his early diagnosis. He has since credited Cahonas for saving his life and is dedicated to helping others to do the same. It is an honourable cause, and I thank him for his work.

From international campaigns such as "Check yer bawballs", which reached tens of millions of people worldwide, to care packages, peer support and even a podcast, Cahonas ensures that men have access to knowledge, tools and support to protect their health.

I will take a moment to tell the story of an individual who received a diagnosis of testicular cancer.

"When I first received my testicular cancer diagnosis, I felt completely alone and unsure of where to turn. Talking about my experience openly on the podcast not only helped me process those overwhelming emotions, but it also reminded me that there are others out there facing the same challenges.

Cahonas is doing incredible work, providing not just support but a sense of community for men who are going through similar diagnoses.

The podcast is a lifeline, offering valuable insights and a space where people can share their stories, learn from others and feel understood. I know firsthand how crucial that kind of support is, and I'm grateful that Cahonas continues to make such a difference in the lives of men like me."

That touches on an important point. Awareness goes beyond the physical. It is also about mental health, emotional support and building a community in which no one feels that they must face cancer alone.

It is also about standing with those who are going through the treatment. Testicular cancer is not just a physical condition; it impacts identity, fertility, relationships and long-term mental health. Cahonas has created that wraparound support beyond the hospital ward, helping men to rebuild their lives and self-confidence. I would be interested to know whether better collaboration could be achieved to ensure that post-treatment services can be better supported.

Awareness starts with a conversation—with breaking down stigma and encouraging our friends and family to know that real strength is found in taking care of ourselves. We need to normalise open, honest conversations about men's health. Having spaces in which men feel comfortable to ask questions and share concerns without shame is a core part of that.

To all those battling testicular cancer, I say, "You are not alone." To those such as Paul who have come out the other side and used their platforms to help others, I say, "Thank you for your courage and determination."

As we end testicular cancer awareness month, I thank members for attending the debate to help to raise awareness. Most of all, my sincere thanks go to Ritchie, Paul and everyone else who is involved with Cahonas. You have, truly, saved lives, and for that I am extremely grateful.

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

17:25

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank Marie McNair for bringing this important debate to the chamber. I have spoken about cancer awareness, specifically bowel cancer awareness, in April in previous years, and I have

had to mention things that we perhaps do not look at until we see them face to face. I have talked about seeing blood in your poo and the other symptoms, and I think that it is important that we normalise those discussions.

Testicular cancer, which we are talking about tonight, is dangerous. There are 2,500 new cases every year, leading to about 65 deaths each year. Catching it early is the way to deal with it. I am therefore going to try to follow the advice of Kenny Everett, and do this "in the best possible taste".

On that basis, Deputy Presiding Officer, I will take you on a journey to your local supermarket. If you go to the fruit aisle, specifically the section where you find pears, I ask you to pick up a pear and look at it.

I have to say that, when I was researching this speech, I did not realise that there were quite so many varieties of pears available, from Conference and Concorde pears to Taylor's Gold and Bartlett pears—in fact, there are some 300 varieties.

When you go to select your pear, you get what you are given on the supermarket shelves. If you pick up a pear and it is misshapen or hard, or if you push it and it causes you pain, you would reject it and do something about it.

That takes me back to the subject that we are talking about tonight, which is testicular cancer. If you find any of those symptoms, you must do something about it. To do nothing is to endanger your life. It might be just those symptoms alone, or there might be other symptoms, such as losing weight, having a cough, having difficulty breathing or a swollen chest, or having a history of testicular cancer in your family, that you are ignoring or do not recognise. However, if you recognise any of them, my strong advice is that you should go straight to the doctor early on and ask to be tested.

My belief is that if we talk normally about testicular cancer—not necessarily by comparing it to a journey to the supermarket, but by talking about the symptoms and raising awareness—we could save lives. It does not matter if only one life is saved—that one life is absolutely vital.

I pay tribute to Cahonas Scotland for its "Check yer bawballs" campaign and to Movember—both charities that are involved in men's health. I remind everyone that, when it comes to cancer, if you find something at any stage that causes you concern, it will probably cause the doctor concern and it will get checked. If you get it checked, it might be nothing, but if it is something, you could save your life, and that is really important.

17:27

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): I pay tribute to my colleague Marie McNair for securing today's important debate. In Parliament, we—understandably—devote a lot of time to discussing women's health issues, so I really welcome the opportunity to speak in a debate with a male focus, on testicular cancer.

As we have heard, testicular cancer is the most common cancer among men in the United Kingdom aged 15 to 45. A total of 2,400 men in the UK are diagnosed each year. In Scotland, 175 men were diagnosed with testicular cancer between October 2022 and September 2023. That represents a decrease from October 2021 to September 2022, when 183 men were diagnosed, but an increase from October 2022 to September 2021, when 161 were diagnosed.

Although more than six men are diagnosed each day across the UK, it is important to note that survival rates have risen every year since the 1970s. When testicular cancer is detected in its early stages, it is 96 per cent curable—the outlook is one of the best among all cancers. According to Cancer Research UK, around 95 out of 100 men survive their cancer for one year or more after they are diagnosed; around 95 out of 100 will survive their cancer for five years or more after diagnosis; and around 90 out of hundred men will survive their cancer for 10 years or more after diagnosis.

However, men should not allow those survival figures to act as a deterrent to regular checking, nor should they become complacent. While nearly all men survive testicular cancer, if the cancer has spread, the rate of survival for five years or more can reduce to 65 per cent, so checking is incredibly important.

The most common symptom is a lump or swelling in a testicle, or a dull ache, pain or heaviness in the scrotum. Usually, those symptoms are caused by nothing more than injury or infection. However, if you notice any of these signs or a combination of them, do not leave it to chance—speak to your general practitioner to make sure.

I, too, take the time to congratulate Cahonas Scotland—which is based in Marie McNair's constituency, as we heard from her—on the work that it does to raise awareness of testicular cancer. As Scotland's only dedicated testicular cancer charity, it has a range of resources to raise awareness, offer advice and support men through their cancer journey. On its website, men can input their mobile number and the charity will text them a monthly self-check reminder at no cost to them. Alternatively, men can sign up for the monthly newsletter for updates, also with a self-check reminder.

As is the case with so many men's issues, men are often too uncomfortable to talk about testicular cancer and its prevention. That is why when men are brave enough to go public with a diagnosis, it can save lives by bringing renewed attention and focus to the disease.

Members across the chamber may remember, or be aware of, the former Celtic player Alan Stubbs, who was diagnosed with, and survived, testicular cancer twice. Although his cancer was initially detected through a post-match drugs test, he has been a strong advocate of men checking their testicles regularly for signs of disease. I am in no doubt that the increased awareness of testicular cancer as a result of people such as Alan Stubbs going public has helped men across the UK and saved their lives.

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

Clare Haughey: I will in one second. First, I just want to clarify something about Alan Stubbs. It was a hormone that was picked up in that drugs test—it was not about any substances that he should not have had in his body.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sure that he will be very grateful for the clarification.

Finlay Carson: I thank the member for taking my intervention. I have been there and done that—I went for the examination; it is very straightforward and it certainly gives peace of mind.

Men often talk about things tangentially in the pub, such as how many times we have to go to the toilet when we get to a certain age, and they are not embarrassed about that. However, testicular cancer probably goes just that little bit further. Does the member agree that raising awareness is often about the blokes in the pub being able to joke about it, as Edward Mountain did, and that that is how we can get the message out about how important it is that we actually go and get checked?

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

Clare Haughey: In response to Mr Carson, I say that I certainly hope so. Obviously, not being a bloke in the pub, I am not privy to a lot of those conversations, but as the mother of three sons, I would certainly encourage them to talk about their health and to do checks regularly.

We have heard about Cahonas Scotland's "Check yer bawballs" campaign at Christmas, which has ensured that men get talking about testicular cancer and has, more importantly, got them checking.

In closing, I thank Marie McNair again for securing today's debate, and I pay tribute to charities such as Cahonas Scotland and Cancer Research UK.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Paul Sweeney, who joins us remotely.

17:33

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): I, too, extend my thanks to Marie McNair, the member for Clydebank and Milngavie, for securing this important members' business debate during testicular cancer awareness month. I echo her commendation of the Cahonas Scotland charity, which is based in her constituency and has done so much to tackle stigma through good-humoured campaigning.

As has been mentioned, testicular cancer is the most common cancer among men in the UK aged between 15 and 45, and yet we know that there is still a real sense of stigma associated with the disease. That is partly understandable—it affects an intimate part of the body, and so for many men who already struggle to talk openly about health issues, the nature of the subject makes it a step too far. They either do not check for symptoms, ignore symptoms or simply put off seeking help until it is too late, and yet we know that, as with so many conditions, the first step to treatment and recovery is to ask for help and get a diagnosis.

If we are not willing to talk about testicular cancer and act on symptoms when they first present, lives will be lost that could have been saved. There is nothing strong or brave about suffering in silence—it is much stronger and braver to reach out and get the help that you need. Given that the survival rate for testicular cancer that is caught early is 95 per cent, the difference between silence and getting help is literally a matter of life or death. How many children are without parents, spouses without partners and parents without children, because embarrassment or procrastination meant that help was not sought out when needed?

Edward Mountain: We read that someone with testicular cancer who has surgery to have one testicle removed will not be affected by that. There are also ways of storing semen, should someone have to have both testicles removed. The long-term effect of the surgery is that it keeps the person alive. Does Mr Sweeney agree that we ought to discuss that and make it clear that treatment is better than nothing at all?

Paul Sweeney: I thank Mr Mountain for making those points. That issue is an important aspect of future campaigning. We know that a lot of current campaigning takes the form of good-natured and humorous campaigns, which are important—the

work that is done by Oddballs underwear and Movember is really useful—but when we look at the HIV stigma campaigns, we can see that a lot of work has been done to change the narrative around that, and send the message that HIV no longer presents the critical health implications that it once did, and that people with HIV can now live relatively normal lives. Perhaps we need to change the narratives around reproductive health for men, which is an aspect that is often not considered when talking about testicular cancer. Mr Mountain's point on that was really insightful and important.

I know that many people will of course be thinking about Capital Radio DJ Chris Stark, who revealed only last month that he had undergone chemotherapy for testicular cancer. I found his public statement to be very moving and I hope that it will encourage others to seek out treatment, so I thought that I would quote a few lines from it. He said:

"The reason I want to share this is that I feel like an idiot that I didn't spot this sooner. And although I'm effectively cured and it was caught early, my hope is any bloke reading this will perhaps think to check themselves today. Or go to a doctor if not sure about any possible symptoms."

Caught early, this cancer is so so treatable. It is most common in men aged 18-49.

I also think it's a tricky subject matter to talk about, but I'm willing to put my now one ball on the line here if it helps make that conversation less tricky for guys."

He says that, if doing that

"Encourages someone to check themselves"

and

"potentially saves a life",

it will have been well worth it. I am sure that the entire Parliament commends Mr Stark for his bravery and wishes him a very swift recovery; we look forward to hearing him return to the radio soon.

Fighting the stigma around testicular cancer must be a priority for this session of Parliament, particularly as it affects young men, who often do not interact with primary care until later in life.

I welcome this debate, and I hope that the discussion will go beyond the chamber and will continue long after parliamentary business has ended. If it does, lives will be saved. Therefore, let us all increase those conversations about awareness of testicular cancer and the need for men to check themselves regularly, and fight against the stigma that prevents people asking for help and getting a diagnosis early. We all need to play our part in that discussion, and for that reason I am happy to support the motion this afternoon.

17:37

Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): I thank my colleague Marie McNair for bringing this important debate to the chamber on a topic that many still find difficult to talk about.

This might be a bit of a stereotype, but I think that it is one that definitely holds some truth: men are notorious for ignoring their own health. It is interesting to note that, today, we have a woman helping to get the conversation going in Parliament to mark testicular cancer awareness month.

Many of us with men in our lives will be all too familiar with the battle of encouraging them to see their GP when they finally disclose to us that they have noticed a change that needs to be checked out. That can be about any part of the body but, when it comes to what is between their legs, the embarrassment factor is ramped up, meaning that changes are not discussed or explored in a timeous manner. It should not be that way, and that is why I applaud the efforts of Cahonas Scotland, which is working hard to raise awareness about testicular cancer and to encourage men to be aware of the symptoms and see their GP if they notice any changes. Its brilliant, stigma-busting “Check yer bawballs” Christmas campaign, which has been mentioned several times already, has been supported by famous figures such as Ayrshire’s footballer Billy Gilmour, who have helped to send the message that, once in a while, preferably monthly, men need to check their testicles.

As we have heard today, if testicular cancer is detected early, there is a 95 per cent cure rate, and survival rates have risen every year since the 1970s. However, it can be detected early only if men know what to look out for and are proactive. Therefore, I will repeat the symptoms, just to really hammer the message home. Men should be aware of a lump or swelling, heaviness and discomfort or pain. Like others who have spoken today, I encourage all men listening to this debate to head to the Cahonas Scotland website and sign up for its monthly self-check reminder, which will ensure that they get a text once a month to remind them to give themselves a quick examination, using the handy guide that can be found on the website. A quick check after a bath or shower is the best plan and is something that all men should work into their schedules.

That is also the call of Capital Radio presenter Chris Stark, who, as Paul Sweeney just mentioned, recently announced that he was diagnosed with testicular cancer, but that, thankfully, it was caught early and he is now effectively cured. He wants all other men to set aside their blushes and encourage each other to check themselves. That just might save someone’s life.

Cahonas Scotland has launched a new campaign called “Check Your Balls for LIFE” to mark testicular cancer awareness month. LIFE stands for lumps, irregularities, firmness and enlargement. The good news is that most of those symptoms are not caused by cancer, but it is important for men who encounter them to keep calm and contact their GP to double check.

I am eager to hear from the minister about what steps the Scottish Government has taken or could take to spread awareness and educate men further about testicular cancer and how to check for it, especially young men, as we know that most cases of testicular cancer affect those aged 15 to 45. We need that knowledge to be as well understood and widely known as breast self-examination is for women—that is something that is hammered home to us at a very early age. We need young men to be leaving education with an understanding of why it is important that they give themselves a check.

Today, we have heard a positive message for men, overall. Testicular cancer is rare in Scotland and it is also easy to diagnose and treat. However, that is the case only if we get the right message out there and get men to talk, take responsibility for their health and get on the phone to their GP if they need to. They must just forget about the embarrassment. There are prosthetics and all sorts of things out there. Men do not need to worry about having one ball—they can have two at the end of this anyway.

17:41

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I thank Marie McNair for securing this opportunity to talk about testicular cancer. I also thank Cahonas Scotland, which, as the motion states, is Scotland’s only dedicated testicular cancer charity.

As others have said, testicular cancer is rare. It is more likely to be found in younger men, most commonly affecting those aged between 15 and 45. Early detection and treatment are key, with a 95 per cent cure rate when the cancer is found early.

As the motion highlights, approximately 220 people in Scotland are diagnosed each year. The latest NHS Shetland data shows low numbers of testicular cancer patients in the isles over the past five years, with no diagnoses in 2020 or 2021—people avoiding seeing the doctor during the height of the Covid pandemic might have had something to do with that. In the past five years, all cases in Shetland were treated within the target period.

Of course, low numbers do not make island men indestructible, and, just as women are encouraged to regularly check their breasts for any lumps,

bumps or changes, so, too, should men self-check themselves.

Edward Mountain is right to say that we need to normalise discussions about the issue, and I agree with Claire Haughey's point that we more often speak about women's health than men's. Therefore, I am happy to set aside my discomfort and contribute to this debate on men's health.

Checking in the shower is recommended. Feeling the weight is important. Often, testicles are different sizes, but they should not feel heavier or larger than usual. Things to look out for include lumps, heaviness, build-up of fluid in the scrotum, pain and/or discomfort in the testicles or scrotum and pain in the lower back. Those symptoms can be caused by injury or infection, rather than cancer, but it is important that men see a doctor if they notice any of those signs or a combination of them. If a man knows what is normal for themselves, that will help them to spot changes.

Education is vital, and I support calls for greater awareness raising, for reducing stigma and for myth-busting. Men should not let embarrassment put them off going to see their GP.

Before I conclude, I want to raise the 13-month delay of the proposed swift urological response evaluation—SURE—unit at Aberdeen royal infirmary, which is of serious concern. NHS Grampian works closely with NHS Shetland, offering many of my constituents healthcare treatment that is not available in the islands. The SURE unit will cover patients needing treatment for urological cancers, including prostate, penis, kidney, bladder, and testicular cancer. With plans first mooted in 2021, there had been hopes to have patients seen in the department by May. I recognise the financial issues at NHS Grampian, but I would appreciate it if the minister could use some of her time to address that point in her response.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I now call Fulton MacGregor, who is the final speaker in the open debate. You have up to four minutes, Mr MacGregor.

17:44

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Initially, I had not intended to speak in the debate, Presiding Officer, so I thank you for allowing me to come in. I might not use up my whole time.

Like others, I thank Marie McNair for bringing this important debate to the chamber. I thought that, as a man, I would rise to say that I agree with what has been said. Testicular cancer is not an issue that is often talked about. When men are socialising with other male friends, it is probably

not a health area that we would particularly mention. That is why it is important that campaigns such as the one that we have heard about today continue to go ahead across the world.

I chose to speak because I want to pay tribute to the Cahonas Scotland campaign that is mentioned in the motion and has been highlighted by everyone who has spoken today. We are all used to interacting every year with the "Check yer bawballs" campaign, which has been extremely effective.

One of the reasons that it has been so effective is that it has pushed the boundaries. I recall that the first time that I got involved in the campaign, I was getting my partner to take pictures of me by the Christmas tree. At one point, although she was not fully questioning what we were doing, she said, "Are you sure you'll be all right to do this? You won't get into any trouble?" I said that I would definitely be fine, because others had done it. However, the fact that she and others asked that question shows that the campaign was pushing the boundaries. It is an effective campaign, with vast amounts of celebrity endorsements every year, and it became a common theme on Twitter—people might remember that, at one point, before the past couple of years, Twitter was good, and it was common to see celebrities popping up on our feeds to support the campaign.

In the first year that I took part in the campaign—I think that it might have been the first year of the campaign—I was retweeted by none other than William Shatner himself. It is my claim to fame. He retweeted me to say, "This looks like a really good idea." I think that he was giving me the credit for the idea, but he would quickly have learned that it was indeed the idea of Cahonas Scotland. However, as a verified Trekkie—although I was more of a "Next Generation" fan—it was good to receive kudos the following day from colleagues who had seen that I had been retweeted by William Shatner. That demonstrates the people who were becoming involved in the campaign—I think that, after that, William Shatner went on to take his own photograph as part of the campaign.

I have to say that, last Christmas, I did not take a photograph for the campaign. That is because I did a search using the hashtag and I did not get a lot of results. That is not to say that there definitely were not many photographs—the activity might have moved forum or whatever—but I did not really see a lot this year. I know that representatives of Cahonas Scotland are in the public gallery, and I say to them that I wonder whether it is possible to either bring the campaign back or, if it was brought back last Christmas, to do a bit more to make it more noticeable next year. It is a very effective campaign, although I

can see the arguments for why taking a year's break or giving it a lower profile for a while is a good idea—we want the campaign to have an impact, rather than people feeling that they are just taking the same photo every 12 months.

Overall, I do not want my words to be seen as a criticism. I pressed my button to speak today because I think that the work that Cahonas Scotland does is absolutely fantastic and I wanted to add my voice to that. I want to say to the people involved in it that they should keep it up, and, like all the other speakers have done, I want to say to men—including Edward Mountain, Paul Sweeney and myself—that we should check ourselves regularly and not be too shy to go to the GP if we find something.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Jenni Minto to wind up the debate.

17:48

The Minister for Public Health and Women's Health (Jenni Minto): I, too, thank my colleague Marie McNair for bringing this motion to the chamber today, and for reminding us all of the impact that diagnosis and treatment of testicular cancer can have.

In addition, I thank Cahonas Scotland for its continued efforts to raise awareness and support those who are affected by testicular cancer. It is great to see its representatives here tonight, and I welcome them to the chamber. I also thank all my colleagues who have contributed to the debate and shared their insights. I say to Edward Mountain that he certainly did so in the best possible taste.

The underlying comment in all the contributions has been that men—and women—need to speak about the various cancers that exist. I absolutely agree with Finlay Carson: men can speak about these issues in more relaxed circumstances—perhaps more relaxed than in this chamber, although I think that we have done really well tonight. I recognise that from visits that I have been on with regard to other cancers. One woman spoke to me about the fact that, when she learned more about her reproductive health, she was able to share that with her husband, who was then able to speak about that when he was out with his friends.

Finlay Carson: One of the issues is that if a man has an issue and gets it checked, he is not likely to talk about it. Sadly, too often, it is only when men are diagnosed with testicular or prostate cancer that they go out and talk about it. Perhaps we should have more people saying that they had a concern and went and had it checked and it was fine; that may encourage more men to go.

Jenni Minto: Absolutely, and that is certainly how my colleagues Clare Haughey and Elena Whitham described the process of breast cancer awareness and checking.

Cahonas Scotland has made that sort of thing so accessible on its website. Marie McNair asked me to talk about the education side and the importance of recognising that it is young men from 15 onwards who could be diagnosed. That is something that the website does really well. It shows a father and son, and I think that the choice of Seán Batty to do the interview is inspired, given that he is so well known and recognised.

Paul Sweeney talked about Chris Stark from Capital Radio and previously Radio 1, who is someone that younger people will know about. Paul was correct when he talked about changing the narrative, which is exactly what Finlay Carson just indicated in his intervention. As Elena Whitham said, we all need to set aside our blushes and ensure that we can talk about the subject, and there are opportunities in the chamber to allow us to do that.

In June 2023, the Scottish Government published an ambitious 10-year cancer strategy, and we remain absolutely determined to improve cancer survival rates and provide excellent and equitable care for all people who are facing cancer. The strategy takes a comprehensive approach to improving patient pathways in cancer, from prevention and diagnosis through to treatment and post-treatment care.

We all know, and Marie McNair highlighted, that April is testicular cancer awareness month. To mark that, the Scottish Government lit up St Andrews house in blue on 16 April, and we will continue to do that every year. We also continue to invest in our detect cancer earlier programme. Every member who has contributed to the debate tonight has commented on the importance of detecting testicular cancer earlier, and we very much recognise that the earlier cancer is detected, the easier it is to treat. We therefore continue to invest in cancer diagnostics and efforts to reduce waiting times.

We also reran the award-winning “Be the early bird” awareness campaign in March. Again, that is a campaign that encourages and empowers people—it tries to reduce the fear and stigma of cancer, which has been talked about today, and it encourages people to act as early as possible. Our get checked early online resource has a wealth of information on testicular cancer. The interview with Paul McCaffery of Cahonas Scotland, who—as other members have said—has lived experience, is well worth watching and learning from. I am delighted to hear that he has accepted an invitation to attend a reception at Buckingham palace this week to spotlight

Cahonas Scotland's work at a celebration of community-based initiatives raising awareness about cancer and supporting those living with cancer.

As others have said, although testicular cancer is a relatively rare cancer, it is the most common type of cancer to affect men between 15 and 45. However, it is also one of the most treatable types, and survival rates are among the best for cancer. However, as we have heard, unfortunately, men are often reluctant to seek healthcare advice and support, as evidenced by a recent health insight survey from the Office for National Statistics.

I hope that the debate tonight has allowed people the ability to speak much more about testicular cancer.

Edward Mountain: One thing is clear: testicular cancer often runs in a family. Is there any way, therefore, that the minister could direct the health service to alert people who have testicular cancer in their family to carry out the checks on a regular basis? That may be one way of reducing the impact quite quickly and simply.

Jenni Minto: I thank Edward Mountain for his suggestion—I am happy to take it away and explore what more we could do. As I said earlier, his analogy was extremely helpful—it can basically be summarised as saying that we have to listen to our bodies and make sure that we speak to the doctor. I will certainly take away Mr Mountain's suggestion.

As Marie McNair and every other member has said, Cahonas Scotland is the only dedicated testicular cancer charity. It absolutely recognises the value in educating everyone about the signs and symptoms of that cancer and the importance—as I mentioned—of early detection through regular self-checking, and its work is invaluable. As I said, I have spent some time looking at its website, which has some fantastic resources, including how to carry out self-checks and—as Clare Haughey and Elena Whitham mentioned—a text service to send reminders to do that. It is absolutely correct that education saves lives.

I will touch on Beatrice Wishart's question about the SURE unit in Aberdeen. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has been dealing with that and I understand that NHS Grampian is committed to refurbishing an alternative site, with the intention to

“provide an excellent facility for ... the Sure unit”,

but I will follow up in writing with the member after the debate.

I thank Fulton MacGregor for sharing his personal experience of, and engagement with, the annual “Check your bawballs” campaign each

December. I know that the campaign has hugely helped to reduce the stigma and embarrassment when talking about testicular cancer. I congratulate him on his “Star Trek” connections, and I also congratulate Cahonas Scotland for the global—and perhaps even intergalactic—reach that its campaign has had. The wraparound service is so important. I note, too, that Sam Heughan is also an ambassador for the charity because his brother Cirdan was diagnosed with testicular cancer. That engagement is incredibly important.

In closing, I make clear the Scottish Government's enduring commitment to improving testicular cancer awareness. In doing so, we can improve early diagnosis rates as well as patient experience and overall outcomes. It is crucial that we continue to raise awareness of cancer symptoms, and I thank everyone who is helping to do so in order, as Elena Whitham said, to extend people's lives.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate, and I close this meeting of Parliament.

Meeting closed at 17:58.

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