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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 10 September 2026

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:30]

General Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson):

Good afternoon. The first item of business is general question time. To accommodate as many questions as possible, I ask for concise questions and also concise answers.

Police Scotland (Crime and Antisocial Behaviour Reduction)

1. Adam Harley (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)

(LD): To ask the Scottish Government what engagement it has had with Police Scotland to help reduce incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour. (S7O-00202)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Neil Gray): Ministers and officials continually engage with Police Scotland on crime and antisocial behaviour. For example, following the independent working group on antisocial behaviour, we worked closely with Police Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to oversee the implementation of improvements to the legislative framework. Earlier this year, at Police Scotland's request, we introduced secondary legislation on the fixed penalty notice regime to increase the penalty to £70, and we are acting on its advice about the powers to seize vehicles that are used antisocially. We are also reviewing the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 with Police Scotland. We are backing that engagement with record investment of more than £1.7 billion in policing this year.

Adam Harley: Crime rates across Scotland are the highest that they have been for more than a decade, while the antisocial behaviour rate is 7 per cent higher than last year. Following the closure of Bishopbriggs police station, there is now only one police station in my constituency. Over the summer, we have seen incidents involving knives, as well as people driving dangerously on e-bikes on footpaths and through parks, sometimes wearing balaclavas. That has caused real concern among my constituents, as has the thuggish, hate-fuelled behaviour that we have seen in Glasgow in recent months.

What is the Government doing to make sure that people feel safe and to ensure that local policing is properly resourced?

Neil Gray: I completely agree with Mr Harley's sentiments about the thuggish and antisocial

behaviour that we have seen. I have already set out the investment that has been made in policing.

Mr Harley will be aware that East Dunbartonshire is a single-area command within the greater Glasgow division and it has its own local police plan, which is agreed with the local authority. Community officers have run focused weekend evening patrols in Bishopbriggs town centre and parks in response to reports of antisocial behaviour, alongside reassurance work with residents. In April, East Dunbartonshire Council reported that community wardens had delivered targeted antisocial behaviour patrols and deployed mobile closed-circuit television in and around Bishopbriggs, responding to youth disorder, graffiti and vandalism. If Mr Harley requires more detail on any of those issues, I am more than happy to correspond with him on them.

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): The cabinet secretary may be aware that decisions were made to close the Oban custody suite for more than a week due to significant resourcing challenges. Measures such as that mean that anyone who is arrested who requires to be kept in custody must be transferred to Clydebank, which is putting extreme pressures on policing in the Oban area. Will the cabinet secretary meet me to discuss the matter further and to establish what actions can be taken to ensure that it does not continue to be an issue?

Neil Gray: I am more than happy to meet Ms Minto at any time to discuss that matter. I am aware of the issue and I agree that it is not acceptable either for those who have been arrested or for police officers in the Oban area.

Ms Minto's question is timely, as I met the chair and chief executive of the Scottish Police Authority this morning and I was able to raise that issue with them directly, along with a number of other issues. They agreed to look into the matter further, look at the resourcing of custody suites and report back. I commit to writing to Ms Minto with the outcome of those investigations in due course.

Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Front-line police resources are under all kinds of intense pressures at the moment—I know that the cabinet secretary knows that—which are being added to by the Government's policy on early release, bail and electronic monitoring. When the cabinet secretary met the chief constable, what exactly did she tell him about the additional demand that those policies are placing on Police Scotland?

Neil Gray: Clearly, where we are requiring the police to do more in order to supervise, monitor or ensure the safety of local areas, there will be resource implications. I will have clear, open and transparent discussions with the chief constable

about her resource allocation and how we approach that in the course of the budget negotiations.

Steven Bonnar (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): North Lanarkshire Council has recently established a long overdue, but very welcome, joint initiative with Police Scotland to tackle the illegal and antisocial use of e-bikes, e-scooters and quad bikes. What engagement has the Scottish Government had with North Lanarkshire Council and Police Scotland to support that work and to ensure that effective local approaches to tackling antisocial behaviour are supported nationally?

Neil Gray: As a fellow North Lanarkshire constituency MSP, I am well aware of the issue that our communities are facing with antisocial behaviour and the use of e-bikes, off-road bikes and similar. I have had direct communication with Police Scotland to ensure that we are maximising the devolved powers that we are able to deploy in relation to the police's work to impound and then destroy those vehicles.

I intend to be in correspondence with and have further dialogue with United Kingdom ministers around their responsibilities, such as the licensing of those vehicles, to support our police to investigate and deter that activity.

Maternity Services (Stranraer and Wigtownshire)

2. Senga Beresford (South Scotland) (Reform): To ask the Scottish Government, further to its commitment to provide an update on the availability of maternity services in Stranraer and Wigtownshire after the summer recess, when will it provide such an update. (S7O-00203)

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs (Maree Todd): This month, we will begin our independent review of maternity services, which will be led by Professor Christine McCourt. As previously outlined, the review will consider the challenges that pregnant women in rural areas face, and our published principles include an explicit focus on women living in Wigtownshire. It will be informed by the experiences of women, families and staff. Professor McCourt is expected to conclude the review within nine months but will share any relevant updates throughout.

In the meantime, we expect all national health service boards to provide maternity services as close to home as practically possible, while ensuring the safety of mother and baby. NHS Dumfries and Galloway developed its service model based on findings from an independently chaired local service review, in line with its

responsibilities to ensure the delivery of safe, sustainable services.

Senga Beresford: I appreciate that response, but given that this week the Government has announced 34 new embassies and that it continues to prioritise strangers—[*Interruption.*]
—that is someone we do not know—including by spending £2 million on free bus passes for asylum seekers, can the minister please tell me when the people of Stranraer and Wigtownshire will become the Scottish taxpayers' priority?

Maree Todd: As I have clearly set out in my response to the member and as the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Care set out when she announced the review, there will be a particular focus on several areas that are important to the sustainability of maternity services across Scotland. Maternity services in rural and island areas across Scotland and the experiences of women living there will be included. That will include, but not be limited to, women in Caithness, Wigtownshire and Elgin.

The Minister for Business and Fair Work (Tom Arthur): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I wonder whether you can clarify, with regard to part 7 of the code of conduct, which is about how we conduct ourselves, whether it is permissible to refer to our constituents—who pay our wages and whom we are sent here to represent—as “strangers”.

The Presiding Officer: That is a debating point. It is not a direct insult.

I would ask that you press your button to make a point of order. At first I did not even know who was asking for it.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): The minister should be embarrassed standing up to deliver that pre-scripted answer. She visited Stranraer years ago and gave a commitment that the women in Stranraer would be looked after.

What assessment has been made of the clinical and safety implications of pregnant women from Wigtownshire having to travel for up to two hours to access consultant-led maternity services? Does she believe that a further delay to access to maternity care, because of repeated consultations, could place mothers and babies at increased risk of adverse outcomes?

Maree Todd: The member will be aware that, when I held the brief previously, I travelled to the area to meet people and hear directly from them. The integration joint board made a decision to change the current service model because of concerns about safe and sustainable services, and members of the community were formally consulted before the IJB made its final decision.

Undoubtedly, the area will be a focus during the independent maternity review, which will start this month and will report promptly, within nine months. I urge the member to await the independent view on the decision that has already been made in consultation with the community.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Waiting Times)

3. Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to lower waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services and ensure that all children and young people are getting access to treatment at the right time. (S7O-00204)

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs (Maree Todd): The Scottish Government continues to take significant action to lower waiting times and improve access to specialist CAMHS support. As a result, we have now delivered the 90 per cent CAMHS waiting times standard for more than 18 months, while one in two children and young people who have been referred to CAMHS start treatment within seven weeks of referral. Total waits have fallen, and waits of more than 52 weeks are now at their lowest level in more than a decade. That progress has been achieved through sustained investment over time to increase CAMHS capacity. We have backed that with national improvement work, including the implementation of the CAMHS service specification and enhanced support for national health service boards to improve services.

Although that represents significant and sustained progress, we are not complacent. We continue to be clear that long waits are unacceptable for children and young people who require specialist mental health support. We are working closely with boards, providing enhanced support and expert advice to drive further improvements in timely access and outcomes for children and young people.

The Presiding Officer: I suggest that we have shorter ministerial responses. It is not fair to members who are asking questions that they are being asked to be succinct when ministers do not appear to be following the same rules.

Fulton MacGregor: Earlier this week, I met the clinical director for Lanarkshire CAMHS, when I was told that, although the department is meeting its target for initial appointments, the demands on the service have increased immensely recently, and many children and young people are still not receiving the assessment or treatment that they need. Some are facing waits of years for assessments by services. Can the minister set out what specific action the Scottish Government is

taking to address longer waits, including what additional funding and capacity will be provided to meet the significant increase in referrals? Will she agree to meet me to discuss the pressures that are being experienced by services and the affected children and families in my area?

Maree Todd: It is important to stress that CAMHS is a specialist service for people with significant mental health needs. The member is asking largely about neurodevelopmental services. I recognise that demand for neurodevelopmental diagnosis and support has increased significantly and that long waits for diagnosis can be worrying for families. Diagnosis is important, but it is only part of a person's journey. It is vital that children and young people can access appropriate support based on their needs without having to wait for a diagnosis. Yesterday, I announced £7.6 million in funding for the young people's neurodevelopmental support fund, which will help in the area. I am more than happy to meet the member.

Bus Priority Measures (Glasgow Southside)

4. Zen Ghani (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Glasgow City Council and the Glasgow city region bus partnership regarding the delivery of bus priority measures on Pollokshaws Road, including any assessment it has made of the potential economic benefits for communities and businesses. (S7O-00205)

The Minister for Business and Fair Work (Tom Arthur): The cabinet secretary met with Councillor Aitken, the leader of Glasgow City Council, on 8 July, where she highlighted the strong partnerships that Glasgow and other local authorities have developed with bus operators through the Glasgow bus partnership and the plans to introduce bus priority measures on key corridors across the city.

Through our bus infrastructure fund, we have provided funding to support the development of bus priority measures on Pollokshaws Road, including corridor design work and artificial intelligence-enabled traffic signal improvements. The supporting business case identifies opportunities to improve connectivity, increase access to jobs and services, reduce congestion, and deliver benefits for local communities and businesses.

Zen Ghani: The Pollokshaws Road corridor serves communities across my constituency. With funding already in place for the design of the corridor and an artificial intelligence bus priority pilot, can the minister provide an update on when people who live, work and travel along Pollokshaws Road can expect the delivery of those improvements?

Tom Arthur: Glasgow City Council's AI bus priority pilot on Pollokshaws Road, funded by the Scottish Government, is already delivering positive results. The AI pilot and radar detection upgrades at 20 sites have produced initial journey time improvements of around 33 per cent, on average, across all vehicles.

We are investing in the next phase of the pilot, alongside improvements in the design and development of a wider corridor. Good progress is being made and we remain committed to working with partners to deliver measures that enhance bus journey times, reliability and connectivity along the corridor.

Rural Crime

5. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its ongoing work to deal with rural crime. (S7O-00206)

The Minister for Victims and Community Safety (Kirsten Oswald): The Scottish Government recognises the significant impact that rural crime can have on individuals, businesses and communities. The Scottish partnership against rural crime, led by Police Scotland, brings together key partners to prevent, deter and tackle rural crime.

A three-year SPARC strategy was published in June, which adopts the four-piece framework of prevent, pursue, protect and prepare, and sets out actions to bring offenders to justice, safeguard communities and reduce the risk of criminal activity. SPARC also works closely with police forces and partners across the United Kingdom to disrupt criminals who operate across borders.

Rachael Hamilton: This week marks rural crime week, which highlights the serious impact that rural crime continues to have on individuals, families and businesses across Scotland, including in my constituency and the Scottish Borders. Earlier this year, several farms were targeted across the Borders by thieves who stole valuable equipment, including power tools, farm vehicles and quad bikes. The thefts cause anxiety and have a major impact on people's livelihoods.

The minister will be aware that I am progressing plans to introduce a member's bill in this parliamentary session to strengthen safeguards against rural crime. Can the minister reinstate the Scottish Government's commitment to working constructively with me and stakeholders as I develop the proposals?

Kirsten Oswald: I am grateful to the member for her focus on this area. It is acknowledged that cross-border criminality is a challenge, which is why SPARC operates closely with police forces

across the UK. Protecting rural communities is at the forefront of our minds. I would be happy to meet the member to have a further discussion on the matter, as I acknowledge that rural communities are a core part of our policing priorities.

East Coast Arc

6. Lloyd Melville (Angus South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what role it envisages for Angus in its proposed east coast arc between Aberdeen, Dundee and St Andrews. (S7O-00207)

The Minister for Business and Fair Work (Tom Arthur): As is stated in our programme for government, we are backing increased growth across Scotland, with every region having its unique strengths and opportunities. Angus, as part of the east coast arc, will play an integral role in helping to drive collaboration, innovation and sector growth. Specifically, given that it will be home to a significant part of Scotland's brilliant life sciences sector, the new cluster development organisation will help to ensure better connectivity and opportunities for businesses across the region and the wider country.

Lloyd Melville: Angus brings significant strengths in food and drink, manufacturing, energy and tourism, alongside the close links with local employers that Dundee and Angus College provides. As the east coast arc is developed, how will the Government ensure that the existing connections between education and business are used to drive investment, skills and economic growth?

Tom Arthur: It is clear that Mr Melville will be an outstanding champion for his constituency. I join him in recognising the strengths that already exist in Angus, which has excellent foundations for growth, built on world-class sectors including food and drink, advanced manufacturing, energy and tourism, and strengthened by the close partnerships between Dundee and Angus College and local employers.

The development of the east coast arc provides an opportunity to build on those strengths, not replace them. Our approach will be to ensure that existing education and business partnerships are at the heart of the arc's development. As is set out in the PFG, the Scottish Government's absolute focus is on boosting productivity and innovation by linking research universities and businesses.

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): I am a bit confused about all of that. I thought that we were trying to reduce clutter in the public sector, but now, in addition to the Tay cities region deal and a discussion between universities on the future framework for the sustainability of their finances,

we are adding that structure in. What value will that add to what we are already doing?

Tom Arthur: I know that Mr Rennie is well versed in agglomeration economics and the triple helix approach to innovation. Collaboration is absolutely essential to ensuring that we realise all the opportunities in enhancing our productivity. I know that, as he is as much a champion for his constituency as Mr Melville is for his, Mr Rennie will want to welcome this initiative and work constructively with the Government.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): How can the Scottish Government viably construct an innovation corridor that is dependent on Dundee and Aberdeen universities when academic departments and research facilities are being hollowed out by hundreds of redundancies?

Tom Arthur: The member raises important points. We want to see every aspect of the Scottish education system flourish, given what it contributes to our society. To touch on my earlier points, it is vital that we ensure that we are making progress in growing our economy and that we have an innovative, entrepreneurial and dynamic economy. The member raises wider issues, and ministers are happy to engage.

Bus Service Operators (Support)

7. Laura Moodie (South Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what support it can provide to bus service operators, including Borders Buses, to improve evening services between Edinburgh, Peebles and Galashiels. (S7O-00208)

The Minister for Business and Fair Work (Tom Arthur): Evening bus services in Scotland provide essential late-night mobility that supports local economies, enhances personal safety and improves access to shift work and social activities. We provide £46.5 million via the network support grant to support current bus services, so that operators can provide access to affordable transport for passengers. That fund is paid on a kilometres-run basis, which supports the longer-distance routes that are more common in rural areas.

We also provide funding through the general revenue grant to support local authorities, which are required under law to identify where there is a social need for a particular bus service. That allows local authorities to influence the frequency and routing of services.

Laura Moodie: The last X62 service from Edinburgh to Peebles and Galashiels currently leaves Edinburgh just before 10 pm. For those communities, the time of the last bus restricts what they can do and how late they can stay at venues such as the Eastgate theatre. What assessment

has the Scottish Government made of the adverse impact of limited evening bus services on the rural economy, particularly the hospitality and creative sectors?

Tom Arthur: The member raises an important point about our night-time industries—indeed, the matter was raised with me in the chamber just last week. Self-evidently, if there are restrictions or constraints around connectivity resulting from services not running later in the evening, that will influence behaviour and have a detrimental impact on hospitality.

We have a world-class hospitality offering in Scotland. We know that the sector faces pressures, but we want to work constructively with it. I am happy to take that point away and engage with the cabinet secretary on it. As much as it is a transport issue, it is clearly also an economic issue. I am happy to engage further with the member.

Housing Shortages (Rural Communities)

8. Laura Mitchell (Moray) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to deal with housing shortages in rural communities, including in Moray. (S7O-00209)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Government is supporting the delivery of more homes in rural and island communities through a record investment of £4.1 billion in the affordable housing supply programme and continued support for a £37 million rural and islands housing fund and a £25 million rural affordable homes for key workers fund, as well as through partnering to unlock development opportunities and ensure sustainable rural housing growth through our planning system.

We are making strong progress towards our commitment to deliver 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, with just under 20 per cent of the affordable homes that have been delivered to date being located in rural and island communities.

Laura Mitchell: The cabinet secretary will be aware that housing shortages in Moray are a significant recruitment barrier for public services, including at Dr Gray's hospital, as well as for businesses that need skilled workers to move into the area to fill key vacancies. What further action can the Scottish Government take to support the development of key worker housing in rural communities such as Moray, especially for national health service workers?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I recognise that access to affordable housing plays an important role in thriving rural communities and in helping to attract employees and retain the workforce. The rural affordable homes for key workers fund was

established to help local authorities and registered social landlords to provide homes in rural communities where there are housing pressures. I know that Moray Council has already made use of that fund.

I am keen to work closely with Moray Council on local housing pressures, and I welcome the collaborative way in which NHS Grampian and local housing associations have been working together to increase accommodation for staff. We encourage other local authorities, RSLs and councils to do likewise.

Adapted Housing (Availability)

9. David Linden (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that sufficient adapted housing is available to meet medical needs through local authorities and registered social landlords. (S7O-00210)

The Presiding Officer: I struggled to hear you a wee bit there, Mr Linden. Perhaps you can speak up in the future. You had your microphone on, but perhaps the angle is not correct.

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Everyone deserves a home that supports their independence, wellbeing and quality of life. As our population ages and people's needs change, our ambition is to create homes that work better for everyone, which will reduce barriers and support independent living. The Scottish Government provides the majority of local authority funding through a block grant, allowing councils to allocate resources based on local need and priorities. We have protected the £20.9 million budget for adaptations for tenants of registered social landlord properties. We are now updating the design guidance to support a new Scottish accessible home standard.

David Linden: My Shettleston constituent Billie-Jo is 29 and has had a brain injury. She is medically fit to return home to her husband and two kids, but their property has not been adapted. As a result, she is in an expensive social care setting. Is this not an example of the housing authority and the health and social care partnership not talking to each other? Is this not an example of the silo working that demonstrates why public sector reform is needed and why we need to get good value for taxpayers and, most importantly, get folk such as Billie-Jo home to suitable adapted properties?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I thank David Linden for bringing his constituent's case to the chamber. It must be an exceptionally distressing time for the constituent and her family. He is right to point out that this is an example of why public service reform

is needed. Although I appreciate that there might be different views across the chamber on what reform might look like, we cannot go on as we are. This example of barriers to a service being provided to an individual is exactly why we need to challenge ourselves to ensure that we are delivering the right service at the right time and in the right manner. Again, I thank David Linden for providing to members this good example of why we must look at public service reform for the benefit of all our constituents.

Cost of Living Support

10. Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the actions it has taken since May 2026 to support people with the cost of living, including in relation to measures to tackle poverty. (S7O-00211)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): In our first 100 days, we have further strengthened support for households, launching a first homes fund, expanding breakfast club provision and progressing the procurement of new welcome-to-school bags. Our programme for government commits to going further still, transforming our childcare offer for families; delivering record investment in affordable homes; capping bus fares at £2, with the cap in Strathclyde launching this week; and consulting on capping the cost of essential foods. With the news that energy bills will rise still further, we will continue to call for reform of the energy markets, including for the United Kingdom Government to implement a social tariff.

Collette Stevenson: Under the Scottish National Party, people in East Kilbride have benefited from ScotRail being taken into public ownership, with new train stations at East Kilbride and Hairmyres and the scrapping of peak rail fares. As of this week—

The Presiding Officer: Question, please.

Collette Stevenson: Does the cabinet secretary agree that Scotland's taxpayers get the best deal across the UK? Will she set out how those and other measures will help to tackle the scourge of poverty?

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): I hear some disgruntlement from across the chamber, Presiding Officer, because we are delivering for the people of East Kilbride and the rest of Scotland.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that some of the lowest-income households with children are around £2,760 a year better off because of the result of our approach to income tax and benefits. It is estimated that our tackling

child poverty delivery plan will keep 100,000 children out of relative poverty this year. We have already provided the strongest cost of living package in the UK for low-income households and, as I mentioned in a previous answer, our programme for government commits us to going further. This Government is delivering for the people of Scotland, and I am delighted that Collette Stevenson has come to the chamber to talk about examples of how her constituents are benefiting.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): Low-income families in Scotland are facing a debt crisis, with public sector debt trapping families in endless cycles of poverty. Has the Scottish Government considered calls to reform the public sector debt recovery process and change the way that we approach public debt?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The Scottish Government is already taking action on several aspects that relate to public sector debt, such as the schemes that are already being run with local authorities on council tax debt and how we can assist people to see whether they require support before their debt is challenged. That is one example of how we are keen to look at ensuring that there is support for people who need it, although we need to make sure that there is value for money for the public purse.

I am sure that the ministers who are responsible for the different aspects of public sector debt would be able to take up further detailed conversations with the member.

First Minister's Question Time

Party Leaders

Women's Health (Treatment Waiting Times)

1. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, starts tomorrow, and I want to wish everybody in the Jewish community a happy new year.

Today, the campaign against the dangerous downgrading of neonatal services was represented at a meeting of the Public Petitions Committee in this Parliament. Its message is clear: mothers and their children should not be put in danger due to Scottish National Party centralisation.

That is just one example of how the SNP is failing on women's health. Statistics show that women in Lanarkshire face waits of more than four years for hysterectomies and that thousands of women across Scotland are currently waiting more than a year for gynaecology treatment, but what was John Swinney's answer to this crisis in women's health? He scrapped the role of women's health minister. That is simply not good enough. Does the First Minister know how long, on average, women in Scotland have to wait for an endometriosis diagnosis?

The First Minister (John Swinney): First, I associate myself with Jackie Baillie's comments about Rosh Hashanah, and I express my good wishes to the Jewish community on the celebration of Rosh Hashanah.

I also take this opportunity to indicate that tomorrow will mark the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy, and I will represent Scotland at a service at St Giles' cathedral to commemorate those whose lives were changed irreparably by the 9/11 incidents.

Jackie Baillie raises significant issues in relation to women's health, and I expect those to be taken forward by my all-female health minister team. I have three health ministers, all of whom are women, and I know from the leadership that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Care will give to that team that all those issues will be prioritised.

Women wait too long for treatment for endometriosis in Scotland, and the Government, as Jackie Baillie knows, is working very hard to ensure that waiting times are reduced so that treatment can be delivered in a credible and acceptable timescale to everyone involved, especially to women who suffer from endometriosis.

Jackie Baillie: The answer that the First Minister was looking for was 10 years. That waiting time has got worse on his watch, and that was

when there were two female health ministers. That is 10 years of women waiting in pain and having their struggles dismissed or diminished.

Women with endometriosis are not the only ones who are being let down in that way. After previous miscarriages, Elizabeth Crammond had a high-risk pregnancy. When she experienced bleeding and pain, she tried to contact the early pregnancy unit in Kirkcaldy. She asked for help 60 times but was not seen. Elizabeth was so desperate that she had two private scans, but, nine days later—nine days—when she was finally seen by the national health service, she was told that she had miscarried.

The Government's miscarriage care framework states that women who are at high risk or who have complications should be able to self-refer to the early pregnancy assessment service. Why was that support not available for Elizabeth Crammond?

The First Minister: I am aware that Elizabeth Crammond has been in dialogue with Jackie Baillie on this question and that Ms Baillie has written to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Care on the issue. We are exploring the circumstances that affected Elizabeth Crammond.

The most important thing that I can say at the outset is to express my sympathy to Elizabeth Crammond about the experience that she had. She should not have had that experience—I state that clearly to Parliament. We will have to get to the bottom of exactly why that was the case, because it is important that when there is any vulnerability whatsoever in relation to a pregnancy, the earliest possible intervention is provided. That is what the maternity framework is designed to offer. It has clearly not delivered that in this case. We must understand why that is the case and provide a remedy.

I appreciate that that will be of little consolation to Elizabeth Crammond, but part of what we must do when things do not go as they should is to be transparent and open about that and ensure that all steps are taken to ensure that the situation is not repeated in the future.

Jackie Baillie: Elizabeth feels failed by NHS Fife and NHS Tayside, and that has left a devastating and lasting impact on her and her family.

However, her experience is not unique. There are lots more women in the same situation. Katie Lyon was pregnant following a previous miscarriage when she noticed spotting on 23 December. On Christmas eve, she had to go to accident and emergency because her condition had deteriorated and there was no capacity to see her in the maternity service. While Katie waited

anxiously for news about her baby, the staff struggled to co-ordinate with gynaecology and maternity care. When she finally got a scan, no heartbeat could be found. It was another seven days before her miscarriage was confirmed, and then only after she had had two further scans.

Katie and Elizabeth are in the Parliament today to demand change. As Katie herself has said, families should not have to endure repeated loss before their concerns are taken seriously. The framework for miscarriage care is not working. Will the First Minister do the right thing and ensure that miscarriage care is urgently reviewed and women's voices are heard?

The First Minister: Jackie Baillie has raised two particular cases—the case of Elizabeth and that of Katie. I am terribly sorry for the experience that those two women have had in our health services.

To come back to some of the points that I made in my response to Jackie Baillie's second question, the framework for the delivery of maternity care should address the circumstances that Ms Baillie has put to me. It has clearly not done that. Jackie Baillie has put to me two cases in which that is very apparent.

That is why the Government has commenced a series of inspections of maternity services around the country. A range of unannounced inspections is being carried out by Healthcare Improvement Scotland, and the Government receives the reports on those inspections, which lead to action points. As has been rehearsed previously in the chamber, some of those reports require significant reforms and actions to be undertaken, the implementation of which the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Care is monitoring.

I am happy to explore the specific cases that Jackie Baillie has put to me, because it matters to me and to the Government that person-centred care is available for every person who interacts with the healthcare service in Scotland, regardless of the details of the case. We want to ensure that people get the best and most appropriate care. In the cases that Jackie Baillie has put to me today, that clearly has not happened. I apologise for that, and I will happily explore both those cases and will respond by providing as much information as I can to Elizabeth and Katie, to whom I express my sympathy and empathy for what they have experienced.

Scottish National Party Priorities

2. Malcolm Offord (West Scotland) (Reform): While I was in the BBC studio on Sunday, getting wired up for my final interview of an eventful weekend, I was forced to listen to the first interviewee droning on and on for 15 minutes without answering a single question. To stop

myself drifting off as the First Minister talked himself into oblivion, I reached for *The Sunday Times*. What did I see on the front page? I saw the new column by none other than the former Deputy First Minister, Kate Forbes. Does the First Minister agree with her commonsense analysis on North Sea gas—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): Excuse me. Let us hear the question, please.

Malcolm Offord: On defence and on taxation, she said:

“the less complex a tax system is, the better ... you cannot tax your way to growth.”

Does that sound familiar? Will the First Minister look forward to reading her column in the weeks to come?

The First Minister (John Swinney): I am always interested in lots of views that are expressed in political debate. I have to listen to them all, and it is not my fault if the BBC wants to put me on in a prime spot instead of Malcolm Offord. That perhaps speaks volumes, but I am sure that Mr Offord, listening down the line from the Reform-fest, where members of the public were being assaulted in the conference hall, would learn a lot from the dignity with which I expressed my case on Sunday morning.

Malcolm Offord: Turning to serious matters, Màiri McAllan has tried to dress up yet another disappointing set of programme for international student assessment—PISA—results as representing stability and as being competitive by international standards. Kate Forbes might say, “Continuity won’t cut it,” but I say that this is not even continuity—this is disastrous for our young people and embarrassing for our nation. To fall so far behind England in education is a national emergency. We invented education. The Scots have had universal education since 1660—the English only got there in 1873.

In August 2016, at the Wester Hailes education centre in Edinburgh, Nicola Sturgeon asked to be judged on her record in education, especially on closing the attainment gap between pupils in poor and rich postcodes. Ten years on, the results are in. Scottish pupils are now a full academic year behind their English peers in science, and Scotland has scored its worst results ever in maths and reading. Meanwhile, England scored a top 10 place in all three disciplines. That is shocking.

All the while, honest John has been ever present. As finance minister, he presided over devastating college cuts. As education minister, he marked down 75,000 working-class kids during the pandemic. Now, as First Minister, he has reduced our great tradition in education from outstanding to average—the ruination of a once-proud nation.

The Presiding Officer: Can we get a question, please?

Malcolm Offord: My question is this: is a free school bag the only gimmick left to this hapless First Minister?

The First Minister: I will tell Malcolm Offord what ruination looks like. It is people like him and Thomas Kerr going around spreading racist filth in our society. That is what ruination looks like.

I accept the outcome of the PISA assessments, but they are one part of the data set for Scottish education. The curriculum for excellence levels data, which is produced by the teachers of Scotland, whom Malcolm Offord has just insulted, shows that the proportion of secondary 3 pupils achieving third level or better in literacy or numeracy is at its highest level ever. We have the highest level of young people leaving school and going to positive destinations, at 93.5 per cent. We have record levels of young people in Scotland going to university for the first time, including record numbers of young people from deprived backgrounds, according to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. At both national 5 and higher, pass rates were up compared with last year and also with the pre-pandemic situation, and the poverty-related attainment gap narrowed for national 5, higher and advanced higher.

That is the full report card on Scottish education, and I am proud of Scottish education.

Malcolm Offord: So, let us talk about the attainment gap. Màiri McAllan has been fulsome in her praise of recent exam results in Scotland. However, in 2026, 49 per cent of the S4 student cohort were not even entered in national 5 maths. That compares with 41 per cent in 2019, while student numbers have grown 12 per cent in the same period. The Scottish National Party might claim success for half the pupils who sit the exams, but those figures mask a systemic failure to narrow the attainment gap for all pupils. We must narrow the attainment gap by raising the floor, not by lowering the ceiling, and the bottom line is that standards are falling in Scottish schools.

During this week’s Education and Gaelic Committee meeting, Patricia Gibson argued that it may be “impossible” to close the attainment gap, as children are starting from very different standpoints. Is that really the stark reality of the SNP’s lack of ambition? First destroy an internationally admired gold standard of education and then give up? Reform will never let Scotland’s children down with that acceptance of mediocrity.

Does the First Minister agree with Ms Gibson? Does he think that closing the attainment gap is really “impossible”? Has he given up on Scottish children?

The First Minister: The only person who should contemplate giving up is Malcolm Offord. If he had followed the presentation of the programme for government to Parliament last week, he would have seen at its heart the Government's primary objective of eradicating child poverty. That is the stated aim of the Government, and that is what we are taking a variety of measures to achieve. That is why we have lower levels of child poverty in Scotland, which I suspect is contributing to some of the achievements that we are making on narrowing the attainment gap in Scottish education.

All the other policy measures that we have taken, such as expanding—more than doubling—the availability of early learning and childcare to ensure that children get the best start in life through their engagement with early learning, and the measures on book bug work for babies and families, ensuring that children and families have the opportunity to engage in literacy from the earliest possible stages, are justified by international evidence. Those are just some of the steps that the Scottish Government is taking to support families, to close the attainment gap and, most of all, to ensure that every child in our country has the best start in life. That is what children will get from an SNP Government.

North Sea Oil and Gas Licences

3. Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Green): Over the coming weeks, the Prime Minister is expected to travel to Aberdeen to publicly announce the licence for the Jackdaw gas field. After a summer of climate breakdown in Scotland and across the globe, that would be an act of sheer climate vandalism. We have had 72 separate wildfires in the United Kingdom, with more than 700 households evacuated. More than 1,400 people have died in Nepal and Tibet after the recent glacier collapse, with more than 5,000 still missing. Across Europe this year, more than 35,000 excess deaths have been linked to the back-to-back heatwaves.

Every licence that we grant to drill for more oil and gas in the North Sea will contribute to more wildfires, more heatwaves and more loss of life for generations to come. Will the First Minister join me in condemning the climate-wrecking behaviour of the UK Government and say no to drilling at Jackdaw and Rosebank?

The First Minister (John Swinney): The first thing that I want to say is that the Government attaches the strongest possible importance to climate action and to fulfilling our statutory obligations to achieve net zero, which is why the achievement of net zero is one of the four principal priorities of the Government's agenda, as I set out

to the Parliament last week in relation to the programme for government.

The United Kingdom Government, in considering decisions in relation to Jackdaw and Rosebank, has to make an assessment of the climate impact of those proposals. That is the legal duty. Those applications have had to be re-examined because such an assessment failed to be undertaken in the past. That assessment is absolutely fundamental, and it must be part of the decision-making process of the United Kingdom Government.

As we utilise oil and gas in the years to come, the question that the UK Government must assess is whether the development of those fields will contribute to more carbon emissions than would, as an alternative, be created through the importation of oil and gas from other jurisdictions. That is the assessment that has to be made.

In all of this, the Scottish Government is focused on ensuring that we make the transition to clean fuel. Yesterday, I was in Aberdeen to set out more grant funding to support the transition to net zero in Scotland, and that will remain the focus of the Scottish Government.

Gillian Mackay: The Scottish Government used to have a clear position on this matter, with a presumption against all new licences for oil and gas fields in the North Sea. Clearly, that would have ruled out support for Jackdaw and Rosebank, but the draft energy strategy has lain in a drawer for more than three years now—it has never been published or finalised. That is despite a majority of people who responded to the consultation supporting the presumption against new licences. Polling from earlier this year shows that that is still the case.

Last week's programme for government promises a refreshed energy strategy at some point down the line, but it also says that new licences should be treated on a case-by-case basis. People who have had their homes destroyed by wildfires and floods and people who have lost loved ones in the recent heatwaves want to know what the Government will do to prevent things from getting worse. Does the First Minister think that new oil and gas fields in the North Sea will make the climate crisis better or worse?

The First Minister: Applications that are made within the United Kingdom's legal framework must be considered on a case-by-case basis—there is no alternative to that. It would be unlawful for us to do anything other than that.

The Scottish Government will reinforce—as I have reinforced already today—our absolute commitment to taking climate action. That has been reinforced by the commitments that we have

made in various budgets, and yesterday, in the city of Aberdeen, I announced further measures to support the utilisation of clean energy, in announcing a project at a hydrogen-related organisation. We are investing in the transition to net zero, which will be the focus of the Scottish Government's agenda.

Gillian Mackay: That represents a departure from the previous energy strategy, which included that presumption. I would be keen to know what has changed to move away from the presumption in the draft energy strategy.

The Jackdaw gas field would contribute just 2 per cent to our gas supply. Any argument that that will somehow contribute to energy security or to making our homes cheaper to heat this winter is simply wrong.

What would make a real and immediate difference would be a rapid roll-out of clean, green heating for homes in Scotland. Replacing gas boilers with electric heating and insulating buildings will make our homes warmer and cheaper to heat and will not contribute to rapid climate breakdown, as Jackdaw will.

When the Scottish Greens were in government, we published a plan to roll out clean, cheap heating to 1 million homes. Last week's programme for government cut that plan by 90 per cent. Has the Scottish Government bought the line that Jackdaw and Rosebank will solve the crisis of high energy bills, or does it intend to take real action to ensure that every home in Scotland has clean, green and affordable heating?

The First Minister: The Scottish Government is taking forward all the measures that Gillian Mackay has talked about. They are all part of the steps that we are taking, whether that is through home insulation, alternative heating systems or community renewables schemes. All those are part of the Government's programme for government, and we have been taking forward those measures for some time.

I am grateful for the support from members of the Greens for the measures that the Government takes, but those measures are integral to the programme for government that I set out to the Parliament last week. That includes, at the heart of the programme for government, one of our four priorities, which is to make the transition to net zero. Whether that should be one of the Government's four priorities will be disputed by members across the chamber, because not everybody will agree with it. Some members in the Parliament do not think that we should make the transition to net zero and do not agree with that agenda, but that is the Scottish Government's agenda, and I am proud to set that out to the Parliament and to the people of Scotland.

Education Standards

4. Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): I, too, wish Scotland's Jewish community all the best as they celebrate Rosh Hashanah.

John Swinney says that Scottish education is "essentially stable", but the new programme for international student assessment—PISA—results confirm that he is utterly delusional. After finishing primary school, many Scottish pupils cannot even read or write. Primary teachers are now teaching basic literacy at almost half of Glasgow's secondary school. One of those teachers said:

"They've got reading ages of maybe five or six-years-old—they can't recognise basic words".

That comes a decade after Nicola Sturgeon said that she would put her "neck on the line" to improve literacy in deprived areas. Of all the Scottish National Party's many failures, is trashing Scottish education the greatest of them all?

The First Minister (John Swinney): As I set out to Malcolm Offord earlier, I am proud of Scottish education. I simply say to Russell Findlay that the proportion of secondary 3 pupils achieving the third level or better in literacy and numeracy is at its highest level ever, and that is because of the investment that the Scottish Government has made in closing the attainment gap, delivering excellence and equity in Scottish education and ensuring that young people are supported to fulfil their potential. That will remain the focus of the Government's improvement work, which was brought forward following the PISA results in 2022, to make sure that we deliver curriculum improvement to constantly strengthen the delivery of Scottish education. That is the Government's focus.

Russell Findlay: That failed education secretary has absolutely nothing to be proud of. Here are the facts: thanks to Conservative policies, pupils in England are ranked in the top 10 in the world for reading, maths and science. The same rankings confirm that Scottish pupils' results continue to decline. Those pupils are intelligent, ambitious and hard working, but they have been failed by the negligent, useless and complacent SNP Government—and its only answer is a free school bag.

Glasgow City Council's executive director for education, John McGhee, said that Scotland's success depends

"on the skills of young people leaving our schools."

Leading education expert Professor Lindsay Paterson said that Scottish young people face

"a competitive disadvantage in the labour market."

Why is John Swinney sabotaging the prospects of a generation of young Scots and Scotland's future

prosperity?

The First Minister: I do not accept the point about there being a competitive disadvantage for Scottish pupils. The data that I set out earlier shows that, when they leave school, young people in Scottish education are going into positive follow-up destinations—that is, going into education, work or training as a consequence of their education—at a rate of 93.5 per cent.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service data shows that 97 per cent of Scots who applied to a university got a place. That does not suggest that there is a competitive disadvantage in outcomes for young people.

Russell Findlay made a comparison with the English system, which he said was attributable to the Conservative Government. Let me tell Russell Findlay what the Conservative Government also gave us. Because of his support for Liz Truss, the public finances of this country were absolutely and completely trashed. I will not take any lessons about anything from somebody who thought that having Liz Truss as Prime Minister was a good idea.

Ferry Disruption (Compensation for Businesses)

5. Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh North Western) (LD): I extend the good wishes of the Scottish Liberal Democrats to Scotland's Jewish communities on this most auspicious of holidays.

When it comes to education, we cannot ignore international assessments. Our education system used to be up there with the best in the world, but it is not any longer. If we are to confront that reality, we need the Scottish ministers to address their shortcomings and accept responsibility.

It is not only school pupils that the Government is failing. I have badgered the First Minister about businesses that have suffered endless ferry disruption, but the Scottish National Party Government has repeatedly refused to compensate coastal communities.

This week, the Parliament voted for a Scottish Liberal Democrat amendment to a motion that would have compensation head to the port towns that have suffered the most—the likes of Ardrossan, Dunoon, Mallaig, Oban and Ullapool. In the spirit of respecting the will of the Parliament, will the First Minister tell business in towns such as those exactly which of them will qualify for that compensation, how much they will get and when that money might reach them?

The First Minister (John Swinney): During the summer, I announced the implementation of a financial support scheme for communities that were affected by ferry disruption earlier in the year.

That is a matter of public record and the information is available on the Government's website.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Those communities are still suffering and are not getting access to the cash that they were promised. It is clear that the Government is all at sea when it comes to compensation—and to ferries more generally.

Yesterday, in the Parliament, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport and his director of ferries were completely oblivious to a major BBC news story that said that 700kg of highly flammable gas was released into the Glen Sannox when it had 82 passengers on board. That critical safety failure was hidden for a year and was only recently exposed by journalists for all to see.

That is the latest in a long line of ferry failures. There is the Glen Rosa, which is now eight years overdue. A shipyard in Turkey has been given £20 million while our own yard in Port Glasgow is shedding a quarter of its workforce. There was an election promise for four new vessels, but there is still no contract. Now, a transport minister, at a transport committee, was clueless about a transport safety failure.

We have all heard the rumours that the First Minister gave Mr Flynn that job to set him up to fail. Did he expect it to happen so soon?

The First Minister: Well, it takes Alex Cole-Hamilton some time to get to the point. Let me pick apart a few of the things that he said.

First, Mr Cole-Hamilton's comment about the absence of a compensation scheme ignored the fact that I announced the compensation scheme during the summer. All that I will say to him, in the spirit of decent parliamentary exchanges, is that he needs to pay attention to what the Government is actually doing. If he did so, he would not ask me questions about things that I have already done.

Secondly, Mr Cole-Hamilton talked about Ferguson's yard and the Government's intervention to safeguard employment there. When the Government intervenes in such cases, his colleague Willie Rennie criticises the Government—he criticised the Government for intervening in relation to the Dalzell steel yard the other day. I simply point out that there is a level of inconsistency from the Liberal Democrats on all these issues.

The Government is investing in the ferry fleet. Four new vessels are coming from the yard in Turkey, and the Glen Rosa is coming from Ferguson's. The Government is investing to strengthen our ferry services. That is exactly what we will deliver.

The Presiding Officer: That ends First Minister's question time for party leaders. Members who are leaving should please do so quietly—there is too much noise in the chamber.

Energy

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S7M-01114, in the name of Stephen Gethins, on Scotland's energy opportunity. Members who wish to speak should press their request-to-speak button now.

14:33

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy (Stephen Gethins): It is a pleasure to speak about Scotland's energy wealth and the opportunities that it brings for Scotland.

It has been a busy summer for me, getting to grips with my portfolios. During the past few weeks, I have engaged with colleagues across the energy sector in every part of Scotland. I have been grateful to everyone who has taken the time to talk to me about the associated challenges and opportunities. Let me put on the record my thanks to those businesses and other stakeholders.

The message that I have received has been clear: the energy sector as a whole is delivering the transformation that we need and Scotland is well placed—we have decades of experience, skills, expertise, infrastructure and the other necessary ingredients that place us at a competitive advantage. There is no question but that there are significant challenges, and no doubt we will discuss some of those today. However, it has been good to hear about the transformation that is being delivered now and to hear the message that Scotland is a good place in which to invest and to do business.

In the spirit of collegiality, I take the opportunity to thank colleagues from across the chamber who have engaged with me. Debate and disagreement are at the heart of a good democracy and better decision making, but so is consensus and the sharing of ideas—I am grateful for colleagues who have done that.

I also place on record my thanks to colleagues in the United Kingdom Government who have engaged with me, including Michael Shanks, the Minister of State for Energy. I will always seek to engage constructively where possible, and those who work in the sector would expect no less from us.

In that spirit—although I will come on to speak about the other amendments—I accept the Labour amendment in the name of Daniel Johnson, albeit with some conditions that I know he will be aware of and will expect: we still have significant concerns about UK Government policy on issues such as the grid, transmission charging, alignment

with the European Union and energy bills, and we are still awaiting the strategic spatial energy plan.

North Sea oil and gas has played, and continues to play, a vital role in our energy system and our security mix. It has delivered jobs in the north-east and allowed us to develop decades of experience and expertise in energy production, including the experience and expertise developed in the offshore environment. However, the North Sea is a maturing basin and the challenge before us is to manage the energy transition in a way that is fair and responsible, ensuring that the skills, talent and expertise built up over those decades are carried forward. There is an opportunity to secure jobs, investment and economic growth for communities the length and breadth of Scotland, supporting energy security not only in this country but across Europe, where there is increasing concern from our European partners.

Crucially, our renewables potential is globally recognised and we are seeing large-scale investment that matches the scale of that potential. That transition is not something that will take place in the future; it is happening right now. We already host some of the world's largest operational floating offshore wind farms, including Hywind Scotland and the Kincardine wind farm, with Green Volt expected to become the world's largest floating wind farm when completed.

Our world-class facilities are already supporting the global-scale build-out of offshore wind. Kishorn port has one of Europe's largest dry docks and is being further expanded to support the next generation of offshore energy. Montrose port is also set to become one of the largest offshore wind operations and maintenance hubs, and the port of Leith is playing a key role in the construction of the 1.1GW Inchcape offshore wind farm which can be seen, as we all know, from across Edinburgh and Fife. Over the summer, I visited Sumitomo Electric's £350 million high-voltage subsea cable manufacturing facility at Nigg. It is the first of its kind in the UK, strengthening domestic supply chains for offshore wind while creating hundreds of well-paid jobs. Those are not isolated examples, and they demonstrate that the energy transition is already creating industrial opportunities in Scotland.

On skills and jobs, the Scottish Government is proactively supporting our North Sea workers to carry their expertise and experience into the renewable energy sector, including through the oil and gas transition training fund. Our offshore wind skills programme is backed by £3.85 million of investment in targeted education, training and workforce transition interventions, with six projects approved so far, with a combined value of £2.5 million.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I have listened intently to what the minister is saying. He will be aware that a recent report from Robert Gordon University says that the economic value of every lost offshore energy job in oil and gas needs to be replaced by around two jobs elsewhere in the economy. Is he confident that he can actually deliver a proper transformation?

Stephen Gethins: I appreciate Mr Kerr raising that issue. I have been up to Aberdeen several times since I was appointed, and the First Minister himself was there just yesterday. We are seeing that transition happening now. I will give some more facts and figures about the transition in a moment, but what has been impressive is seeing how the energy sector is working together. The skills and experience that are being delivered to the offshore renewables sector put us at a competitive advantage. Those skills are found among people in Mr Kerr's own constituency and I know that they are found in mine.

The energy transition offers a scale of opportunity like no other and is delivering tens of thousands of jobs. I ask members not just to take my word for it—Mr Kerr will be glad of that. A 2026 Confederation of British Industry report indicates that the net zero economy in Scotland already supports over 105,000 jobs and generates £10.2 billion in economic value, with activities spanning energy, manufacturing, engineering and professional services, and that around 3,000 businesses are already part of the net zero economy. Members of the Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee will be glad to hear that we are committed to that.

However, if we are to make the most of the opportunity, we must all also learn the lessons of the past. Scotland generated enormous wealth for the UK Treasury from oil and gas, but we did not see the long-term benefit. That was a structural failing over the past half century of energy policy. The UK was one of the only states on earth to discover oil and gas but not establish some kind of futures fund to ensure that future generations would benefit from what is a finite resource. I know that members will acknowledge that.

Angela Ross (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform): Will the minister take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: On the point about those failures, I will be glad to take the member's intervention.

Angela Ross: Why are so many companies that are involved in wind farm assets, such as Ørsted, foreign owned, with most of the profits being repatriated abroad rather than being held in Scotland. Is that acceptable?

Stephen Gethins: I know that Reform is not into foreigners very much, but I am very much in favour of an international and outward-looking Parliament and economy. I encourage Ms Ross to go back and read the CBI report that I mentioned, which mentions the jobs and the economic value that are being delivered to Scotland not in the future, but right now. Reform is a party that wants us to be isolated from the rest of the world, and its policies would cost £250 million a day in lost tax revenues because it wants us to be isolated from the EU. That is not the policy of this Government, which will work in an international vein as we secure European energy security, delivering jobs at home.

We have to learn from the past, and a futures fund must be developed.

I acknowledge the Green amendment, which notes that the energy transition must drive community wealth, and I look forward to supporting that. I also acknowledge the Liberal Democrat amendment, which mentions community benefits and how we can make the most of them. In the spirit of collegiality, we will also accept that amendment, but I want to work with Liberal Democrat and other colleagues on how we can deliver that.

Monica Lennon (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the minister take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: I will take Monica Lennon's intervention, and then I must make progress.

Monica Lennon: I welcome the minister to his post. I welcome the Government's plans to increase community ownership of Scotland's renewable resources. Can he tell the Parliament when the ScotWind wealth fund will be established?

Stephen Gethins: I welcome the member to her post. It is nice to see her here. She is more experienced than I am in this place and I should have taken the opportunity to welcome her. I am going to talk about community benefit right now, and I will touch on some of the issues that I know are important to her.

As well as community benefit, the transition must create jobs in ports and coastal communities, opportunities for young people, contracts for Scottish businesses and stronger local economies. We will talk about ScotWind more generally, but, on community benefit, let me talk about some of the benefits that are already in place. SSEN Transmission's support for the delivery of 1,000 new homes across the north of Scotland is an example of the long-term impacts. Ms Lennon will be pleased to hear that we will establish a ScotWind wealth fund during the current session of Parliament. That is a sensible

step that we can take to ensure that the renewable energy transition creates long-term benefits for future generations, and I look forward to working with Ms Lennon and others on that.

I urge the UK Government to learn from the failures of the past and look at how, even at this stage, a futures fund can be established while the Treasury continues to make billions from our energy sector—not least from the energy profits levy, which has been so damaging to the sector.

However, we know that it is not just about Westminster—the Scottish Government is taking action as well. We will deploy all our devolved powers to ensure that projects are delivered as quickly as possible, creating sustainable opportunities. In offshore wind alone, we have already unlocked almost £900 million of investment, putting our investment of over £150 million to work, crowding in £70 million from UK public finance institutions and leveraging up to £675 million of private investment into projects, with the potential to support 5,000 jobs. We are demonstrating that the public and private sectors in Scotland can work together at pace to deliver high-quality green jobs and drive growth.

In the previous debate that I led in this Parliament, not just those in my party but we, as a Parliament, voted for energy policy to be devolved. That is because industry is actively telling us where the barriers are to renewables deployment. Without full devolution, we need Westminster to take action. I have been clear that a strategic spatial energy plan that fully reflects Scotland's renewable energy pipeline, including our global leadership in floating off-shore wind—

Duncan Massey (North East Scotland) (Reform): Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: I will take one very briefly, because I am wondering whether the member is still going to talk about “net stupid zero”, as he did in his previous comment. Maybe he can put on the record that he takes that back.

Duncan Massey: On the point about devolution, does that mean that the Scottish Government will be paying contract for difference subsidies? Will the Scottish Government be paying for the £39 billion that Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks keeps boasting about? Is it the Government's commitment today that it will pay for them?

Stephen Gethins: As well as noting that Mr Massey has not taken the opportunity to retract the dangerous and damaging remarks that he made previously—I hope that he might do so later, although I wonder if he is being gazumped this time by his leader, who will be speaking in this debate instead—I have to say that his party is

isolationist. Scotland exports electricity. If we align with the rest of Europe, we can export even further. When it comes to energy security, we are part of the solution, delivering jobs and investment back home here in Scotland.

However, there are damaging Westminster policies. One of those is transmission charging. We want to get rid of that so that Scottish projects do not continue to be unfairly penalised. That would also mean a more stable and predictable contracts for difference regime. I underline that point to Labour colleagues in relation to their amendment. We also need to see greater investment and delivery from the UK Government in supply chains, manufacturing capability, ports, infrastructure and—crucially—grid. Scotland is ready and delivering. Industry is ready and delivering. The projects are ready and delivering. What is needed now is for the UK Government to match Scotland's ambition with action.

In conclusion, the energy transition is not far off—it is happening now. I am determined to continue to build on the work that has been done to deliver on that during this parliamentary session. However, this opportunity is bigger than any one Government, sector, parliamentary term or party. We will get further with the support and collaboration of Parliament, and we call on everyone in the chamber to work with us. That is why I have tried to accept as many amendments as I possibly could today. No other economic opportunity currently available to Scotland promises the scale of jobs and growth for people and local communities as the energy transition does.

Again, I thank colleagues in industry, in Scottish communities and here, in Parliament, for their collegiality and—so far—for their willingness to work together. This is Scotland's opportunity and I hope that we can seize it together.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that Scotland's energy transformation provides a generational opportunity to grow the economy, create more high-quality jobs, strengthen communities across Scotland, and place Scotland at the heart of the solution to Europe's energy security challenge; calls on the UK Government to deliver a stable, transparent policy, regulatory and investment environment to enable timely energy deployment in Scotland at scale, and to deepen Scotland's relationship with the rest of Europe on energy, and agrees to work together to accelerate energy deployment and ensure that the full benefits of Scotland's energy transformation are realised for the people of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I call Daniel Johnson to speak to and move amendment S7M-01114.3.

14:48

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

I begin by noting the collegiate and consensual approach that the minister is seeking today, because it is important, not least because energy policy is critical to the whole country and the future of the economy. Energy is at the heart of a country's competitiveness—that was true in the past, it is true in the present and it will be true in the future. In the past, our success was built on access to coal, which was reliable, cost effective and secure. Through the 20th century, access to oil was critical; that industry sustained hundreds of thousands of jobs and continues to employ around 100,000 people.

Energy is also critical for our future, as we seek to do something exceptionally difficult with floating offshore wind. The ability to do engineering in the harshest of environments, out in the North Sea, could deliver dividends for Scotland, and we must ensure that it does. However, that will require long-term planning and consensus. It will also require a degree of candour and acceptance of reality that is sometimes lacking among those on both sides of the argument, which at times is reduced—or traduced, even—to “Drill, baby, drill” versus “Turn off the taps”. Neither of those positions is tenable. For a start, peak oil occurred in 1999 and, according to most sources, we have extracted about 80 to 90 per cent of the extractable resource. However, we will be reliant on gas for decades to come, whether we like it or not.

Liam Kerr: On that point, the member is unquestionably right. Does he support the licensing of Jackdaw and, indeed, Rosebank?

Daniel Johnson: I would not want to pre-empt the Prime Minister, but let us talk about that. We rely on gas, whether we like it or not, not just because that is how we heat our homes. We use three times as much energy to heat buildings and homes as we do in our consumption of electricity alone. If we wanted to switch overnight, the grid simply does not have the capacity. We are probably not generating enough electricity, certainly across the United Kingdom.

The point is that, if we are going to use gas for decades to come—we need to do so—the carbon footprint of the gas is important. The reality is that gas that is produced in the North Sea has a carbon footprint that is around 50 per cent less than that of the gas that is imported from other parts of the world. We need to ensure that we have secure access to gas and that it has the lowest possible carbon footprint. I suggest that that means using gas from the North Sea.

There is also a point about cost. The reality is that, taking comparable units, it is about 7p per unit of gas versus 26p for electricity. Frankly, an

overnight switch would impoverish people on a scale that is hard to imagine. We must talk about the energy mix and the pathway for how we transition away from gas, and we must use all the energy sources that are available to us.

I say gently to SNP members that that includes using nuclear. There are parts of the world, especially South Korea, that have nuclear reactors that produce electricity for £33 per megawatt hour, which is considerably less than the figure for the vast bulk of renewable wind. We need to talk about the energy mix, because we need baseload for when the wind is not blowing. If nuclear is not providing that, it probably needs to be done with pumped hydro, or some combination of the two. That is how Norway and Sweden produce their energy. Let us not forget that France has the cheapest electricity in Europe and we know how it produces it.

It is important to note that 26 per cent of the UK's renewables and 62 per cent of the UK's onshore wind are produced in Scotland. It has created 47,000 jobs. We are a net exporter of electricity, but we need to remember that that infrastructure has been built out on the basis of underwriting the price across all UK bill payers. If we look at the aggregate wholesale price versus the price guarantees, the aggregate CFD strike price is £150 per megawatt hour, versus a wholesale price of £90. In Scotland, we received around £500 million in 2025-26 through contracts for difference.

If we are going to talk about devolving energy policy, the Government has to answer the following questions. What happens to those contracts, and will they be honoured? What happens to those costs? Tens of pounds spread across all UK bill payers would turn into hundreds of pounds shouldered by Scottish bill payers. Most importantly, in order for all those things to happen, we need grid upgrades. Who will pay for those?

Stephen Gethins: Will the member give way?

Daniel Johnson: I believe that I am out of time. I apologise—otherwise I would have given way.

We need less rhetoric and more reality. We need plans that are grounded in both climate and geological reality, because we simply cannot rely on fossil fuels for energy security in the future.

I move amendment S7M-01114.3, to insert at end:

“; recognises that Scotland's energy future must be built on a secure, affordable and sustainable mix of sources for decades to come; welcomes the UK Government's commitment to putting Scotland at the heart of the UK's renewable energy generation, through a modern industrial strategy, billions of pounds of public and private investment, and upgrades to the grid to improve electricity transmission, and calls on the Scottish Government to speed up planning, to work with trade unions and industry and to invest in the

skills that Scotland's energy sector needs, and to ensure that local communities share in the wealth generated by Scotland's energy.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I remind members that they should not intervene in the last minute of speeches. I call Malcolm Offord to speak to and move amendment S7M-01114.5.

14:53

Malcolm Offord (West Scotland) (Reform): Scotland's energy opportunity can be summed up in three simple words: drill, Scotland, drill. Renewables are no silver bullet for cheaper energy in Scotland. Yes, they have a complementary role to play in a balanced clean energy system, but they will never replace the dominant role that hydrocarbons play in our day-to-day lives. Right now, the UK is energised by 75 per cent hydrocarbons and 25 per cent alternatives, including wind, biomass and nuclear. The idea that we can flip that on its head to 75 per cent renewables in 2050 is for the birds. It is never going to happen.

Why? First, it is too expensive. The grid system that we have had for the past 50 years was based on coal-fired power stations in major conurbations that delivered power through the grid to consumers. We are now talking about a new grid system that takes power from the most remote areas—the north of Scotland and the Hebrides—to where local populations are, which is incredibly expensive.

It would be fine if people said to me, “The good news is that we will remove the old grid and replace it with a new one to take all the energy from the Highlands to the south.” However, we apparently have to keep the old grid because, sometimes, the wind does not blow—that is something called intermittency.

Daniel Johnson: Will the member give way?

Malcolm Offord: I would be delighted to.

Daniel Johnson: The member is right to talk about the complexity of grid upgrade—it is hugely complicated. However, does he not acknowledge that, according to the North Sea Transition Authority, 90 per cent of the extractable hydrocarbons have been extracted from the North Sea? The member has said, “Drill, baby, drill,” but from where will that drilling extract the required hydrocarbons?

Malcolm Offord: The Office for Budget Responsibility has said that only 4 billion barrels are left in the North Sea; Offshore Energies UK has said that there are 12 billion; and the operators think that there are considerably more. In the past year, Norway drilled 47 fields; we drilled none.

Technology will help us to find more oil and gas. The reality is that, with intermittency, we might pay £1 billion to shut the wind farms but we might not have any gas. Do we send letters to the national health service to say, “We hope your operation happens on a windy day”? How does that work?

That exposes the folly of the Conservative Party policy on energy over 14 years. George Osborne and Theresa May invented that system, and we are now in a mess, with energy prices four times those of the US and seven times those of China. I tried to fix that. Theresa May brought in net zero in 2019 in a 70-minute debate in the House of Commons with no votes. George Osborne created the whole subsidy system—the CFDs—and decided to put that on to consumers rather than general taxation when only one third of consumers’ bills is the cost of electricity. That is the biggest transfer of money from poor people to rich people since Robin Hood.

That is why the Tories cannot be trusted on energy—we should not be fooled by Kemi Badenoch’s latest Damascene conversion, because she just parrots my lines. I tried my best to reform that party, but I tell members that it is stuffed full of renewables zealots. That is why I joined Reform.

What could a balanced energy system look like? If members want a slogan, how about 50:50 by 2050—50 per cent hydrocarbons, 25 per cent renewables and 25 per cent nuclear? China accounts for 30 per cent of global emissions and has already hit 25 per cent renewables; America accounts for 13 per cent of world emissions and has achieved 25 per cent renewables.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The member’s motion calls for the same level of output for nuclear as for renewables. Scotland already has 18GW of renewable capacity, which will increase in the years to come to 30GW. Is he saying that Scotland should have 30GW of nuclear, which would be like 10 Hinkley Point Cs or something like 50 small modular reactors? Is he really saying that that is what should be delivered?

Malcolm Offord: My comment was in relation to the whole of the United Kingdom. I absolutely believe that we should have nuclear at that level—we can see what has happened in France. How has China got to 25 per cent renewables? It has used coal as its transition fuel. America has used shale gas as its transition fuel; we should be using North Sea gas as our transition fuel. We are floating on a sea of gas, yet we import that stuff from the US and from fields in Norway, over the ones that we have shut down. Even the Norwegian energy minister thinks that that is completely daft.

We need a new energy system that is sane. Let us use the acronym SANE—secure in these uncertain times, affordable and giving nationwide employment. Here is the Brucey bonus: the Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform could then take an axe to the ludicrous £5 billion that he and Holyrood are spending on net stupid zero in this financial year, which would solve in one stroke the Scottish Government’s black hole.

I move amendment S7M-01114.5, to leave out from the first “Scotland’s” to end and insert:

“the most important measure for energy policy is the cost of energy to households and businesses; recognises the reality that hydrocarbons will remain a critical component of Scotland’s energy mix; endorses the position of renewables playing a complimentary role in the energy mix and not a dominant one, and agrees to a target for nuclear energy output to match renewable energy output by 2050.”

14:59

Kristopher Leask (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I declare an interest as a member of Orkney Islands Council.

This is a debate about the programme for government. Although others have perhaps not covered that aspect directly, it is really important that we focus on what the Government is laying in front of us and hold it to account better than we have done before.

Although the text of the motion points to an ambitious approach to Scotland’s energy, I am afraid that the programme for government does not. Scotland’s energy policy is not in Scotland’s hands, but that does not mean that we cannot do anything at all. We have an energy sector in limbo and communities shouting that they want a greater role and stake in our energy system. What has the Government’s response been? To be frank, there has been a lack of leadership and vision. For example, the programme for government is quick to criticise the energy profits levy, but it fails to acknowledge the uncertainty and concern in the sector right now. The strategic spatial energy plan, transmission network use of system charges, grid connection costs—those issues are weighing heavily on the minds of the sector in Scotland, yet they are completely absent from the PFG, and I am glad that the minister acknowledged that.

I appreciate that structural barriers and UK-level plans are not in the Scottish Government’s remit, but I urge the minister not to co-sign an SSEP that will not deliver for Scotland—I ask him to make that commitment today.

Although I welcome the Government’s recommitting to deliver an energy strategy, that cannot become a catch-all excuse to avoid taking clear positions and acting where it can now. I will gladly commit to working with the minister to

develop an energy strategy that delivers the ambition and vision that we need in Scotland, but that cannot be put off for the next two years.

Our supply chain stakeholders have been dutifully attending conferences, engagement breakfasts and meet-the-buyer events for years now, and companies of all sizes have been telling me that they see the potential economic opportunity in front of them. However, when I attended the Scottish Renewables onshore wind conference—I know that the minister did as well—stakeholders that I met there expressed frustration that the opportunities that they have been preparing for are not materialising, and frustration that what was, several years ago, an exciting and dynamic outlook for local businesses in this space has become murkier.

Developers tell us that Scotland has a reputation for stable investment and stable development of renewables, and the minister noted that. We have land availability and the resource and capacity factors for wind, among other generation methods, which set us head and shoulders above Europe; however, policy certainty is now in question. There is a reason why so many developers come to Scotland to invest.

Helen McDade (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform): Will the member take an intervention?

Kristopher Leask: Not now; I am going to make progress.

There is a reason why many developers come to Scotland to invest and why many of our communities and councils increasingly look to develop ambitious energy projects of their own, as they should, but the programme for government leaves everyone without a clear direction for renewables. If we are not careful, we will begin to undermine the reputation and confidence that we have thus far garnered in Scotland. We must change that course today and inject confidence and stability into the sector. We need to build momentum, get projects consented and have a framework that is fit for purpose and that bakes in and delivers shared ownership en masse.

I do not have time to go through the entire programme for government today, but I look forward to the minister coming to committee.

I want to focus on an issue that we desperately need to address in government and in the Parliament, which is energy ownership. The Scottish Greens have a clear vision for a greener, fairer future based on diversified energy ownership, and we want to empower communities, councils and the Government itself to play a much greater role in owning and reaping the rewards of our country's energy abundance.

In short, we want to keep Scotland's energy wealth in Scotland's hands. The programme for government commits to reviewing community benefits, and I look forward to the Government publishing the long-awaited consultation responses on that subject, but we have been through rounds of that before and nothing substantive changes.

Let us not put off the big problems that we face by focusing entirely on community benefits, only for private companies that wish to ignore them to continue to do so, and by taxing the conscience of those companies that do engage in good faith. Instead, we must unashamedly back community, public and shared energy ownership. The benefits of doing so are crystal clear. Community Land Scotland has crunched the numbers and it found that community-owned turbines bring in an average of 34 times more than what private developers would give back if they paid the old £5,000-per-megawatt community benefit in full. Increasing community benefits to £6,000 per megawatt is not the scale of progress that we need to address the imbalance in ownership. By reclaiming ownership of our energy system, we not only enable decarbonisation but we build community wealth to invest in local infrastructure and the delivery of good-quality, locally delivered public services. Therein lies Scotland's greener, fairer future, if the Government wants to listen and act.

In Orkney, for example, we are leading the way with a long history of community-owned turbines. We are now implementing plans for council-owned wind farms, and the Our Power Scotland campaign group has pointed out that that publicly owned development is expected to bring in £120 million over its lifetime. That will help to fund front-line services that are operated by Orkney Islands Council. That is what keeping Scotland's energy wealth in Scotland's hands looks like, and the Government urgently needs to follow suit.

Compare that with the fact that, according to the Centre for Local Economies, in Scotland, nearly 90 per cent of profits from private wind farms go to corporate shareholders. That is an estimated £5.6 billion during the period 2019 to 2024. However, people living near those wind farms have received less than 3 per cent of that profit. Such injustice is felt by too many communities all across Scotland. The Scottish Greens are clear that we must do better. The Parliament cannot accept a repeat of the oil and gas blunder that the minister has referred to, which is why we are calling on the Government to keep Scotland's energy wealth in Scotland's hands.

How can we get there? There is one action that the Scottish Government could take today to set us firmly on that path, and I am glad that the

minister has said that he will support our amendment. If the Government really has Scotland's back, it will fund its proposed ScotWind wealth fund with £300 million from the ScotWind lease money. With £300 million, the wealth fund could get back to work supporting community groups that want to develop their own energy generation projects or take shared ownership stakes with private companies, many of whom already have a good track record of engaging with communities on that. We could support more local authorities to replicate what Orkney Islands Council has done, ensuring a stable source of revenue for more cash-strapped councils, diversifying public income streams.

With £300 million, the wealth fund could even support the Scottish Government to take stakes directly, mirroring what the Welsh Government has done with Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru, which is a registered limited private company that is wholly owned and overseen by the Welsh Government.

We are not alone in calling for this. Indeed, just yesterday, *The National* reported Dr Josh Doble, the director of policy and advocacy for Community Land Scotland, arguing that

"leftover funds from the ScotWind leasing pot must not be squandered or spent on plugging holes in the budget."

Likewise, Amanda Grimm, the advocacy lead for Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, noted:

"As we transition from fossil fuels to home-grown renewables, we have the opportunity to make Scotland's energy system fairer as well as cleaner."

We in the Scottish Greens completely agree. With a new ScotWind wealth fund that is seeded with £300 million, we could begin our journey to keep Scotland's energy wealth in Scotland's hands. By committing all future ScotWind revenue to the wealth fund, the Parliament can ensure that we stay on that path for generations to come. Colleagues in the chamber can build that future with us by backing the Scottish Greens' amendment today.

There is another immediate action that the minister could take today. He could commit to improving and reviewing the repowering pilot on Forestry and Land Scotland land by extending it to all public land, including Crown Estate land in Scotland, so that communities can develop renewable energy projects in more areas across the country. Similarly, although I understand the pilot projects being limited to 50MW sites, the minister should recognise that some communities can manage bigger projects, especially when in partnership with private developers.

Once successful pilot projects have been delivered, we look forward to working with the Scottish Government to see all public land and repowering sites of any scale give priority access

to communities. However, having spoken with representatives from Community Land Scotland, it is clear that the pilot sites will not get off the ground unless three things are sorted out. First, the minister must create an enabling environment by ensuring that community asset transfers are successful. For that to happen, Forestry and Land Scotland must work with communities in close collaboration with the community and renewable energy scheme—CARES—and Local Energy Scotland. Private developers should see that as an opportunity to support communities on shared ownership projects.

Secondly, funding must be unlocked at pace. Of course, CARES serves that function, but it is too restrained. The Scottish Greens' proposed £300 million ScotWind wealth fund would be in a much better position to seed fund projects through long-term capital and grants, which I would have liked GB Energy to do more of.

Thirdly, the repowering pilot needs to be the start of a wholesale culture change for our Government, energy sector, local authorities and public bodies. The round-table event on this topic to which I have invited the minister—he has yet to reply—must be the start of that culture change. Properly supporting community energy development through the repowering pilot has the chance to enhance that considerably.

Those are two suggestions for actions that the Scottish Government could deploy now that, if delivered properly, would not only drive investment and prosperity in our communities and supply chain but make returns for the Scottish Government. Alone, they would not make up entirely for the other shortcomings of the programme for government that is in front of us, but they would set us firmly on the right track—one on which Scotland's energy wealth stays in Scotland's hands.

I move amendment S7M-01114.1, to insert at end:

"recognises that energy policy is a largely reserved competence, but accepts that the Scottish Government should do what it can to provide leadership; believes that Scotland's energy future must and will include significant diversification of ownership of its energy system across private, public and community ownership, and further believes that a ScotWind Wealth Fund should be established during the current parliamentary term, and that consideration should be given to investing the remaining ScotWind leasing options into the new Wealth Fund, which should be tasked with driving community wealth, public and community ownership, and supply chain development."

15:08

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Regrettably, there are no prizes for being the first to be right. However, having stood in the chamber

time and again arguing that Scotland needs a pragmatic energy policy that recognises the importance of renewables, the continuing importance of oil and gas, the scientific and practical case for new nuclear energy, the need to invest in grid and storage and, above all, the need to manage the transition rather than pretend that we can simply switch one energy source off and flip to another, it is gratifying to hear how many of my arguments from previous debates have been taken on board.

Having endured Stephen Flynn cheerleading a windfall tax in Westminster, John Swinney and Tom Arthur demanding that it be hiked to astronomical levels, and Nicola Sturgeon demanding that the investment allowances be removed, I am delighted to hear the minister's conversion to my position that the windfall tax should be removed immediately.

Daniel Johnson: Will Liam Kerr give way?

Liam Kerr: In two seconds, Mr Johnson. I am also delighted that, after years of blocking investment in the North Sea, and having capitulated to Nicola Sturgeon's demands to hike the windfall tax and scrap investment allowances, Labour has shifted so substantially on Jackdaw and Rosebank. Although Mr Johnson was too coy to make his position clear, perhaps he will do so now.

Daniel Johnson: I was merely rising to say that, given Liam Kerr's amazing powers of foresight, does he have the lottery numbers for the weekend?

Liam Kerr: If I do, I am not giving them to the likes of Daniel Johnson. However, I understand why he is so keen to associate with my position on things. The real world has a habit of intruding on unevidenced political posturing. In the real world, North Sea gas still meets almost half of UK gas demand—in fact, around 84 per cent of homes in the UK are still heated by gas.

What Sanne Dijkstra-Downie misses in her amendment is that the acceleration of electrification—whether in transport, heating or industry—is already happening. The fact is that electricity demand is projected to double by 2050, so the challenge is how we generate enough reliable, affordable electricity to meet that demand.

When it comes to oil and gas, what the Green Party always misses is that stopping domestic production does not stop demand: it simply changes from where that demand is met. The more that we meet that demand from imports, the higher the emissions and the greater the impact on the environment, the higher the unemployment—1,000 jobs a month, according to Offshore

Energies UK—the lower our energy security and the lower our tax take.

Once those capabilities have disappeared, they are extraordinarily difficult to rebuild—so says RGU's energy transition institute in its latest report, "Delivering Positive Energy". It says that more than 42,000 people were employed in the north-east offshore energy workforce in 2024, and around 90 per cent of those were in oil and gas. However, it warns of catastrophic potential job losses by 2035. It also tells us something more hopeful—if that is managed properly, more than 90 per cent of the region's offshore energy skills are transferable to renewables and the like.

In short, the people who built the North Sea industry can also build our future. We already have the experts in subsea engineering, fabrication, project management, vessels, ports and offshore construction, and they can help us to make a global centre for renewables and a genuine energy transition. That is why RGU talks of a Goldilocks zone, in which reducing oil and gas employment is matched by a growth in renewables.

That is where I come to Reform's positioning and yesterday's report from Energy Voice that highlighted its hostility to renewable energy. There are legitimate questions around costs, subsidies, intermittency, storage and planning of renewable technologies, but to describe renewable energy as a "big, fat racket", as Malcolm Offord did in this Parliament just a few months ago, is not a serious contribution to the energy debate.

The renewable energy sector already employs perhaps 40,000 people in Scotland. It generates around £13.3 billion in turnover. Those are my constituents—those are our constituents—so to have someone come in here and trash an entire sector is, frankly, irresponsible.

Malcolm Offord: Has Liam Kerr discussed his enthusiasm for North Sea oil and gas with senior members of the Conservative Party such as Theresa May, John Selwyn Gummer and Alok Sharma? They certainly do not share his enthusiasm.

Liam Kerr: I am grateful to Mr Offord for acknowledging my enthusiasm for oil and gas, which has never been in doubt, and I assure him that senior members of the Conservative Party, or, indeed, members of this Parliament, have never had any doubt about that. I have discussed at every opportunity how we promote North Sea oil and gas.

Every energy technology has its costs and benefits. Every technology involves hard choices about investment, infrastructure, reliability and security. That is why I want to pick up on something that Daniel Johnson said. If we accept

the doubling of electricity demand by 2050, that the North Sea reserves are in decline and that intermittent renewables are vulnerable to events such as a dunkelflaute, which is the word that Mr Offord was searching for earlier, we need firm, reliable, dispatchable capacity, or, for Alan Brown's benefit, let us call it baseload.

The indisputable fact is that nuclear provides that dependable low-carbon power, alongside intermittent renewables. Scotland already has the nuclear skills, the sites and the engineering expertise. The argument is not that nuclear should replace renewables, as some wish to suggest that it is, but rather that there is no coherent reason to voluntarily exclude a key source of reliable low-carbon power from the balanced energy system that Scotland needs.

This is a new session of Parliament, so we have a real opportunity.

Alan Brown: Will the member take an intervention?

Liam Kerr: I really do not have time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): The member is concluding.

Liam Kerr: I am delighted that the SNP and Labour have moved to support my position. I genuinely offer to work with the Government on a proper energy strategy to replace its wholly discredited draft, with its ludicrous and deeply damaging presumption against oil and gas.

I hope that the Greens finally see that their attempt to switch off the North Sea is simply economic, environmental and energy security vandalism, and I truly hope that Reform will eventually develop a grown-up energy policy that does not trash an entire sector or propose opencast coal mining on the granite of Aberdeenshire.

The Scottish Conservatives have the energy policy that Scotland needs. That is the transition that I want to see.

I move amendment S7M-01114.4, to insert at end:

"expresses deep concern that 1,000 jobs each month are being lost in Scotland's oil and gas industry; calls on the UK Labour administration to scrap the damaging energy profits levy and to approve the Rosebank and Jackdaw oil and gas fields; urges the Scottish Government to publish a new energy strategy, which abandons its presumption against oil and gas; calls on the Scottish Government to stop blocking new nuclear sites and to explore the roll-out of small modular reactors, and warns that failing to invest in a diverse energy mix will have an adverse effect on Scotland's energy security."

15:16

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie (Edinburgh Northern) (LD): I, too, welcome the minister's collegiate approach, because Scotland has an enormous energy opportunity. The challenge is to deliver on that opportunity with the ambition and the holistic approach that it requires. Our focus must be on not only how much energy can be produced—although that is, of course, important—but who benefits from it, how much of it we use and what the transformation can deliver for the people of Scotland.

To my mind, community benefit for energy projects must be at the heart of Scotland's energy transformation. It is imperative that the communities that host new onshore renewable developments see the benefits of those developments in their own communities. We are asking them to accommodate large infrastructure developments on their doorsteps. Turbines, pylons, batteries and generators are big structures that often fundamentally change the landscape that they live in. It is difficult to build support for renewable energy when communities face disruption without seeing any of the benefits.

The Government's proposals for updated community benefit guidelines, which it published back in February, were underwhelming and fell far short of the demands of councils, communities and campaigners. For instance, the proposed figure of £6,000 per megawatt represents a real-terms cut compared with the rate of £5,000 per megawatt that was set 12 years ago. That cannot be right, so we ask the Government to reflect on that and set levels that are more ambitious than those that were set out in its recent working paper, and to include pumped storage, which is currently not covered in the guidelines.

However, the benefits to communities should be about more than a cheque. They should include local jobs, investment, skills and, where possible, a genuine stake in the infrastructure that is being developed.

Helen McDade: Will the member take an intervention?

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: Not just now, thank you.

Scotland has the capacity and the ability to lead the world in renewable energy, but we must ensure that the opportunity touches every community, from Kelso to Thurso.

Increasing renewables capacity is only part of the equation. We can have all the wind turbines in the world, but if the grid cannot get the electricity to where it is needed, that is pointless. We can have all the solar panels in the world, but if cars still run on petrol and boilers on gas, emissions will

not go down. We need to drive down demand for oil and gas by accelerating electrification in all sectors.

I appreciate the point that Liam Kerr made. Of course that work is already happening; my point is that it needs to go faster. That needs to happen in relation to how we heat our homes, through heat pumps and heat networks, through to how we power our transportation.

We also need to use less energy through a range of energy efficiency measures. Liberal Democrats have long called for a nationwide insulation programme.

Liam Kerr: If the member is proposing that we should move away from fossil fuels and electrify as much as possible, from which source does she propose that we generate that electricity?

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: Liam Kerr's point about the need for a mix of energy sources is important, but renewables must be a crucial part of that mix. That is why we want to ensure that community benefits are strengthened. We want to ensure that we have buy-in from communities so that we can accelerate the transformation to renewables.

Returning to insulation, we want a programme that is targeted at those least able to pay. Measures such as those will help us to make our homes and buildings more efficient, lower household bills and provide greater security from volatile global energy prices.

Of course, none of that means that we should turn our backs on the people and communities whose livelihoods have historically depended on oil and gas. Scotland has developed an enormous pool of expertise in engineering, technical and industrial skills over many years. That expertise will be essential to building the industries of the future. The transition should be about taking those skills with us and making sure that the people who have powered Scotland's energy economy can play a leading role in its future.

Malcolm Offord: Will the member give way?

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: Not just now.

However, we cannot simply assume that high-quality employment opportunities will magically appear. Workers need access to the training, investment and pathways that allow them to move into other industries. A successful transition should build on the strengths that we already have, instead of treating the past and future of Scotland's energy sector as distinct, separate entities.

We also need to recognise that the transition will not look the same in every part of Scotland. The answer cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. The transition will require change, and we should be

honest about that. However, change is much easier to support when people do not feel that the change is leaving them behind.

Although I welcome both the ambition and the tone of the Government's motion, we must acknowledge, as I am sure that the minister does, that the opportunity that Scotland has is about more than how much energy can be produced or how quickly new infrastructure is built. It is about what that energy transformation delivers for the people of Scotland. It is about making our homes warmer, reducing household bills, creating good jobs and helping communities to benefit from the infrastructure they host. It is about using our renewable resources to reduce our dependence on oil and gas while taking the skills and expertise of our existing energy workforce with us.

If we can get those things right, we can build an energy system that is cleaner, fairer and more secure and benefits communities across Scotland.

I move amendment S7M-01114.2, to insert at end:

“; recognises that work on this transformation also requires urgent action to reduce demand for fossil fuels through the acceleration of electrification and a focus on energy efficiency measures, such as insulation, in order to reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills, and further calls for the Scottish Government's Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments to be made more ambitious than the level set out in the recent working paper, which proposed a real-terms cut compared to the 2014 guidance, based on the principle that people should benefit more from the money that companies make from generating, storing and transmitting renewable energy near them.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): We now move to the open debate. I remind members who have yet to press their request-to-speak button to do so now.

15:21

Kate Campbell (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP): Scotland is a net exporter of energy. We create six or seven times more energy than we use, yet we have some of the highest energy costs in Europe. Why? It is because most of the powers over energy are reserved and the UK Government has always neglected energy policy, particularly with regard to policies that would benefit the people of Scotland. As a result, households and businesses are suffering.

Labour promised us GB Energy, with Scotland as the powerhouse of our clean energy mission. It promised 1,000 skilled jobs in the north-east but has delivered only 132, and 46 of those are done by people living outside Scotland. It promised millions of pounds of investment in Scottish

renewables but, instead, it has delivered millions of pounds of investment in English solar panels.

It is not just Labour that has let us down. The Tories absolutely failed to invest in upgrading the grid for decades. The challenge with moving energy around is one of the main reasons why we are not fully utilising the renewable energy that is created in Scotland. When the grid does not have capacity, it creates bottlenecks, and we have to turn on the gas to create electricity, which pushes up our unit price. Curtailment has already cost more than £1 billion this year.

As has been mentioned, the National Energy System Operator is now bringing forward its strategic spatial energy plan. That work was jointly commissioned by the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments, but NESO is sharing the half-dozen or so scenarios that it has produced only with the UK Government, which will decide which one goes out to consultation.

That is a strategy that has enormous consequences for Scotland. If we do not see investment in increasing the capacity of the grid in a way that enables renewable energy to flow from where it is produced to the places where it will be used, the consequences for us could be catastrophic.

The Scottish Government must be able to shape that strategy, or we could continue to see reliance on switching on the gas when we cannot get renewable energy to where it is needed, which pushes up our unit price and adds hundreds of pounds to household bills.

Liam Kerr: If energy was devolved, who would pay for the maintenance and expansion of the grid infrastructure?

Kate Campbell: It is interesting that the party that allowed the grid to get into the state that it is in today—the state that is costing households hundreds of pounds—would pose that question. Like everything, when we become an independent country, we will work out how to manage our resources in a way that is best for the people of Scotland. I have no doubt about that.

The situation that I outlined pushes up our unit price and puts hundreds of pounds on to household bills. Those are the bills that Labour promised would go down by £300 but which have gone up by £600. We should not be surprised, however, because, in energy as in all else, Scotland has repeatedly been let down by UK Government after UK Government, going right back to Thatcher not creating a futures fund when there was the opportunity. That opportunity has gone.

In Tuesday's debate on the economy, I heard Duncan Massey talk about a return to peak North

Sea oil production. Either he does not understand or he is prepared to mislead people: as has been said, the reality is that the North Sea is a mature basin. Production has halved since 1999, which was peak oil. There is not much oil left, and the cost of extraction is high—and that is before we even consider the climate consequences of continued extraction.

We have seen wildfires this summer—

Duncan Massey: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Kate Campbell: No—I will continue to make progress.

More than 250,000 people were displaced across southern Europe. Here in rainy Scotland, we had wildfires in the Cairngorms and just outside this building, on Arthur's Seat, and there was the glacial collapse in Tibet and Nepal. The Amazon rainforest is at risk of wildfire. That is an area that should be saturated with water. Climate change is very real and must be part of the conversation on energy.

Fossil fuels are nearing the end of life, and any responsible Government should be focused on the transformation, protecting jobs and transitioning skills for the industry and supporting sectors. For those pushing nuclear as an alternative, I point out that the cost of nuclear is prohibitive. We heard from Professor Helm at the Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee last week. As he said, new nuclear is costing

“£16 billion per gigawatt, while gas costs £500 million to £1 billion per gigawatt.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee*, 1 September 2026; c 11.]

Jamie Langan (South Scotland) (Reform): Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Kate Campbell: No—I will continue to make progress.

The future is renewables—although there are challenges. As has been said, grid capacity is a huge one, and the UK Government needs to invest in it. Intermittency is also a challenge, and we need to invest in research and development for energy storage.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Kate Campbell: No.

There is also the diversification of our energy supply to consider. Here is the really critical thing: continued reliance on fossil fuels equals continued price instability. A future with renewables means that we can create price stability. We can insulate ourselves from geopolitical shocks, such as the war in Ukraine and Trump's war in Iran—and such shocks will inevitably continue to happen.

About 10 per cent of gas costs are capital up-front costs, and 90 per cent are variable ongoing costs—primarily the cost of the fuel. With renewables, that is reversed. Most of the costs are capital costs. Because we know those costs up front, we know what the price will be in five or 10 years' time. That is so important—and it does not just concern the cost of living for households. Energy costs are impacting the public sector, which delivers the services that we rely on, and they are impacting businesses. When business costs go up, so do prices. Then, jobs are lost.

We need to break that cycle. Long-term energy security is vital for us all. We can achieve that only with renewables, and we can fully achieve our potential only with a Government that is focused on delivering the infrastructure that we need. That will only ever be the Scottish Government, and it must be a Scottish Government, with full powers over energy policy—the full powers that can come only with independence.

15:28

Paul McLennan (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP): This debate is about the enormous opportunity that Scotland's energy resources represent, for my constituents in East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs, for communities across Scotland and for our shared future.

Scotland is energy rich. We have won the natural lottery twice: first with North Sea oil and gas, and now with world-class renewable resources in wind, wave and tidal, and the potential for green hydrogen. Too many households still struggle with high bills, however, and too many communities see the wealth generated from their local resources flow elsewhere. That cannot be right.

In East Lothian, we see both the challenge and the opportunity. We have two onshore wind farms and three offshore grid connections.

Malcolm Offord: Will the member take an intervention?

Paul McLennan: I will progress a little bit further into my speech, if that is okay.

Torness has been an employer in East Lothian since the 1980s. As we look to the future of that site, my focus, and the focus of the Scottish Government, is clear: clean, green renewable energy and the skilled jobs that come with it.

Jamie Langan: Will the member take an intervention?

Paul McLennan: I will take the intervention from Mr Offord.

Malcolm Offord: I was down at Torness during the election campaign. On the day when I was there, Torness was providing 45 per cent of Scotland's electricity. What would Mr McLennan's plan be when Torness is shut down?

Paul McLennan: I will come to that in my speech. I inform Mr Offord that I was a councillor down there for 15 years, so I have been engaging with Torness regularly on that issue, and I will continue to do so. The baseload issue and the future of renewables will be picked up in the future energy strategy, which Mr Gethins will be talking about.

As we look to the future of the Torness site, my focus—and the Scottish Government's focus—is clear: clean, green renewable energy and the skilled jobs that come with it. Scotland has the raw ingredients for low-cost green hydrogen in abundance, and we have concentrations of energy expertise, including at Torness, that can harness the wind, wave and tidal power to produce it.

Just on Monday, we met representatives from Torness and Hynamics, which is part of the EDF Group, to discuss the hydrogen opportunities that exist on the site. The decommissioning and transition at Torness can, and must, deliver opportunities for the existing workforce while creating new ones. Mr Gethins and I have had a chat about the future of Torness, and he will shortly receive an invite from me and the station manager to discuss that. Mr Gethin has said that he would be quite happy to go down and see that, so we will be talking about Torness. As I said to Mr Offord, I engage with people from Torness regularly.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Paul McLennan: If I can have the time back.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Yes.

Liam Kerr: The member founds upon wind, wave and tidal power for Scotland's future but, like Kate Campbell, he makes absolutely no account for the baseload that he was asked about. Does he acknowledge the need for baseload? If so, where is it coming from?

Paul McLennan: As I said in my response to Malcolm Offord, I am sure that Mr Gethins will bring that forward in the energy strategy, and we will see about the future of renewables.

I come back to the point that I was making. After my election in 2021, I established the East Lothian energy forum. We now have an annual conference, which is coming up in two weeks. We bring together all the providers, including Torness, Scottish Power, SSE, Scottish Gas and EDF, and we bring together local communities through

community councils, which is important, and local companies such as Sunamp and Had Fab.

I will touch on Had Fab, which I mentioned in my speech just the other day when we were talking about another issue. Had Fab, which is a fabrication company, has seen a massive increase in its workforce. Gillian Martin and I visited it earlier this year and we heard from the growing number of apprentices. Had Fab has seen a threefold increase in its workforce in that regard.

Of course, there are other such companies—we are already growing employment through the renewables supply chain. The Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit and the CBI advise that around 1,500 green jobs are already in place in East Lothian, and the number is growing. Those are people who work and live in East Lothian.

We have seen community benefits, including support with energy costs for local families, and we know there is far more potential if the full value of our energy stays here in Scotland. Nationally, the picture is the same. Kristopher Leask made an important point about the importance of community energy. When we talked about community benefits in my area, I brought the communities together, along with the developers, and we developed a framework around that, which works really well.

Let us not forget that—as a few members have mentioned already—Scotland generates far more electricity than it consumes. Net electricity exports have been substantial, yet households face rising bills and businesses face costs that undermine competitiveness.

Analysis has shown that we need a different policy approach: one that properly values our low-cost renewable generation, increases storage and ends the waste of what is, when we think about it, paying generators not to produce. I will touch on that issue further on in my speech. Such an approach could deliver the lowest wholesale electricity prices in western Europe and cut household bills by a third, as we have heard Octopus Energy mention on a number of occasions. That would ease cost of living pressures for families in East Lothian.

The Scottish Government is already acting within the powers that we have, reforming the energy consents process to bring forward more low-cost energy—

Jamie Langan: Will the member take an intervention?

Paul McLennan: I have already taken two interventions; I want to progress a bit further, if that is okay.

We are reforming the energy consents process to bring forward more low-cost renewables projects more quickly, including community renewables; investing in the hydrogen sector; and, as has been mentioned, planning a ScotWind wealth fund so that more of the benefit reaches people in Scotland.

We are determined to make Scotland an energy superpower and ensure a just transition that creates good jobs and supports workers and communities through change. However, the crucial point is inescapable. Scotland has the energy, but it does not yet have the full power to decide how the energy is used and how its wealth is shared. Energy powers remain mostly reserved.

There are still challenges. Last week, I hosted a round-table meeting with EDF Power Solutions and the issues discussed were as follows. Grid capacity is still a major issue. In those discussions, the company mentioned the issue of the strategic spatial energy plan, and the lack of involvement from the sector—that was coming from EDF—and from the Scottish Government. The process is still to take around another 18 months. That is far too slow; the Scottish Government has not been fully involved in the process, and nor has the UK Government. There needs to be movement, because that is hindering development at this stage.

Developers need certainty from distribution network operators and transmission operators. Scotland has to be included and fully consulted in the review of the electricity market arrangements. Consumer and investment confidence is already being impacted by the delay.

As Mr Gethins has talked about, the Scottish Government is working on the energy strategy and the just transition plan. The Scottish Government also needs to develop a skilled workforce to meet future demand.

This is Scotland's second great energy opportunity and we must not miss it. We must place Scotland's energy in Scotland's hands to lower bills, create and retain high-quality jobs, give communities a real stake in the projects around them, accelerate progress toward net zero and build a fairer, more prosperous country. I support the motion and urge colleagues to do the same.

15:35

Donald MacKinnon (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab): Last month, I attended an international conference on community energy storage in my constituency, at the Stornoway campus of UHI North, West and Hebrides. It was a fascinating event, which showcased the wide range of options for energy storage that could be part of our energy future. From hydrogen to battery storage, they

present huge potential, and integration with community energy projects would create the possibility of even more benefits. Na h-Eileanan an Iar leads the way in community energy, with projects in Barra, South Uist, North Uist, Lewis and Harris. Those include the largest community energy project in the UK, the 9MW Point and Sandwick wind farm, which generates an average annual profit of £1 million that is reinvested in the community.

At the conference, we heard from former member of Parliament Calum MacDonald about Point and Sandwick's plans for a battery storage installation in Stornoway. That would provide resilience to community energy generators in the island by helping to balance the grid in the event of any disruption to supply to the mainland. Currently, outages result in a diesel-fired power station in Stornoway taking over the island's electricity supply and wind turbines being switched off. The benefits of community energy are well understood in our islands and, as we heard from Kristopher Leask in his excellent speech, research shows that community-owned renewables projects provide 34 times the financial benefit to local communities that is provided by privately owned wind farms.

Energy in our islands is a story of two parts: on one hand, community-owned energy, and, on the other, large-scale multinational-owned proposals. In 2022, a 1.8GW interconnector was approved for Lewis. At the same time, the ScotWind leasing round opened up opportunities for three sites off the coast of Lewis—two to the north off the Butt of Lewis and one just 3 miles off the west coast. With two of those ScotWind projects looking to connect to the interconnector, alongside existing proposed onshore commercial developments, the grid is now oversubscribed. The situation puts at risk the opportunities for community projects to connect to the grid. Asking community projects to compete with multinationals is not fair, and grid reform must reflect that. I hope that the minister will take forward those arguments with his UK counterparts.

It is also vital that the projects continue to receive the support that they need from the community and renewable energy scheme—CARES—to put them in the best possible situation to take up grid connection offers when they arise. I am pleased to see the commitment in the PFG to investment in CARES.

This does not need to be an either/or situation. Yes, something has to give to allow community projects to progress, but power at scale by private developers will also be part of the story of the energy future of our islands. The example of Eilean Siar Energy shows what ambitious collaboration between communities and large-scale projects can look like. The project is looking to take up a 20

per cent share option in onshore projects. However, to do that, it will need support and I hope that the minister will be there right behind it.

Supply chain benefits are important, and investment in ports and infrastructure will help to ensure that benefits are felt throughout the country. In my constituency, we are seeing the investment by SSEN in housing that will ultimately be available for social rent. We also need to invest in jobs and skills, like at UHI North, West and Hebrides, as I talked about earlier.

I know that not everyone is in favour of energy projects at the scale that is being proposed. The views of communities are important and must be taken on board in the consenting process. For developers and for those who oppose the projects, the last thing that we need is long limbo periods where consenting hangs in the balance, causing distress to communities and risking investment from developers. The consenting process must reflect the changing landscape that we are operating in and ensure that community voices are heard and that communities benefit from development—when those developments are appropriate.

We have a tremendous opportunity in front of us but to fully realise those opportunities will require collaboration between Governments and with communities.

15:39

Emma Roddick (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP):

The word “opportunity” seems to be the most important one in today's motion. This is a huge opportunity, but I am afraid that, thanks to UK energy policy, when we look back on the renewables boom in Scotland, it will be hard to ignore the opportunity that has been lost.

There can be lasting benefit to local communities—more jobs, legacy housing developments and ownership of assets that can continue to bring in energy and income for those areas long term. As there can be such things, I believe that there must be such things.

In a situation where Scotland is generating so much energy, we in the Highlands should not be struggling to pay our energy bills. We can get to a situation in which it is possible to notice cheaper renewable energy generation when we read our energy bill, rather than the unaffordable prices that we currently see tied to gas prices.

We cannot keep pretending that little pots of money here and there are good enough. Scotland has the natural resources to generate green energy. We have the knowledge to operate developments and the innovation to keep on creating better ways to do things and store that

energy. We do not have a fair regulatory and legal framework that puts the communities hosting those developments and living in cold homes first.

I am looking forward to seeing the detail of the ScotWind fund, but it is clear that ownership is key. Gillian Martin made progress on that during the previous parliamentary session, but we have to force the issue. We could take a more active role in ensuring that there are opportunities not just for those community organisations that already have the expertise and the capital behind them to push their way in but for all the communities that are in a position to take ownership of local generation.

There are other areas that we could put more effort into. Scottish Land & Estates sent a briefing to MSPs ahead of this debate. One of the things that it is calling for is co-location of energy development and other economic activity, and an example that it has given is anaerobic digestion plans located next to farms.

I have seen the benefits that that can bring—gas production and the by-products being used to help nearby farmers, who might also be starting the process again by providing energy-related crops. I visited Biogen at Tornagrain in the summer, and I previously got to see how Fearn Farm is benefiting from the nearby Acorn plant. Co-location is entirely possible, and it is a way to gain the trust and involvement of at least some of those in the communities that are hosting such developments.

Some of the places that I went to see during my time as a Highlands and Islands MSP that stick with me the most are energy related, because it makes a huge difference when communities have ownership. The Assynt crofters became experts in hydro. The local turbines in Yell and Rousey provide a constant source of income for those communities, who can then use that to build affordable housing for key workers. There are also farms that are literally becoming circular economies by working alongside local whisky distillers and anaerobic digesters.

Rural areas know how to make land work for lots of different things at once. We do that every day, but grid constraints and rarely updated regulations are strangling the process. Our ambition for the UK should be bigger than the occasional funnelling of public money to energy companies that already make staggering profits, rather than changing the system that allows them to do that while thousands of people desperately reach out to Citizens Advice or MSPs because every time they turn on the heating all they can think of is the debt that they are accruing.

The Highlands has a lot going on right now. Over the years, I have been very impressed with the work that is going on at the port of Ardersier under Haventus. From the before and after vistas that I

have seen on visits and the individual stories about high-quality employment that I have heard, I know that it is very inspiring, modern and brandy. Port workers take pride in the changes that have already been made, as well as the opportunity that lies ahead. I was very pleased that Hannah Mary Goodlad was able to visit the port in the summer recess. I cannot overestimate the importance of the place not only to the local area but to Scotland's energy resilience and economy.

Although many UK Government decisions have had a negative impact on the communities that I represent in Inverness and Nairn, I cannot recall one coming up as often as the blocking of the Ming Yang investment in Ardersier did on the doorsteps ahead of this year's election. People in my constituency understand the importance and value of local jobs. I hope that a way forward can be found with the new UK Government, as there is huge potential.

As for the bigger picture, I hold out little hope of a UK Government ever taking the right action. I say that not because I believe that there is a competence issue but because it is a matter of interest—the UK Government is not interested. Scotland is producing lots of energy and the UK is benefiting. Scottish people should benefit and our communities should be rich, owning their own developments and with no one unable to afford to heat their home. Whether the Prime Minister is unable to look past Greater London or unable to look past Manchester, the result in Inverness is the same. We must be able to benefit from what we have, we need to align legislation with our goals and we need power over our energy.

15:45

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I moved to Argyll and Bute 15 years ago. I am an east coaster, but the west coast of Scotland has always been a draw to me. History, sea and landscape, and people—eachdraidh, sealladh-mara agus tir, agus daoine—are all connected. As I said in my first speech in the chamber, Argyll and Bute could be the powerhouse of renewable energy in Scotland. I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, because I have a personal investment in the Islay Energy Community Benefit Society, which owns the Islay community wind turbine, and I am a member of the Islay Energy Trust.

Islands are full of gifted people who want to do their bit for energy generation. For example, Tiree and Islay have community wind turbines and solar arrays; Jura's Inver estate has hydro and solar schemes that provide power to the Jura distillery; and Mull and Iona Community Trust has a community hydro scheme. Many of those renewable energy schemes have been supported

by the Scottish Government, and they were all initiated by members of island communities for the benefit of those communities. They are similar to the schemes that Donald MacKinnon spoke about.

However, when discussing renewable energy, I am frustrated by the split between devolved areas and reserved areas and by the way that the charging system operates, as Emma Roddick eloquently said. People who live in Argyll and Bute experience some of the highest energy prices in the UK while seeing the power that is generated on their doorsteps flowing between the pylons that march across their landscape. My question yesterday highlighted both those issues, and I thank the minister for his answers. The chuntering reaction from members who were sitting to my left showed that I clearly pressed the right buttons.

Over the past five years, I have noticed a change in my conversations with constituents about renewable energy. There has always been an understanding that renewable energy is required to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, but their concerns now focus on what the benefits to their community, to Argyll and Bute and to the rest of Scotland will be. I agree with much of what Sanne Dijkstra-Downie said about community benefit.

Last year, our SNP Government took a positive step on the repowering of wind farms, and Argyll and Bute is at the heart of that. As Kristopher Leask said, Forestry and Land Scotland is piloting an opportunity for community organisations to develop onshore wind repowering projects on public land, primarily on that managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. That will help communities to move beyond receiving an annual community benefit payment to leaving a lasting legacy for future generations. I look forward to engaging further with them to progress that work.

Jamie Langan: Does Jenni Minto recognise that a lot of communities across Scotland, including those in Dumfries and Galloway and East Lothian, are keen on investment in nuclear energy and that it is time that her party and the Scottish Government got rid of their student politics obsession with opposition to nuclear power?

Jenni Minto: My husband filmed in Chernobyl 10 years after what happened there. Nothing will change my mind on the impact that nuclear energy can have on the people who live in our precious world.

The plans that I mentioned illustrate that the Scottish Government is doing what it can with its limited powers. Imagine what could be done with independence and with all the powers needed to run an energy system that works for everyone in Scotland. For example, power produced in Argyll

and Bute could directly benefit those who live there.

I am supportive of Our Power Scotland's calls on the Scottish Government to

"Take a stake in all future offshore wind projects to generate public revenue ... Fund councils to invest in local renewable energy projects to generate local income"—

I believe that that fits in with public service reform—

"Give more local communities the chance to own energy projects"

and

"Create secure, well paid jobs by building an offshore wind manufacturing industry."

Renewable Parts in Lochgilphead is a major success story in that area.

Angela Ross: Will Jenni Minto take an intervention?

Jenni Minto: I will not. I have quite a bit to say.

Our wind turbines are a clear illustration that Scotland is harnessing the power of the wind to create green electricity. However, they must be in the right place, and people who live in the communities that are impacted need to be listened to. I note and agree with the points that Kristopher Leask made about community wealth building, and I also listened closely to Donald MacKinnon's speech about community views on renewable energy.

I have spent time listening to constituents about the proposed MachairWind offshore development. Yesterday, I met the community councils of Colonsay, Iona and Islay, which have all raised objections that cover impacts on landscape, seascape, cultural heritage, the socioeconomic development of islands and biodiversity. They have also raised concerns about the environmental impact assessment and the evidence that it contains.

I will quote briefly from one community council's objection. It said:

"The Community Council wishes to be clear at the outset about what this objection is, and what it is not. It is not opposition to offshore wind, and it is not a demand that these waters be left untouched ... The principle is one of simple proportion: a development close to a stunning, scenic, pristine Atlantic inhabited coast must be modest, and a vast development must stand far away. What has been applied for honours neither half of that principle."

In Bella Bathurst's book "The Lighthouse Stevensons", there is an interesting historical parallel with the building of wind turbines. I quote:

"The Board recorded only petitions of the governmental organisations and the shipowners. The sailors who were most at risk from Skerryvore—the islanders and the local fishermen—stayed silent. Money and politics, as usual,

shouted loudest.”

The voices of islanders and communities must be heard. I have been swayed by some of their arguments—which, if I am honest, is not what I expected. I whole-heartedly agree with the Scottish Government’s journey towards net zero. However, communities that are impacted must be listened to. To put it simply, consideration must be made of the impact on eachdraidh, sealladh-mara agus tir, agus daoine—history, sea and landscape, and people.

15:52

David Smith (West Scotland) (Reform): Scotland has some of the best nuclear engineers in the world, but we have an SNP Government that maintains a long-standing and absolute opposition to the construction of civilian nuclear power stations in Scotland.

The claim that Scotland has some of the best nuclear engineers in the world is a bold one, so let me qualify that. In the north, we have had the shore test facility Vulcan and the Dounreay fast reactor. Both of those sites have played a major role in supporting the local economies of Thurso and Caithness for decades, but, more than that, they have developed a workforce at the cutting edge of nuclear innovation and technologies. The workforce is highly skilled and highly trained, and it takes safety and security incredibly seriously. We should all acknowledge what a credit it is to Scotland. However, it is being let down by a Scottish Government that does not value its work.

In 2013-14, I was a senior commissioning engineer working for the dockside test organisation at Barrow-in-Furness, commissioning the nuclear reactor on Astute boat 3. During the commissioning, a team of engineers from Thurso came down to assist. They brought their expertise, their excellent work ethic and their excellent humour to the project, and they were an absolute pleasure to work alongside. However, more and more of our nuclear engineering excellence is leaving Scotland to find employment elsewhere. It is estimated that approximately 1,200 highly skilled, excellent Scottish nuclear engineers are now working on the Hinkley C project because they cannot find a job in Scotland.

If we move west, we have His Majesty’s Naval Base Clyde, which is the base port for all UK submarines. It is maintained and operated by the Royal Navy and civilian staff working side by side. Naval nuclear reactors are governed by all the same rules and regulations as there are for civilian nuclear reactors, and they have an outstanding safety record. Maintaining the UK’s nuclear deterrent is a tremendous feat of engineering, and

it is further evidence of the knowledge and skills base in Scotland.

A little further south, we have Hunterston power station—another nuclear site that is being decommissioned, with another highly skilled workforce whose jobs are not valued by the Scottish Government.

Heather Anderson (Dundee City West) (SNP): It has taken me a second to process what David Smith has been saying. We have heard nothing but bad news about leaks at Faslane, so if he is saying that there is an excellent safety record, he obviously must not have read any of the investigative journalism about the state of the base and the maintenance of the submarines, which are putting everybody near them at risk.

David Smith: Let me say, for Heather Anderson’s benefit, that I have operated nuclear submarines at Faslane. I have been a nuclear reactor operator and maintainer, and I have written the safety cases. She is talking about incidents, not accidents. There is often overreporting, and a lot of people do not understand what is actually going on. If she wants to talk about a specific incident, I am happy to sit down and talk her through exactly what has happened. There have been no primary coolant leaks at Faslane—it will be some other type of water. Everything gets reported. There is a very high level of safety. There is almost overreporting, because people pick up on things that they do not necessarily understand.

As I said, a little further south, we have Hunterston—another nuclear site that is undergoing decommissioning, with a highly skilled workforce whose jobs are not valued by the Scottish Government.

To the east, we have Torness nuclear power station. That power station is still operating, but it is coming to the end of its life. Without a replacement, the local economy in Dunbar and the surrounding areas will really struggle. It should therefore come as no surprise that East Lothian Council passed a motion in August 2025 supporting new nuclear at Torness.

Paul McLennan: Will David Smith take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): If Paul McLennan wishes to make an intervention, he should press his button. That allows official report staff to know who is about to speak.

Paul McLennan: As I have mentioned, I have mentioned with those at Torness on a number of issues. The station manager was at Hunterston, and work has already been done on replacing those jobs. As I said in my speech, there are already 1,500 green jobs in East Lothian, and that figure is growing. “Net stupid zero”—which is the

rhetoric that is used—accounts for 1,500 green jobs in East Lothian. A balance needs to be struck. Jobs are being replaced. Please acknowledge the 1,500 green and renewable energy jobs in East Lothian. Those people live and work in East Lothian and contribute to it in that way.

David Smith: I am speaking solely on the value of the nuclear industry in Scotland, and I will not deviate from that. The issue that Paul McLennan raised is part of a wider debate.

As I said, it should come as no surprise that East Lothian Council passed a motion in August 2025 to support new nuclear. However, it seems to have made no impact on the Government's position.

I know a young man who is completing an electrical engineering apprenticeship. He has been forced to travel to Sellafield in Cumbria each week for work because of a lack of opportunities in Scotland.

Michelle Campbell (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP): Will David Smith take an intervention?

David Smith: I have taken two interventions, so I will not be taking another one just now.

I know another young man who recently graduated from the University of Glasgow after completing a degree in physics. He would love a job in the nuclear sector, but, instead, he has been forced to work in the financial sector due to the lack of nuclear engineering opportunities in Scotland.

Many of the difficulties that our young workforce in Scotland faces could be addressed by the Scottish Government backing new nuclear. In recent years, England has generated 43,000 new jobs in nuclear—well-paid, highly skilled, long-term jobs. If the Scottish Government was truly progressive and truly committed to growth, regeneration and energy security, it would back new nuclear. Indeed, if Scotland was able to keep pace with England, an additional 5,000 jobs would be available for Scottish workers in Scotland.

Let me move to nuclear waste. The United Kingdom is the best place in the world for reprocessing and storing nuclear waste. That is another bold claim, but I will explain it. All nuclear waste in the UK is reprocessed at Sellafield, which also reprocesses waste for many other countries, including Japan, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Australia and the Netherlands. Those are all technologically advanced countries that have put their trust and faith in the United Kingdom—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Mr Smith, you have gone well over your time, so you need to come to a conclusion.

David Smith: I will bring my remarks to a close. We have some of the best nuclear engineers in the

world. When we are this good at doing something, especially something that contributes so much to our society, we should keep doing it. I encourage the Government to urgently reconsider its position and back new nuclear.

16:01

Heather Anderson (Dundee City West) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a serving councillor for Dundee City Council.

The city of Dundee is perfectly poised to support and benefit from Scotland's green energy revolution. With our history of innovation and industry, combined with our educational institutions—including the University of Dundee, Abertay University and Dundee and Angus College—Dundee is ensuring that the future workforce is ready and capable of meeting the challenge of the new energy landscape. Our location on the Firth of Tay gives us direct access to the North Sea, while the port of Dundee is ideally located for offshore wind repair and support and North Sea repair and eventual decommissioning.

Forth Ports has invested £40 million to build its renewables hub, which is Scotland's first purpose-built offshore wind marshalling and assembly facility. Thanks to that investment, Dundee has been selected as the pre-installation and marshalling harbour for the Inch Cape project. Inch Cape is just up the coast, and the 72 Vestas wind turbines are some of the tallest in the world. I point out that they are bigger than a Dundee multi, but the kit in Dundee can handle them.

Malcolm Offord: Heather Anderson commented with pride about the scale and size of the turbines around the Tayside. How does she feel about the fact that not a single blade is made in Scotland?

Heather Anderson: I would welcome the blades being made in Scotland, which is why I want there to be investment in renewable energy development and the supply chain. That is what I am talking about.

The Inch Cape project will meet 10 per cent of the Scottish Government's 11GW offshore wind ambition for 2030, and it will generate sufficient energy to heat half the homes in Scotland—just think about that. Dundee and Angus College has thought about it, and it never misses a trick. In May, it signed a memorandum of understanding with Inch Cape to ensure that students at the college could access hands-on training and have a clear pathway to a career in offshore wind. Young people in Dundee will have the opportunity to get the best training and to match the skills that they need to be a mechanic with the skills that they

need to fix a turbine. My message is clear, and I am sure that Reform members will agree: dinna tow your turbines to Norway for repair; deliver them to Dundee and we will fix them.

In the summer, I was lucky enough to join a number of other MSPs on a visit to Scotland's largest offshore wind farm at Seagreen, just 17 miles from Montrose port. Seagreen is one of the deepest fixed-bottom wind farms in the world. People come from all over the world to understand the engineering and to see what SSE is doing. The 114 turbines produce enough power to heat the equivalent of two thirds of the homes in Scotland. It is astonishing technology. Once again, Scotland is showing ingenuity in using its natural resources and skills to generate energy.

Tackling climate change is no longer a technical problem; it is a political problem. I am heartened that our programme for government is clear about our preferred direction of travel.

Scotland's economy grew by 68.5 per cent in real terms between 1990 and 2024; at the same time, we cut greenhouse gas emissions in half. Reaching net zero and growing a thriving green economy go hand in hand. In 2025, we generated enough renewable energy to heat 16.5 million homes for a year. The problem is not ingenuity, skills or capacity; the problem is distribution.

Duncan Massey: Will Heather Anderson take an intervention?

Heather Anderson: I will not take an intervention—sorry.

We are acting to accelerate the delivery of offshore renewables, which will genuinely strengthen our energy resilience.

The benefits of the green economy to Scotland are enormous. The CBI estimates that net zero-related industries are already worth more than £10 billion to the Scottish economy and already support 100,000 jobs. We will publish a refreshed energy strategy—it has been referred to several times today, and we all look forward to seeing it—and establish a ScotWind wealth fund by the end of this parliamentary session to ensure that the public benefits from our renewables. The fact that all of us want more community ownership and more benefits for the people of Scotland has been echoed again and again today.

There is a snag, however. All that energy from Seagreen makes landfall at Montrose, but it does not go to the Scottish grid, because we do not have one—it goes to the national grid. The National Grid Group's great grid upgrade is billed as an opportunity to, as it says, move clean power from where it is generated to where it is needed. However, from looking at its maps—I have a few with me—although it is clear that clean power is

generated here, it is crystal clear that here is not where it is going. Most galling of all for the people who never wanted to leave the European Union, clean power is being extracted south and then exported to Europe, not by Scotland but by the UK.

Duncan Massey: It sounds as though Heather Anderson does not appreciate the power being exported and would like to stop the exports of electricity to England. Is that what she is saying?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Ms Anderson, we are already into extra time, so you will not be able to take any further interventions.

Heather Anderson: I would absolutely love to export the energy. We will be an exporter, but we simply do not get the benefit at the moment. I would like us to get the money from the extraction of our natural resources. As we do not have any power over our own energy, we cannot do a thing about any of that.

Scotland is one of the National Energy Systems Operators' 11 regions. NESO is not in any way confused or ambivalent about Scotland's enormous energy wealth; it is simply not its job to ensure that the people of Scotland benefit from it. The end result is that a family in Dundee has to pay £55 more in standing charges than a family in London does, before it uses a single unit of electricity. That is what happens when we do not have power over our own energy.

Everyone in the chamber will be hearing from constituents who are increasingly frustrated by what they regard as a rip-off—because it is a rip-off. They are genuinely asking why our renewable energy is not benefiting them or their communities—they can see the turbines and pylons but not the benefit. That is why the demand for powers over the extraction of our natural resources and our energy must be heard and answered. Scotland has an enormous economic advantage: we are an energy-rich nation again. This time, we need the powers over energy to ensure that the people of Scotland benefit. History must not repeat itself.

I would be delighted if the minister would consider a visit to the port of Dundee in the coming weeks.

16:09

Monica Lennon (Glasgow) (Lab): I am really glad that we are debating Scotland's energy opportunity. As I listen to the debate, it feels that the Parliament that I rejoined a week ago feels and sounds quite different to the one that I left before the election. Although most of us understand that the climate crisis is becoming more serious by the day, I feel that climate change denial has crept into the chamber. I hope that I am wrong, because we

must be in no doubt that the climate crisis is an existential threat to our health, to our living standards and to our communities.

We need a new energy future that will help us to tackle the climate crisis, and I am optimistic about the economic opportunities that that will bring. However, the question in my mind is, who owns that future and who will benefit? Hundreds of my Glasgow constituents have been in touch through the Our Power Scotland campaign. They are fed up of watching private companies and overseas investors get richer while Scots miss out. As they put it,

“we have the wind, we have the workers, but we lack ownership”.

They are demanding more public ownership, more community wealth building and secure well-paid jobs through a proper offshore wind manufacturing industry, and they are right to do so.

Jamie Langan: In the year in which BP has said that it will exit the North Sea, is it not incredibly important that we are open and embrace private capital investment in our energy market, as well as broader solutions?

Monica Lennon: I will come on to talk in a moment or two about big oil and gas and the eye-watering profits that they continue to make and about how we need to use some of that money to fund the just transition. What is evident is that Scotland is world leading in offshore wind and has abundant renewable resources. We have heard from the minister that we are creating thousands of good jobs, we are strengthening our energy security and we are building an economy that is fit for the future; however, we need to go further and faster.

Climate change is already causing havoc—something that I do not think that Reform and the Conservatives have mentioned today—from the wildfires in the Cairngorms and excess deaths from heat to the devastating loss of life from climate impacts in Nepal. Meanwhile, workers and communities are paying the price, while big oil and gas continue to make billions and record profits.

We need those profiteers—I hope that the members on the benches across from me agree—to pay more tax and contribute more to the just transition. Those members are shaking their heads, so perhaps they do not agree. That would help the workers who are facing redundancy due to the geology of the North Sea.

Jamie Langan: *[Made a request to intervene.]*

Duncan Massey: *[Made a request to intervene.]*

Monica Lennon: I will make some progress; I have only three minutes.

I do not know whether Rosebank and Jackdaw will ultimately be approved, but I do know that we cannot drill our way to lower energy bills, to long-term jobs and energy security or out of the climate crisis. We need to accelerate the just transition, and that must include having trade unions at the table—I know that we do not all agree with or believe in trade unions, but we need to have them at the table. We need investment in skills, domestic manufacturing, insulation of homes and acceleration of electrification—

Malcolm Offord: *[Made a request to intervene.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member cannot take an intervention because she is already in additional time.

Monica Lennon: I was allocated only three minutes. I will try to conclude very quickly.

We need democratic control of our energy wealth alongside properly resourced planning.

I pay tribute to campaigners, including those across Glasgow, and especially to our young people, who are demanding action. They understand that international climate justice is not a weakness but a strength.

I am pleased that the minister has pledged to work constructively with MPs and also with the UK Government, because we should co-operate more. I want to hear a bit more precision around dates for the ScotWind wealth fund and the long-awaited energy strategy.

Scotland can meet the climate challenge if we have the right strategy and plans. We can meet the moment when it comes to our energy future, but we need to shift the power from multinational profiteers and distant investors to our workers, communities and the Scottish public. It is not only about changing how we generate energy; it is about changing who has power in our economy and our democracy.

Scotland has the natural resources, we have the workers and we have the opportunities. What we need now is the political will and action from the Scottish Government to put that power and opportunity into the hands of the Scottish people.

16:14

Lloyd Melville (Angus South) (SNP): For more than half a century, Scotland and Norway have looked across the same sea, at the same extraordinary natural wealth. We both discovered oil and we both saw billions generated from beneath the North Sea, but only one of us was able to fully decide what happened to that wealth. Norway has invested in a fund for future generations, but under Westminster, Scotland could not.

The lesson is simple: possessing extraordinary natural wealth is not enough. The key test is how it is used, and Scotland faces that test yet again. This time, the wealth is not treasure that is buried beneath our feet; it is blowing over our hills and moving through our seas. Last week, Professor Sir Dieter Helm told the Parliament that Scotland's peak electricity demand is around 5GW, while our strategy is for around 20GW of additional renewable capacity. Therefore, much of what we generate will be exported. The question is, who will own Scotland's energy, who will profit from it and where will that wealth go?

Helen McDade: Will Lloyd Melville take an intervention?

Lloyd Melville: No, thank you.

Just off the Angus coast—

Jamie Langan: Will Lloyd Melville give way?

Lloyd Melville: No, thank you.

Just off the Angus coast, the Seagreen wind farm is already capable of generating enough electricity for more than 1.6 million homes. Inch Cape wind farm is under construction, just 15km from the Angus coast. In our county, a new offshore skills academy will help to train the workforce that those industries need. That is what it looks like when an energy opportunity becomes an economic one: not just turbines in Scottish waters, but skills here, supply chains here and communities benefiting here.

Jamie Langan: Lloyd Melville is talking about exporting energy as if “export” was a dirty word. He is talking about people being trained for the energy industry, but is that just for domestic use? He does not want us to have an export industry—is that what I am to take from SNP policy?

Lloyd Melville: Unfortunately, Mr Langan is incorrect. I am a big proponent of exporting electricity. What I would like, however, is for us to receive the financial benefit from that, which we currently do not.

On investment—

Malcolm Offord: *[Made a request to intervene.]*

Lloyd Melville: Lord Offord, do you want to come in? On you go.

Malcolm Offord: Thank you, Mr Melville. I was not sure where you were going with that so I just wanted to ask a question. I was the exports minister, and I applaud exports. However, who would buy that energy at the right price when the expense of getting it from northern Scotland to Europe would be extortionate? At the moment, the expense of the grid distribution system is covered by 70 million people in the UK. If it were covered by only 5.5 million people, our abundant energy

would be the most expensive energy in the world. Who would buy it?

Lloyd Melville: There is enormous demand for clean green electricity. Scotland will be well placed to export across Europe when we are an independent country.

On investment, which I was coming to before Lord Offord came in, the Scottish Parliament does not have the final say. I want to note a point that Emma Roddick put on the parliamentary record, which is that £1.5 billion of investment from Ming Yang was blocked, with 1,500 jobs moved elsewhere. National security must of course be taken seriously, but what made that pill harder to swallow was that the very same UK Government returned from China boasting about Chinese investment elsewhere in Britain. UK ministers welcomed it in Liverpool, and they have welcomed it in London. They are open for business, but not when the business is to come to Scotland. We also saw that in the broken promises on Grangemouth. While some people make empty promises for an ermine cloak, this Parliament must fulfil the promise of Scotland's energy future.

We have something enormously valuable to build from. For 50 years, the North Sea has built world-class engineering, subsea and offshore expertise here, and that expertise is an inheritance.

Michelle Campbell: On skills, a critical issue that has not been part of the debate so far is decommissioning and the jobs that are required in that sector. Such jobs would be welcomed across site groups, among major stakeholders, by the previous parliamentary session's cross-party group on renewable energy and energy efficiency and by the Scottish councils committee on radioactive substances, which includes councils and stakeholders. Despite the decrying, there is a need to find good, highly skilled jobs. Does Lloyd Melville agree that that should be recognised and celebrated?

Lloyd Melville: Absolutely. Michelle Campbell has put that point on the record so eloquently, and I thank her for it.

We must invest to turn the foundation of those jobs into the foundation of the next energy industry. We cannot watch one industry decline while waiting for another to arrive—we must build the bridge between them.

I agree with Kristopher Leask—he is not now in his seat—who talked earlier about ScotWind. The first ScotWind leasing round raised more than £750 million, and if we have learned anything from Norway, it is that some of today's windfall should be invested in a future generations fund. That is why I am pleased to hear that the Government has

committed to doing just that. Money from Scotland's energy should not just sit on a balance sheet but help us to build industry here in Scotland.

Future ScotWind proceeds should help us to invest in Scottish wind turbine manufacturing, supply chains and the industrial capacity that allows us to keep more of the value that we create. That wealth should still be working for Scotland decades from now. It cannot simply be the North Sea oil story but with wind turbines instead of rigs. It is not enough for the wind to be ours if the factories are elsewhere. It is not enough for the power to be generated here if the jobs, investment and profits flow elsewhere. We must capture the value as well as produce the power.

Scotland has been here before. We know what it means to possess extraordinary natural wealth and watch too much of its value leave our shores.

Jamie Langan: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member cannot take an intervention as he is in extra time.

Lloyd Melville: I apologise, Mr Langan.

This time, that wealth must leave something lasting behind in the industries that we build and the skills that we pass on, as well as in wealth that we preserve for the generations yet to come.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): We move on to the closing speeches.

16:21

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie (Edinburgh Northern) (LD): Last night, I watched "The People's Emergency Briefing" for the second time. I urge any member in the chamber who has not seen it to seek out a viewing near you. It is, for sure, a challenging watch, but it is a vital one, especially for anyone who is involved in politics.

One of the key positive takeaways at the end of the film is that we have an extraordinary natural advantage when it comes to renewable energy, which we have heard a lot about in the debate. We should be using that advantage by creating our renewable energy generating capacity, and getting community benefits right is an important part of that.

However, we also need to drive down the demand for oil and gas by phasing out fossil fuel technology and phasing in clean technology, and doing so faster. As the film points out, if, for example, we had decarbonised our domestic heating systems earlier, households would have saved huge amounts of money on bills when

inflation went through the roof in the post-Covid years.

If we are serious about reducing our dependence on oil and gas, we need to make it easier for people and businesses to electrify their heating systems, transport systems and other parts of everyday life, and use less energy through an upscaling of insulation and other measures that stop wasting energy that we cannot afford to waste.

Some members focused their remarks on the opportunities of nuclear, and a proper energy mix is critical to increasing the volume of electricity needed.

David Barratt (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: Not just now.

Although a focus should be on clean renewables, we should take an evidence-led approach to the potential of small modular reactors as part of the mix.

I am pleased to hear the minister say that the Scottish Government will engage constructively with the UK Government on Scotland's energy future. I am also grateful to the minister for accepting my amendment on strengthening community benefits. My colleagues and I look forward to working with him on that.

Kristopher Leask rightly referenced the importance of ensuring that there is no further delay to the Government's energy strategy. I am glad that he agrees that the proposed community benefit levels are insufficient. I agree with him that community ownership and community benefits have a role to play in empowering communities as part of the renewables transformation. As for some of the other contributions, the fact that we are still talking about new oil and gas licences shows that we simply have not moved fast enough in reducing our demand for fossil fuels.

The benefits of Scotland's just energy transformation cannot simply be measured in gigawatts generated, turbines constructed or investments announced. They should instead be measured in whether people have secure and well-paid jobs, whether their homes are warmer and cheaper to heat, whether we are genuinely reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and whether communities that host crucial renewable energy infrastructure are stronger because of it. Scotland's green, clean energy ambitions must be built on pragmatism as much as principle, and they must leave no community behind.

16:24

James Adams (North East Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, which states that I am a serving councillor on Aberdeenshire Council.

The oil and gas industry is vital to North East Scotland, and I have always been clear that I intend to champion the sector and the people who work in it, so I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this afternoon's debate, in which I have found myself agreeing with points made by members across the chamber.

Opposition to new oil and gas licences has already cost thousands of jobs and billions of pounds in lost revenue, and Scotland is being put at risk by that approach. A thousand jobs a month are being lost in Scotland's oil and gas industry, while the north-east and Scotland as a whole are missing out on potential revenue that could have supported public services and vital infrastructure. Those job loss figures relate to skilled workers in businesses across the north-east, as well as the wider supply chain that supports the industry. We should be asking how we can retain and make use of those skills as our energy system changes, rather than creating conditions in which investment and employment move elsewhere. That is particularly important, because the transition away from fossil fuels will not happen overnight.

The reality is that Scotland and the United Kingdom will continue to need oil and gas even while we expand the use of renewables. Pretending otherwise is a waste of time. It is not a choice between oil and gas or renewables; it is a choice between a balanced, managed transition that protects workers and strengthens energy security or a reckless transition that undermines communities and weakens Scotland's economy.

Approving Jackdaw and Rosebank is not a radical proposal. It is basic common sense, and it should happen now. I hope that we will find out about that in the next week or so. Those projects would support skilled employment, sustain local supply chains and provide greater certainty for investors in the North Sea. If approved, Jackdaw and Rosebank could generate around £10.8 billion in revenue. Every year of delay damages confidence, and it sends the wrong message to companies that might otherwise invest in Scottish jobs and Scottish communities.

The demand for oil and gas will continue for many years to come. As that is the case, it is far better that we meet demand from our own resources, rather than relying more heavily on imports from overseas, which leaves households and businesses more exposed to global price shocks.

David Barratt: Scotland has less than 1GW of installed pumped storage capacity but more than 10GW of identified capacity in the pipeline. That is twice Scotland's peak demand and four times Scotland's average demand. Development of such schemes is too slow. Does the member agree that pumped storage should at least be a larger part of the mix?

James Adams: Yes, I do.

Scotland has considerable renewable resources, a highly skilled workforce and decades of experience in the energy sector, but although I agree that Scotland's energy transformation presents a significant opportunity, if we are to make the most of that opportunity, we need to be realistic about the challenges that we face.

That brings me to Liam Kerr's amendment and, in particular, the part about nuclear energy. The Scottish Government currently has a presumption against any new nuclear development, but that position should be reconsidered. Nuclear is an established source of low-carbon electricity, and developments in small modular reactor technology mean that there is a case for considering what role such technologies might play in Scotland's energy future. That does not mean that every proposed nuclear project should automatically be approved, but the Scottish Government should be prepared to examine the evidence rather than ruling out a technology in advance.

In recent years, energy security has become a much more important consideration, and the disruption to the European energy markets following Russia's invasion of Ukraine demonstrated the risks that can arise when countries become too dependent on sources of imported energy. Scotland is fortunate to have substantial domestic energy resources, but failing to invest in a diverse energy mix will have an adverse effect on our energy security.

The Scottish Government claims that its £500 million just transition fund will create jobs in the north-east of Scotland and help workers to move from jobs in the fossil fuel sector to jobs in green energy. However, the reality is that that will not come close to offsetting the job losses that are being felt across the region at the moment.

Protecting jobs, securing revenue and bolstering our energy security are essential to Scotland's economic future and to a credible transition that works for the whole of Scotland. As Scottish Conservatives, we will continue to make the case for an energy policy that is rooted in jobs, security and common sense, and we urge the Scottish Government to publish a new energy strategy that abandons its presumption against oil and gas.

This week, it was announced that £1.9 million of investment from the just transition fund is being invested in Aberdeen, which is set to become home to Scotland's first electrolyser assembly facility. That will create up to 12 jobs and safeguard a further 11. That is welcome, but it is not enough, and it does nothing to ease the concerns of workers and their families across Scotland and the north-east.

Some may be willing to turn their backs on the north-east and its vital oil and gas industry, but we in the Conservatives will not. We will continue to stand up for Scotland and for the oil and gas industry—

Jamie Langan: Will the member give way?

James Adams: I am literally finishing my last sentence.

We will continue to stand up for the oil and gas industry, its workers and the communities that depend on it across the north-east of Scotland.

16:30

Iris Duane (Glasgow) (Green): I thank the minister for his collegiate approach, and Daniel Johnson for what was an interesting speech.

The subject of today's debate could not be more important to the constituents we serve. Like Monica Lennon, I have recently been contacted by hundreds of my constituents who have spoken about how they feel that their energy is not serving them. Is that any surprise? Almost 30 per cent of households are in fuel poverty, and half of those are in extreme fuel poverty. If one in three households are in that situation, fuel poverty is not the exception but the rule. Despite being by far the most energy-rich nation in the United Kingdom, we are by far the most fuel poor.

I hope that members will forgive me, but I will use my closing speech to expand this debate to cover not just what is on the table, but what should be on the table at the earliest convenience. The numbers that I quoted are quite old now, as they come from 2024. I sought further information from Citizens Advice Scotland, and it believes that the numbers are set to increase again. However, those are not just numbers. Too often, in the roles that we are in, we find ourselves balancing books and evaluating spreadsheets but forgetting who and what stands behind them.

Hundreds of thousands of households, especially in our rural areas, are bracing themselves for months of cold and damp. For far too many, the basic right to a warm home is too far away from their lived reality. We are talking about children shivering while they are trying to sleep, our pensioners confined to one room because it is

all that they can afford to heat and young workers choosing between whether they are going to eat or heat. In fact, not too long ago, those statistics included me, as I would often wake up in the single-glazed flat that I rent to the sight of my own breath in the winter months, with the temperature as low as 11 degrees inside, to the great detriment of my health and that of my flatmates. I may be lucky enough to sit at the heart of power for the next five years, but the one in three people outside of this chamber who continue to live in fuel poverty often do not get the opportunity to be heard.

During the election, I spoke about the need to bring forward an upgraded heat in buildings bill to take over from the Government's previous half-hearted attempt. So, let today's debate fire the starting pistol for what could be a swift and resolute race to the finish line, where everybody gets a warm home. Let this be the first step to a better future. A truly transformative energy agenda will include a heat in buildings bill that involves not only ambitious targets but a clear delivery mechanism, actual meaningful standards and triggers that clearly lay out when buildings must be upgraded. It is all well and good to set targets, but what exactly is the point when the Government misses them and our constituents suffer?

As my colleague Kristopher Leask argued earlier, we must also stand absolutely firmly on the side of communities and unashamedly back community and public shared energy ownership. What is the point in living in a land that is so energy rich if those riches are not shared among the masses? Who does our energy wealth belong to if not the working class men and women of this land?

As the minister has previously said, we cannot let the robbery of Scotland's energy wealth happen for a second time. While we continue to fawn over the wealth of our northern neighbour, politicians happily sold Scotland's energy wealth down the river 50 years ago. Let us together stop that from happening again. Today, we are proposing setting up a ScotWind wealth fund, seeded with the £300 million from the ScotWind leasing options. That is us firing the first shot—it is the first step on what should not be a complex path to a warmer future. Scotland's energy wealth must be in Scotland's hands, not gambled away to faceless international corporations. Our proposal could unlock hundreds of millions of pounds for our struggling communities and local authorities to invest in our wellbeing.

I hope that the chamber will join me in firing that starting pistol, and I hope to see members vote for the Scottish Greens' amendment.

16:34

Duncan Massey (North East Scotland)

(Reform): It has been an interesting debate, albeit a bit of a cut and paste from the last time that we debated energy. There has perhaps been a slight increase in energy reality—but not much. I was particularly disappointed that Kate Campbell and Lloyd Melville did not seem to grasp the overall view from Dieter Helm, who made an excellent presentation to the Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee, but which has been cherry picked. I urge everyone in the chamber to seek out and view that evidence, as it was excellent. I reiterate the simple reality of much of what Dieter Helm said: that, across Scotland, across the UK and indeed across most of Europe—

Kate Campbell: Will the member take an intervention?

Duncan Massey: Not right now.

In much of Europe, the energy system is simply not working. In Scotland and the UK, we have some of the highest energy prices in the world. That is causing huge cost of living challenges and huge damage to all our industries and many businesses. We have a growing reliance on imported energy, particularly via liquefied natural gas tankers and French interconnectors, and we have a fragile, overstretched grid, which is struggling to provide enough energy for growth opportunities such as AI, and that is even as we deindustrialise and reduce our energy usage. Increasingly, we are getting close to having blackouts. That will only get worse, especially in Scotland, where we are reliant on two conventional plants for power, both of which are forecast to close in the 2030s.

Why are our costs so high? It is true that Europe has a structural shortage of oil and gas, which is obviously made worse by the conflicts in Ukraine and Iran causing temporary price spikes, but the main underlying issue is that we have gone down a route that prioritises net zero above all else, pushing intermittent renewables too far and too quickly, with no understanding of the costs needed to upgrade the underlying system.

The direct costs of renewables are extremely high, as we can see from the CFDs, but the main problem is the huge system costs that are required to support intermittent power.

Kate Campbell: Will the member take an intervention?

Duncan Massey: I will now.

Kate Campbell: Duncan Massey said that the cost of renewables is high, and he said that my colleague and I did not understand what Professor Helm told us, but the professor said that new nuclear is costing

“£16 billion per gigawatt, while gas costs £500 million to £1 billion per gigawatt.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee*, 1 September 2026; c 11.]

Does Duncan Massey accept that that is a fact?

Duncan Massey: On that point, Dieter Helm was talking about Hinkley Point, a single project. He was making the point that, if we do nuclear, we have to do multiple plants at the same time, rather than one at a time.

Kate Campbell: Is that a yes or a no?

Duncan Massey: It is a no.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I ask members who want to make an intervention to do that formally, so that it is on the record and the public can understand the debate.

Duncan Massey: I come back to the point that I was making about the huge costs—and the main costs are the system costs. We need massive capacity—two or three times the capacity that we used to have. We have a massive grid that we seem to think grows on unicorns and does not cost any money. In fact, it costs a huge amount of money, with pylons and battery parks that are not wanted around most of the country, and there are of course huge balancing costs.

The system is not benefiting our communities, as has been asked for, because it is not cheap, it is not home grown and it is not secure. That is doing nothing to reduce global emissions, which is all that counts, because all that we are doing is offshoring emissions to China and other large manufacturing countries around the world.

I am glad that we are now starting to talk about the energy mix. We have talked about having more nuclear and maintaining our oil and gas, with renewables as a complement. Let us talk about oil and gas first. We have a world-leading industry that is being crushed by deliberate policy choices. Despite renewables investment, that industry still provides about 75 per cent of primary energy in this country. Globally, the figure is well above 80 per cent.

We need to acknowledge that, under all possible scenarios, the UK and Scotland will need that oil and gas for decades. Transport fuels, key chemicals and just about every product in this chamber come from oil and gas. They are vital for heating processes and industrial processes. Paradoxically, the more renewables that we have, the more flexible gas back-up we need. We need to maximise the use of our own oil and gas resources, rather than importing them from neighbouring Norway or even further afield. We can do that—the North Sea has a strong and vital future if we choose it. We can use the gas as a key transition fuel, aligning with long-term contracts as we used to do.

I therefore again call for the Parliament to become a vocal champion for the North Sea oil and gas industry—not negative, as it has been in the past, or a fence-sitter at best, as it is now—and to provide unambiguous support for Jackdaw and Rosebank and for new drilling and licences. It should be calling for changes to UK laws if necessary, because the benefits of a stronger UK oil and gas industry are enormous: continued jobs, major tax revenues, a greater balance of payments and, of course, energy security, with the opportunity to reduce imports and costs.

Lloyd Melville: Would the member take an intervention on that point?

Duncan Massey: Yes.

Lloyd Melville: I thank the member for his generosity. He is talking about energy security. Does he recognise the official projections that, even if new North Sea fields are developed, the UK's reliance on imported gas is set to rise from 55 per cent today to more than 90 per cent by 2050, even in a max-production scenario?

Duncan Massey: The max-production scenario does not take into account new investment, but my point is that we can eliminate LNG tankers and use gas from Norway as a balance. Either way, it would be a great improvement to our security.

The decline of North Sea production has much wider repercussions. Over the summer, I visited Grangemouth's world-scale petrochemical plant, as I am sure that many members have. In terms of efficiency, it is a top-tier plant—one of the best in Europe—but it is challenged by high costs from carbon taxes and high energy costs. The decline of production is ensuring that feedstock increasingly has to come from the US—it is US ethane. As North Sea decline increases, that percentage is going up and, ultimately, over time, those high costs, and the fact that we are reliant on US imports, will threaten the future of the plant.

We have talked about jobs, but I think that the Government is becoming increasingly desperate on the lack of renewables jobs coming through; we have seen headlines about it this week. Those jobs, in terms of timing, number, location and pay, are simply not on the same scale as those in the oil and gas industry.

In conclusion, if we want real economic growth, jobs and energy security, we need pragmatic energy policies. Policy should focus on cheap, abundant and reliable energy, and it should be driven by reality, not wishful thinking. It should acknowledge our current failing system, which has driven the highest energy costs in the world, and get the energy mix right. That is best delivered by maximising our oil and gas resources in the medium term and transitioning to a nuclear-

powered system over the long term, with renewables playing a complementary, rather than a dominant, role.

16:42

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): As we draw the debate to a close, I want to reflect on a shared frustration that we have heard from members across the chamber about the industrial opportunities that Scotland has already let slip through our fingers. I am reminded, with the economic history that has been relayed today, of one of the great pivotal moments in our nation's economic history: the point in 1979 when the SNP voted with the Conservatives to bring down the Labour Government and fundamentally change the trajectory of Britain's North Sea oil and gas future.

It is important to remember that that was at a point when the British National Oil Corporation, the UK's state company in the North Sea, was destined for privatisation in 1982. If we had not had that moment in history, we would still have had the UK equivalent of Statoil or Equinor today. That is one of the great what-ifs of our economic history, in my view.

When we look at the massive build-out of onshore and offshore wind, we see a stark failure of industrial strategy. We should look back to the 1980s as well, for a tantalising glimpse of what we lost. It was a Glasgow engineering firm, James Howden & Co, that pioneered some of the world's first commercial wind turbines, successfully exporting them, from Orkney to the wind farms of California. We had the head start, the engineering brilliance and the manufacturing capacity, yet a lack of sustained Government backing saw that early advantage squandered. The industry drifted across the North Sea to Denmark during the 1990s, although the recent announcement by Vestas to construct a nacelle factory in Leith earlier this year is massive for the country, and most welcome.

Today, despite possessing a massive share of Europe's wind potential, we have too often imported the technology and exported the economic benefits. We leased our natural resources but wholly missed the industrial prize. As we look to the next frontier of our energy future, we cannot afford to repeat that mistake.

As we have heard from across the chamber, energy is the lifeblood of modern society, from the power driving heavy manufacturing to the electricity that boils our kettles. However, amid global market turmoil, we must recognise that we in this Parliament are not powerless. Far too often, we focus on multilateral gridlock across the UK or Europe while we fail to unleash the powers that are

held by central and local government right here in Scotland. The UK Labour Government has put Scotland at the heart of its energy strategy, committing billions of pounds in investment, launching GB Energy and upgrading our grid.

Lloyd Melville: How central is Scotland to the heart of the energy policy when virtually none of the promised jobs at GB Energy has materialised and not a single penny of the £200 million that was promised for Grangemouth has been spent?

Paul Sweeney: The member may be familiar with project management constraints. It is important to note that it takes time to develop such massive projects. At least the company has been launched, unlike the state energy company that the Scottish Government committed to launch, which never materialised. Let us see how that develops. I hope that the member will fully support the scaling up of GB Energy and the unleashing of the opportunities. To realise that vision, the Scottish Government needs to step up. It must speed up planning, work constructively with trade unions and industry, invest in skills and ensure that communities can share in our natural wealth.

To see what is possible when we match natural resources with industrial strategy, we should look to our own proud history in Scotland and in my city of Glasgow. It was in Glasgow that James Watt developed a separate condenser and where we turbocharged the first industrial revolution. Decades later, engineers such as John Elder revolutionised marine propulsion in Scotland, for the first time in human history unifying shipbuilding and engine building, at the Fairfield works in Govan.

However, Glasgow not only innovated in private enterprise but led the world in municipal utilities. When private companies struggled to deliver at scale in the late 19th century, public initiatives stepped in. Under the guidance of figures such as Lord Kelvin, the Glasgow Corporation took municipal control of electricity, establishing public generating stations. What could have remained a luxury for private shareholders became a public utility, owned and used by all Glaswegians.

As we transition to net zero, once again, Glasgow has everything to give and everything to gain. Today, local companies such as Star Refrigeration and Malin Group are developing groundbreaking large river-source heat pumps. A prime example of that is the B-Neatpump, a pioneering barge-based heat pump. For years, extracting clean heat from rivers was hindered by the scarcity and high cost of prime riverside land. The B-Neatpump solves that ingeniously by floating the heat pump and abstraction equipment directly on the river, providing a modular solution to district heating. Supported by Scottish

Enterprise, the concept is already being demonstrated on the River Clyde in Clydebank. Unlike the wind turbine roll-out, that economic prize can be kept in Scotland. The floating technology could be deployed in dozens of cities, allowing urban centres to harness the ambient heat right on our doorsteps.

Deindustrialisation scarred our urban communities through the 1980s. However, municipal energy generation offers a path to reindustrialise our country. In order to manufacture those barges here, our deep maritime heritage, sustained by skilled shipbuilders on the Clyde, provides the exact workforce needed to construct the new infrastructure. By establishing local municipal energy companies—as the SNP Scottish Government has often committed to doing—and expanding district heat networks, we can cut bills, create high-skilled jobs, reduce emissions and return the profits directly to local communities. It is one of the best examples of community wealth building in action that I can think of.

I urge members to support the Labour amendment and work together to achieve the greener, municipal and highly industrialised energy future that we all need.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Stephen Gethins to wind up the debate on behalf of the Scottish Government.

16:48

Stephen Gethins: I thank colleagues for their contributions to the debate. Overall, it has been a rich debate and a good one.

Daniel Johnson started by saying that we are seeking to do something difficult. He is right: the transition is difficult and we should acknowledge that. That is why, when we look at the progress that has been made over the past few years, we should give due credit to the engineers, businesses and researchers who have made so much of it possible. Like Daniel Johnson, I like to talk about what has happened. That is not to say that there are not big challenges in the future, but sometimes we need to stand still and acknowledge the work that has gone on.

Daniel Johnson was also right to talk about the need for candour and collegiality. I am glad that we have had an element of collegiality across the chamber today.

The opportunity for renewables is here now. Renewables are delivering jobs right now. That is why it was a little disappointing to hear some of the remarks from those in the Reform party, including Lord Offord. Remarks about “net stupid zero” do not help anybody when we are trying to have a

discussion about things that impact on people's jobs across all our constituencies. I was quite struck by that.

Malcolm Offord: Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: If the good baron would like to challenge that, I would be happy to hear it.

Malcolm Offord: OEUK has said that jobs in green energy are running at half the rate of North Sea oil and gas jobs, and they are at half the salaries. They are also paid for by subsidies on people's bills. Are they real jobs?

Stephen Gethins: I find that astonishing. I talked about the 105,000 jobs that were noted in the CBI report. Those jobs are paying for folks' bills, and they bring in excellence and expertise that will have benefits around the world.

I will come on to the Conservatives in a moment, but first—although I do not want to embarrass him—I will explain where I disagree with Liam Kerr. I think that we have to get the balance right and get the benefits from the renewables sector, which is doing groundbreaking, amazing work in Aberdeen and elsewhere. We can disagree on policy, but those who are conducting that work deserve support from across the chamber, regardless of where we find that we disagree.

Malcolm Offord: Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: I find it quite striking that Lord Offord is denying the Government that he was a member of, not briefly—not briefly at all. For three years, he was a member of that Government, and now he seeks to deny it. The less we hear from Lord Offord in this debate, the better.

On a more positive note, I accept Kristopher Leask's motion. I look forward to discussing that with him, as I do with other colleagues. I mentioned issues such as those involving TNUOS—transmission network use of system charges—and others in my speech. That was deliberate. TNUOS is having a very significant impact on the sector, not least in Orkney, where he lives. It is stopping jobs and investment being delivered right in his home patch, and I can understand why he is concerned about that.

For the record—and this is important—Mr Leask asked me whether I would sign off on a strategic spatial energy plan that does not deliver for Scotland. First of all, I do not sign off on those, unfortunately. I wish I did; I wish we had more powers. However, I will not endorse an SSEP that does not deliver for Scotland, and I hope that he feels reassured by that.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: I will take Liam Kerr's intervention, but I will take as few interventions as I can, because there were a lot of contributions.

Liam Kerr: I am keen to understand Mr Gethins' position on the transmission charges, which we have heard a lot about. Transmission charges fund the building of more grid, and I think everyone accepts that we need that. The member seems to want those companies to pay less, but someone else will have to pay for the grid upgrades. Who does the minister think should pay more?

Stephen Gethins: I think that there is a way of finding a more balanced approach. I want to see a European approach and European alignment on that. There is an opportunity at the EU leaders summit, where electricity could be on the market, but the fact that transmission charging is stopping development and stopping people getting into jobs is not a new debate. It has been going on for years under Conservative and Labour administrations, and we know that it is a challenge.

On Liam Kerr's other points, although we will not agree on everything, I welcome his constructive approach and I agree with him on the damage that Reform's dogma is doing. There is so much on which we can agree with each other and so many areas where we can have constructive rapport.

I should also say that I had a very good meeting with RGU. Members will know, based on my background, that I think that engagement between policy makers and academia is welcome.

I also thank Sanne Dijkstra-Downie for her comments. We have said that we will endorse her amendment today. I take the point that she raised about community benefits. I have seen for myself—from Innerwick in the south of Scotland, to Shetland and elsewhere—that communities need to see those benefits. I welcome her remarks and I look forward to working with her.

Kate Campbell spoke about the reality of climate change, and Reform members would do well to listen because climate change is having a direct impact today—that fact is something we must all agree on. She also spoke about the impact of Margaret Thatcher's policies. I would also go back to Harold Wilson and Ted Heath—of course, it was our Labour colleagues who took us back to the 1970s.

Regarding Paul McLennan's point, he will know that I was recently in his constituency. It was good to meet stakeholders who were clearly aware of the fantastic work that Mr McLennan is doing. I accept his invitation to come and learn about skills in his constituency, and I applaud his work on establishing the East Lothian energy forum. I look forward to meeting members of the forum and discussing that further.

I thank Donald MacKinnon for his comments about the huge contribution made by community benefit, and I note the leadership that has been shown by communities in his constituency of Na h-Eileanan an Iar. There is a lot to learn. I note that the First Minister announced the expansion of the CARES funding when he was in the Western Isles, and I think it was right that he did that there because it acknowledges the work of some of the communities that Mr MacKinnon represents. I hope that he will not mind if I also acknowledge the work of his predecessor Alasdair Allan.

Emma Roddick used the word “opportunity” and was right to talk about opportunity and diversity in her constituency, where whisky distillers and farmers are making such a big contribution. She mentioned Hannah Mary Goodlad’s visit to Ardersier during the summer recess. I also made a visit there during the summer, so I must have a think about my publicity when I do those things. I was so impressed by what I saw and the work that was going on.

Emma Roddick was also right to raise the issue of Ming Yang. I have called upon the UK Government to do what it has done elsewhere and to look at having guardrails. In all collegiality, I continue urging the UK Government to do that, and I would be very happy to meet with ministers and to work with them on that.

Jenni Minto spoke about community benefit and said that communities must be listened to as part of that process. Her point was well made.

Heather Anderson made an excellent point about the city of Dundee. It may be remiss of me to say so as a minister, but I think she is right to say that Dundee is perfectly poised in many ways and especially in having the opportunity we are talking about here. I look forward to joining her to visit the port of Dundee but, although I agree with Heather Anderson on most things, I kindly remind her that the port sits in my constituency and not in hers. However, she made a good point.

Monica Lennon was so right to talk about climate denial. It is important that she raised that subject and spoke about the impact of young people, because they will live with the consequences for so much longer.

Lloyd Melville asked the question, “Cui bono?” or, “Who profits?” He is right about the impact on Angus and about how much Angus has to add to the discussion. We must fulfil our potential. He was intervened on by Michelle Campbell, who made a really important point about decommissioning. That issue is now part of my portfolio and the point was well made.

I turn to my final remarks, knowing that I do not have long, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): You have 90 seconds.

Stephen Gethins: I will do my very best.

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie made some points about seeing the benefits of electrification. Iris Duane brought up the important issue of the impact and human side of fuel poverty, another issue that sits in my portfolio.

I am not sure that Paul Sweeney can blame the SNP for Labour’s inability to beat the Tories at elections, whether in 1979 or since. We have always done our bit to beat the Conservatives. He also bemoaned the impact that Westminster Governments of the 1970s, 80s and 90s had on the energy sector. I welcome him to the party but was hoping for a more positive debate.

Regarding the Labour, Green and Liberal Democrat amendments, I would like to have a presumption in favour of responsible and constructive opposition amendments, which is why we are happy to endorse those today.

I want to endorse one other thing briefly. It is a privilege to hold this role and I have been so pleased with the engagement that I have had from most members and most parties in this Parliament. We are sending out to industry, stakeholders and communities the powerful message that the opportunity is here right now and it will deliver so much for Scotland. I look forward to working with everybody on it.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on Scotland’s energy opportunity.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson):

There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S7M-01114.3, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01114, in the name of Stephen Gethins, on Scotland's energy opportunity, 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.

17:00

Meeting suspended.

17:03

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the vote on amendment S7M-01114.3, in the name of Daniel Johnson. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
 Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
 Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)

Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
 Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
 Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
 Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
 Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
 Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
 Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
 Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Lorna Slater]
 Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
 Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
 Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
 Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01114.3, in the name of Daniel Johnson—I ask folk to listen to the result, please—is: For 76, Against 40, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01114.5, in the name of Malcolm Offord, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01114, in the name of Stephen Gethins, on Scotland's energy opportunity, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app would not connect. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

For

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
 Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
 Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
 Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
 Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
 Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
 Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
 Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)

Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
 Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
 Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
 MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
 Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Lorna Slater]
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
 Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
 Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
 Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
 Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01114.5, in the name of Malcolm Offord, is: For 24, Against 91, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01114.1, in the name of Kristopher Leask, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01114, in the name of Stephen Gethins, on Scotland's energy opportunity, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Kate Nevens (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. Your vote has been recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
 Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
 Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
 Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
 Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
 Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
 Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
 MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)

Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
 Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Lorna Slater]
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
 Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
 Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
 Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
 Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
 Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

Abstentions

Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
 Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
 Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
 Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
 MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)

Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01114.1, in the name of Kristopher Leask, is: For 83, Against 24, Abstentions 8.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01114.4, in the name of Liam Kerr, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01114, in the name of Stephen Gethins, on Scotland's energy opportunity, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Malcolm Offord (West Scotland) (Reform): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I could not get connected. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I could not connect. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

For

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
 Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
 Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
 Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
 Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
 Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
 Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
 Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
 Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
 MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
 Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Lorna Slater]
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)

Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
 Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
 Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Abstentions

Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
 Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
 Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
 Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
 MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01114.4, in the name of Liam Kerr, is: For 25, Against 83, Abstentions 8.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01114.2, in the name of Sanne Dijkstra-Downie, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01114, in the name of Stephen Gethins, on Scotland's energy opportunity, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh North Western) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app would not connect. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. Your vote has been recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)

Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
 Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
 Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
 Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
 Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
 Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
 Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
 Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
 MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
 Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Lorna Slater]
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)

Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
 Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
 Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
 Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
 Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
 Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01114.2, in the name of Sanne Dijkstra-Downie, is: For 91, Against 25, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01114, in the name of Stephen Gethins, on Scotland's energy opportunity, as amended, 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)
 Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
 Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
 Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
 Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
 Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
 Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
 Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Lennan, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
 Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
 MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)

Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green) [Proxy vote cast by Lorna Slater]
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
 Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
 Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
 Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
 Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
 Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
 Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
 MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
 Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
 Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
 Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
 Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
 Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S7M-01114, in the name of Stephen Gethins, on Scotland's energy opportunity, as amended, is: For 90, Against 25, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Scotland's energy transformation provides a generational opportunity to grow the economy, create more high-quality jobs, strengthen communities across Scotland, and place Scotland at the heart of the solution to Europe's energy security challenge; calls on the UK Government to deliver a stable, transparent policy, regulatory and investment environment to enable timely energy deployment in Scotland at scale, and to deepen Scotland's relationship with the rest of Europe on energy; agrees to work together to accelerate energy deployment and ensure that the full benefits of Scotland's energy transformation are realised for the people of Scotland; recognises that Scotland's energy future must be built on a secure, affordable and sustainable mix of sources for decades to come; welcomes the UK Government's commitment to putting Scotland at the heart of the UK's renewable energy generation, through a modern industrial strategy, billions of pounds of public and private investment, and upgrades to the grid to improve electricity transmission; calls on the Scottish Government to speed up planning, to work with trade unions and industry and to invest in the skills that Scotland's energy sector needs, and to ensure that local communities share in the wealth generated by Scotland's energy; recognises that energy policy is a largely reserved competence, but accepts that the Scottish Government should do what it can to provide leadership; believes that Scotland's energy future must and will include significant diversification of ownership of its energy system across private, public and community ownership; further believes that a ScotWind Wealth Fund should be established during the current parliamentary term, and that consideration should be given to investing the remaining ScotWind leasing options into the new Wealth Fund, which should be tasked with driving community wealth, public and community ownership, and supply chain development; recognises that work on this transformation also requires urgent action to reduce demand for fossil fuels through the acceleration of electrification and a focus on energy efficiency measures, such as insulation, in order to reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills, and further calls for the Scottish Government's Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments to be made more ambitious than the level set out in the recent working paper, which proposed a real-terms cut compared to the 2014 guidance, based on the principle that people should benefit more from the money that companies make from generating, storing and transmitting renewable energy near them.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. I ask members who are not staying for members' business to please leave the chamber quietly. Thank you.

Queen's Park Glasshouse

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S7M-00899, in the name of Holly Bruce, on save Queen's park glasshouse. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I ask members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises what it sees as the deep cultural, historical and environmental significance of the Queen's Park Glasshouse to the Glasgow Southside constituency and the wider city; notes what it considers to be the significant public support for protecting this cultural heritage asset, evidenced by a Glasgow City Council petition signed by more than 13,000 people; understands that the glasshouse supports a range of crucial community priorities and that maintaining public access is important for heritage preservation, community cohesion, urban greenspace, accessible public toilets and dedicated opportunities for children's play; believes that the safeguarding and sustainable revitalisation of the glasshouse aligns directly with key Scottish Government strategic ambitions, including those under the National Planning Framework 4, the Climate Change Plan and the Health and Social Care Strategy; notes the view that additional investment is required to bring the glasshouse back to its full potential, and further notes calls for the Scottish Government to meet with representatives of the Save Queen's Park Glasshouse campaign and Glasgow City Council to discuss all opportunities for the future of the glasshouse.

17:15

Holly Bruce (Glasgow Southside) (Green): I will start by declaring an interest: I am a sitting councillor on Glasgow City Council.

I thank the campaigners from the save Queen's park glasshouse campaign, some of whom are in the gallery this evening. They have taken time off work and education and travelled through from Glasgow to be here today. I thank them for their tireless campaigning—Glasgow Southside owes them a great deal. I also acknowledge that all seven Glasgow regional MSPs signed their support for the motion. I am pleased that this issue is one that we can agree on across the parties, and I am particularly grateful for Paul Sweeney's support for the campaign.

Every time we allow a public asset to lock its doors, we chip away at the social fabric of our communities. Cities demand that we buy something just to sit down. Free, publicly owned spaces are the vital equaliser in our communities. They are safe, non-transactional places where we can take up space without cost. In privatising or profiteering from public space, we tell working-class people that they must pay to exist and that they do not belong.

Safe, free green spaces are not a luxury; they are a fundamental feminist infrastructure for more equitable cities. Nobody knows that better than folk who live in Glasgow Southside. We have been here before with the threatened closure of public libraries. In the past few months, the save Queen's park glasshouse campaign has worked tirelessly to protect the Queen's park glasshouse. For those who do not know, it is an iconic community venue in my constituency that has been threatened with closure, with Glasgow City Council claiming that the costs of keeping the building open have become unsustainable.

However, this evening, I really want to talk about priorities. Right now, in a world that aims to dehumanise us, I believe that we should be holding on more tightly to our precious public spaces that make us feel more human and connected to those around us, not eroding their funding and allowing them to sit empty, or worse, be sold off to the highest bidder. I do not want to see yet another public asset disappear. I do not want campaigners to have to continue to take time out of their lives to fight for something that it is the Parliament's job—our job—to prioritise.

Queen's park glasshouse is not just a building; it is a crucial civic asset—one whose public value has only become more important in the face of austerity and degrading public assets, many of which have been left to deteriorate and sit abandoned, leaving depressing relics of what could have been scattered across Glasgow and throughout Scotland. My constituents have said loudly, proudly and very clearly that they will not stand by and watch that happen to the glasshouse.

For more than a century, the glasshouse has provided numerous benefits to Glasgow Southside. It has hosted weddings, live music, family events and festivals. It has housed a cafe and a children's soft play area, supported horticultural education and provided a calm, sheltered, green space of refuge for Glasgow residents and visitors.

I have received hundreds of emails from constituents across Glasgow Southside telling me that this really matters to them and asking me to do something about it. What has struck me is not just the volume of emails that I have received but that each person has their own relationship to the glasshouse. Many young people wrote to me to tell me that when they find life in the city really overwhelming, they go there to reflect, restore and just rest, and that the glasshouse is a place of sanctuary in some of the most vulnerable times. While we look to improve the mental health of young people across Scotland, we must listen to them and provide calm spaces to support their wellbeing. Many have said that that is exactly what

the glasshouse is—a coping mechanism in dark times.

That is why the save Queen's park glasshouse campaign has been working tirelessly to prevent the glasshouse from being closed. It is why more than 13,000 people signed a petition to support the campaign's aims to keep the glasshouse publicly owned, publicly run and publicly accessible, with future use developed through meaningful, deep community engagement. The campaigners have also been clear that they want this campaign to result in a space that will continue to provide social, environmental, cultural, educational and wellbeing benefits—the glasshouse ticks all the boxes, really, as it has done for more than a century.

Last month, in my capacity as a local councillor, I lodged a motion at Glasgow City Council that was passed with significant cross-party support. It commits the council to keeping the glasshouse open, at least until the next budget day comes around. However, I do not want us to have to fight to save our public spaces budget to budget, year on year. I do not want our constituents to always need to keep a watchful eye over services that should be thriving.

This is only for now, and I look to the long-term future of the glasshouse and many other public spaces in Glasgow Southside and beyond, such as Govanhill baths and Langside hall. We need to go deeper and look at why our public spaces are in the state that they are in. I have dedicated a lot of my time to this cause. Some might call it political crumbs and a councillor problem, but this is what I am here to do. It is my job to serve my constituents and make our everyday spaces better and, in turn, that will help to make my constituents' lives better.

It is not news to anyone that our councils face chronic underfunding and an inability to raise revenue. We need more funding for local government so that we can make better decisions on the local level. That is the bottom line. We need creative solutions to these problems instead of just saying that there is no money and not doing anything substantive to change it.

If we reformed the council tax, we could have a tax that not only is fairer for people and paid by those who can afford it but raises more money for councils. That should be a priority for the Government. We should be working on the hard stuff.

The funding that is available to councils and communities is often poorly advertised and difficult to access. Take the ENV2 planning framework, which is an example of money that, in theory, is available but is not making its way to the projects that need it most.

The capital block grant from the United Kingdom Government is forecast to fall, year on year. Capital spending for people and place will decrease at a time when community spaces for community cohesion, warmth and mental health are needed more than ever. There is a big opportunity for the new Prime Minister to change that.

Investment in the glasshouse would reward itself time and again. I want to make the Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education and the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic aware that, although I know that there are substantive issues with capital funding, I am here to help to solve those problems and to find a sustainable solution. I would welcome their collaboration, a visit with them to the glasshouse and a solution-focused meeting to protect the people of Glasgow Southside's heritage, wellbeing and community spirit.

I look forward to hearing the reflections of many members this evening and to the debate being the start of a conversation to not only save the glasshouse but open its doors for good. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I must remind members of the public in the gallery that contributions such as clapping are not permitted.

17:23

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): I thank Holly Bruce, the member for Glasgow Southside, for lodging this members' business debate motion. I was pleased to second it, because we are united not just in the defence of that public building but in defence of a principle that was foundational to the creation of the modern city of Glasgow: our great civic assets and our places of beauty, learning and wellbeing belong to the public, and Glasgow City Council has a fundamental duty to be their ultimate guardian on behalf of the public.

Queen's park glasshouse is not just another greenhouse; it is a vital piece of our social and architectural history. Constructed in 1895 by the renowned Partick-based horticultural builder Simpson & Farmer, it has stood for generations as a civic sanctuary in the south side of the city.

When the Victorian city fathers commissioned such structures, they were driven by high-minded ideals. In an era when Glasgow was the workshop of the world, shrouded in industrial smog and soot, municipal glasshouses were constructed as cathedrals of light and nature. They were rooted in the philosophy of rational recreation and the civic gospel: the belief that the working class deserved access to clean air, botanical education and moral uplift. They were designed to provide a democratic

space of beauty and tranquillity, free at the point of use, to improve the physical and mental health of the public.

Those laudable ideals are just as relevant today. The Queen's park glasshouse currently provides immeasurable benefits to the community, and its future potential as a hub for growing, learning, biodiversity, climate action and wellbeing is enormous. The local campaigners here in the gallery who have rallied to save the glasshouse have fought a magnificent campaign, and they have won the right to be heard in the national legislature.

Glasgow City Council has finally committed to consultation, a feasibility study, capital funding bids and community engagement. We welcome those commitments, but as the campaigners have rightly stated, those processes must not become a bureaucratic smokescreen to avoid the central question, which is, who will ultimately be responsible for the glasshouse in the future?

I know all too well the perilous journey of saving such a structure. The Queen's park glasshouse shares a profound connection with another of Glasgow's great lost civic treasures, the Springburn winter gardens, which was built by the exact same firm, Simpson & Farmer, just five years later in 1900. The Springburn winter gardens was once the jewel of the north of Glasgow, built with the same soaring ambition. When I first became involved in the campaign to save the Springburn winter gardens back in 2013, the building had lain derelict for three decades—its spectacular ironwork was rusting, its glass was long gone, surrounded by Heras fencing and municipal apathy.

For 13 years alongside the dedicated group of local trustees, we fought to pull that building back from the brink. We tirelessly lobbied, we scraped together funding for emergency works to keep it standing and we fought a seemingly endless battle against a culture of managed decline. I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved in a major breakthrough in that campaign this year, securing a viable funded path forward to restore the ruined building.

However, it should not require 13 years of exhausting, relentless campaigning by volunteers in their spare time to save a category A-listed publicly owned asset from collapsing altogether. People who have been involved in the struggle to save the nearby Govanhill baths over the past quarter of a century will know exactly what I mean.

Community trusts and local collaborations are wonderful. Indeed, they are essential for community wellbeing, but we cannot allow local authorities to use community empowerment as a euphemism for municipal abdication of

responsibility. Handing over the keys of complex heritage-listed and capital-intensive glasshouses entirely to underresourced volunteer groups is often setting them up to fail. That does not mean, however, that the council must rigidly operate every square inch of the site alone. We must look to the future through a lens of collaboration and modern municipal enterprise.

There is immense opportunity here to be flexible and innovative. We can and should collaborate with social enterprises, charities and local organisations to diversify the utilisation of the wider glasshouse complex. Whether that involves partnering to run a community cafe, leasing ancillary spaces for urban agriculture projects, running a botanical gin distillery or collaborating with educational groups, such partnerships can generate vital revenue and breathe dynamic new life into buildings if appropriately planned and designed with the community.

However, that flexibility must be built on an unshakeable foundation: the fundamental principle of public ownership and control. The core public spaces of the magnificent glasshouse, which are open to the public today thanks to the campaign, must remain publicly operated, publicly managed and free to access. The council must be the ultimate guarantor of the building's future.

We must also acknowledge that the vulnerability of the Queen's park glasshouse and the wider erosion of our parks funding is not happening in a vacuum. It is a direct symptom of the disproportionate austerity inflicted on Glasgow City Council by the Scottish Government. Over the past decade, Glasgow's budget has been slashed by more than 10 per cent—literally decimated. When the Government sets roughly 80 per cent of the local authority's funding, it leaves the council with an impossible dilemma.

We cannot allow our Victorian civic inheritance to become the collateral damage of those cuts. We need only to look to the east end and the devastating closure of the People's Palace winter gardens in 2018 to see the cost of inaction. That closure robbed the people of the east end and Glasgow as a whole of another civic historic glasshouse, leaving it to languish while the council struggled to find the funding to keep it going.

We cannot allow the south side to suffer the same fate by stealth. We are witnessing the gradual erosion of the civic infrastructure that led the poet John Betjeman to famously describe Glasgow as

"the greatest Victorian city in the world".

Today, too often, we see these civic assets treated merely as liabilities on a spreadsheet rather than the engines of community wealth that they were

meant to be.

The conclusion here is straightforward.

David Linden (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Paul Sweeney: I will give way, if I may.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I am sorry. Paul Sweeney is well over his time.

Paul Sweeney: Apologies. I would love to give way.

We have won the right to be heard here. Now we need to win the future of the glasshouse. The council must embrace the opportunities of municipal enterprise and partner with the community to unlock the building's potential while retaining the ultimate responsibility for its ownership and the operation of its core public spaces.

Keep the glasshouse publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accessible. Anything less is a betrayal of Glasgow's municipal socialist heritage and its people.

17:29

Kim Schmulian (Glasgow) (Reform): In principle, I am happy to support Holly Bruce's motion; indeed, I thank her for lodging it.

As someone who has worked to look after heritage buildings, I know what challenges they present and what is required to make them sustainable. What is required is not only money but love, care and active community support. Therefore, a breathing space—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I am sorry, Ms Schmulian, but could you raise your microphone?

Kim Schmulian: My apologies. Did members hear the opening part of my speech?

Members: Yes.

Kim Schmulian: From me, it is a yes to breathing space for a feasibility study but an absolute no to getting Glasgow Life involved, because strategic alignment with council objectives is not the same as a business case, which is what is required for the glasshouses to flourish.

I say this not to have a go at the council but as someone who knows: for any potential community business to flourish, it needs to have stakeholder partnerships with the private sector. A one-size-fits-all approach will simply not cut it. I will tell members why. These days, people who spend money on events want some personal input and

flexibility when it comes to catering, drinks suppliers, entertainment and so on. They want to plan their event to their own price point. In addition, when a community business works with a dedicated list of suppliers and stakeholders as a multipurpose venue, they in turn do the business's marketing for it.

The south side of Glasgow is buzzing at the moment, with many start-ups in places such as Sinclair Drive and Strathbungo. The transformation of the old Victoria infirmary into flats, with more development planned for Battlefield, means that the market is expanding, and residents and visitors will look for more green space, better access to the park, more pedestrian areas and also more parking. While people like me have retreated from the city centre, local community businesses have flourished. If residents are willing to spend £5 on a matcha latte in some shop front, they will do it at a cafe in the glasshouse.

In considering the glasshouse's future, there are positive and negative examples in the south side to look at. I was on the committee of Langside Halls, which is a project that often seems endless. Its drawbacks include major fabric challenges, a poor location with no exclusive green space and, most notably, its size. Govanhill baths is another example of a project that is not a sustainable business concept. After many years of going from funding application to funding application, there is still no conclusion. A plan with a revenue model attached moves in years.

By contrast, Newlands park is flourishing, with the privately run cafe and the community group Friends of Newlands Park working together with voluntary Scottish tennis bodies for the restoration of the tennis courts adjacent to the cafe.

My final example is Pollokshields Burgh Hall Trust in Maxwell Park, where I acted as chief executive for three years, increasing its turnover to £300,000. The building was acquired by a community group when Strathclyde Regional Council wound up. With a lottery grant for repairs, the building opened in the mid-1990s with a clear business plan and community support. It offered on-site overnight accommodation in the form of luxury wedding suites for events in renovated park-keeper cottages. A varied list of trusted suppliers offered a variety of hospitality packages that were approved to suit every ethnicity and taste, from curries for mehndis to steak for weddings, as well as vegan options. As some of those suppliers to the venue had their own following, they brought business to the trust. As a result, little marketing was required. People would often tell me that they booked the burgh hall because they knew that all profit was ploughed back into the community business. Most people in Glasgow know someone

who has been to a wedding or a similar event at the burgh hall.

I do not fully know what facilities the glasshouse has, as I was prevented from doing a thorough on-site investigation when someone found out that I was a member of Reform. However, if the Kibble Palace can achieve what it has achieved, I am sure that Queen's park glasshouse can, too.

Nobody in the south side is short of banners, hashtags or public meetings. What we are short of is people who are willing to say the words "commercial" or "profit" without flinching. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I ask people in the gallery not to contribute or they may be asked to leave.

17:34

Iris Duane (Glasgow) (Green): I, too, was proud to second the motion. Perhaps Holly Bruce, Paul Sweeney and I should have shared notes before the debate, because I cannot imagine that members will hear much that we have not heard in their fantastic contributions.

I must say that I am disappointed to find myself here on this fine Thursday evening. I say that not because of the glasshouse, nor because of the cohort of incessant activists who have marked their ground and protected their community, or, of course, the hard work of my Green colleague Holly Bruce in her capacity as a councillor and an MSP to empower the movement, but because of the underlying topic of the debate.

Just yesterday, barely 24 hours ago, this chamber heard powerful speeches on the need for community, togetherness, integration and local pride. Yet, today, those notions hit the cold, hard reality of what they mean in practice. How can we build community with no community space? Where is local pride when local areas are left to atrophy? Is it really togetherness if we are only consistently coming together to fight back against losing our spaces?

I am starting to feel a bit like a broken record in this place, but this must be highlighted. What happened at the glasshouse is not one isolated case; it is a continuation of the successive failures to protect our built heritage and community spaces, to build an environment that everyone can thrive in and to reject managed decline. It is the same story with the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Trongate 103, the Hillhead Baptist church and, most recently—although the situation has been questioned desperately by almost all Opposition members in this chamber, including me—the People's Palace and the winter gardens in the east end.

We have all seen what happens when we gamble with our publicly owned assets and what happens to our communities when we leave them behind in order to simply balance the books. Slow austerity is still austerity. I am glad that our council has chosen to protect the space, but it must follow its own strategies and protect all our community-owned assets, with support from this place.

Investing in our spaces is investing in our future. It means investing in the social lives of our children, reducing isolation for the elderly and working towards a more collegiate and coherent society. I need not remind colleagues, nor those in the gallery, of the disgraceful scenes that we have seen across our great city in recent months. Just last week, affordable housing was set on fire due to misinformation surrounding refugees and asylum seekers. The last thing that we need right now is to reduce the ability of our communities to come together. Let us not isolate in the age of disinformation. Let us not give up on vibrant and thriving communities, which every one of my constituents deserves access to.

Before I end this speech, I must honour the members of the save Queen's park glasshouse campaign, some of whom join us in the gallery today. To them, I say: your continued drive to save this community asset is inspiring, not just to myself, but to the thousands of people who have followed this campaign. Let the work that we do here in this chamber, and the work that is done in Glasgow City Council, make sure that you never need to come out again to access your basic right to community.

17:37

Michelle Campbell (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am an elected member of Renfrewshire Council—I promise that that will be relevant to the conversation. It also states that I am a nurse in the national health service, which is also relevant to the points I am going to make.

As the member for Renfrewshire North and Cardonald, I am in the unique position of representing a constituency in which Renfrewshire and Glasgow come together—that can sometimes be a controversial statement in itself. However, although the glasshouse is not something that I have had to talk about before, I have enjoyed going to it. It is one of those unique offerings that, as an east coaster who is now in the west, I found absolutely intriguing when I had the opportunity to see it.

The issue reminds us of the importance of heritage assets and the need to recognise Glasgow's specific heritage. I felt such warmth

when I was learning the history of the glasshouse. I am not going to go over the things that members have already said about that history, because they have spoken eloquently about it, and much better than I could. Instead, I want to draw members' attention to the fact that listening to communities has always been my bread and butter—it is what has mattered to me in the representation that I have offered—and I think that we should recognise how loudly this community has spoken and how hard it has worked in order to raise the issue and, more importantly, get positive action.

Iris Duane spoke very well about community cohesion, and I align myself completely with her comments. In order to get rid of bad-faith actors, it is important that we all come together on that point.

David Linden: I, too, pay tribute to Holly Bruce. I am unashamedly an east-end politician, and people who know Glasgow will know that crossing the river is the kind of thing that we need to take our passports for. However, all that I would say to Ms Bruce—and, indeed, to my fellow Glasgow MSPs—is that they should take heart and take hope from what has happened with the Tollcross winter gardens. There is now a beautiful nursery attached to it, and, whereas it used to be an absolute wreck, it has now become a vibrant space. Although I will not seek to cross the River Clyde—I am unashamedly a parochial east ender—I would say that members should take heart, because that example shows what can be done.

Michelle Campbell: I thank the member for his comments. He is absolutely entitled to his views, and if he wants to get his passport, I am sure it will carry him over that way.

I will get back on point. As has been said, this is about mental health, but it is also about physical health. Where I disagree with some of Kim Schmulian's commentary is in relation to people being willing to pay the same price elsewhere for a coffee. We do not want to create exclusion in our communities and exclude people from spaces that we have created in order to be inclusive. It has been made clear that, where there are opportunities to look for investment, that should be done collaboratively with the community. Community empowerment is powerful when it is done well and done right.

Public service reform is a major part of the Scottish Government's focus, and this is an opportunity for us to look at how we utilise community spaces, places and people, and their skills and experiences, to make Scotland better. Ultimately, that is really important.

As well as welcoming the minister to his new role, I welcome Councillor Ricky Bell to his new role at Glasgow City Council. It is important to set

the tone right and well. Consultation is due, although I appreciate that a date has not been set for it yet, and I encourage all stakeholders, both groups and individuals, to be heard as part of that. When Ricky Bell made his statement today, he expressed clearly his dedication to being a champion for the people of Glasgow and to working collaboratively with communities. I know that the proof will be in the pudding; however, given that he has only been in post for an afternoon, I will give him a bit of time to gain that bit of pace. He has been a councillor for a long time and is aware of the realities of these situations. I am sure that my good friend in Glasgow City Council, the new council leader, will open his door to those discussions, to make sure that those things are done with communities.

I look forward to seeing how the local communities whose representatives are in the gallery today, as well as the wider movement, work alongside local political leaders—whether the councillors in the wards or the wider council—to develop a long-term plan so that this situation does not happen again. The people's palace is a really good example of where, even with good intentions, structural complexities can cause delays. We do not want to have that situation in the future.

We all have places in our patches with these issues—I could mention several even in Renfrewshire. For the greater good of everyone, we need a more proactive approach.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I call the minister to respond to the debate. In doing so, I welcome him to his new role.

17:42

The Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education (Alyn Smith): Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. I am very proud to represent the Scottish Government in responding to the debate, and I am very glad to be responding to such a positive debate, in which there really is a lot of consensus across the chamber from all points of the compass.

Holly Bruce made a powerful speech, and I disagreed with nothing in it. I am glad to see that the Glasgow MSPs are united on this issue. Paul Sweeney had a lot of good ideas, and I pay tribute to his advocacy for the built environment across Glasgow and elsewhere. Over the years, he has had a lot of good ideas about new uses for the building, and I think that has to be where we all turn our minds going forward. He also made a powerful point about public ownership and control of the space, which was echoed by my friend Michelle Campbell. I, too, am concerned about the privatisation and commercialisation of the public realm. That is not what we, as a nation, want to

see. We need to preserve our heritage and our spaces, and we must make sure that they are free to access. I will come on to Glasgow City Council in relation to that point shortly.

Kim Schmullian made a very good point when she said that this is not just about a building, but about love, care and active community support. That is a powerful ethos. She also talked about partnership with the private sector, and I am very open to that.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I, too, welcome the minister to his role. In relation to his reflection on a member's speech about the role of community, does he share with me a deep discomfort with the gratuitous insults that a Reform member made in the chamber yesterday against the community of Govanhill, talking down everything about that community and insulting not only its representatives but its residents? Does he think that the member's speech this evening might have been improved if it had included an apology for those remarks?

Alyn Smith: I am doing my best to achieve consensus in the debate, but I am in furious agreement with Patrick Harvie—yes.

I believe that community assets are the future. I am very supportive of Stirling, the place that I know best, transferring assets from the council to the community. However, there must be a sustainable plan for the asset, it must be free for the public to access and it needs to wash its face, because we all have budgetary challenges.

Iris Duane made several good points, particularly about the need for community spaces, with which I am in strong agreement.

My friend Michelle Campbell made a powerful speech and several great points, particularly in recognising how hard the community has worked to be heard. I am very glad to see the community campaigners here and to respond to their concerns. She also made points about commercialised and privatised public space, which is very much at the forefront of my mind.

David Linden made a really powerful point about the Tollcross winter gardens. There are solutions to this matter and a lot of good examples of stuff being done.

The Queen's park glasshouse has been part of Glasgow life for more than a century. I am a Glaswegian and my dad is from Queen's Park. If you go back far enough, generations of families have happy memories of visiting the glasshouse and learning, meeting and finding enjoyment there. Many people have powerful memories associated with it, and that connection really matters.

However, although we are united in wanting the space to be preserved and to flourish, we need to recognise the challenges as well: it requires substantial investment. Issues relating to its condition and long-term sustainability are long standing. Everyone who cares about the future of the glasshouse shares that same starting point: we want to protect this important heritage asset and give it the best possible chance of a sustainable future. The Scottish Government recognises the importance of historic buildings and public heritage spaces—of course we do. Across Scotland, communities are grappling with similar challenges: many historic buildings require substantial investment at a time when public finances remain under pressure.

Paul Sweeney: I welcome the minister to his post and thank him for giving way. An interesting example nearby might be the Queen's park arena. The original arena was destroyed by a fire in 1996, but the community councils around the area took control of the site and developed a new public asset, which is managed by a community interest, not-for-profit company called Inhouse Event Productions. That shows that there can be ways to activate a venue and make it self-sustaining while retaining some degree of public control and ownership of it. Of course, there is a balance to be carefully struck between keeping it in the council and shirking responsibility altogether.

Alyn Smith: I really could not agree more. Community ownership of sustainable assets will be a great thing for a lot of communities the length and breadth of Scotland, not only in Glasgow.

I am grateful for the engagement that I have had from Glasgow City Council.

Holly Bruce: The minister mentioned the need for capital funding. I laid out in my speech a few options that could be explored in relation to council tax reform, ENV2 money in the planning framework and capital funding from the UK Government. Is the minister open to sitting down with me and the glasshouse campaigners to discuss those options, and will he agree to meet me in Queen's park glasshouse?

Alyn Smith: I am grateful for being put on the spot and am very happy to agree. I am conscious that I am standing in for the cabinet secretary, Màiri McAllan, so we might have a discussion about who should meet Ms Bruce. I am very supportive of that idea and I know that the cabinet secretary is as well.

Glasgow City Council has made a commitment: it has primary responsibility for and ownership of the building. It will keep the building in public ownership and explore the long-term financial options, and the glasshouse will remain open while that process is under way.

The arguments that have been made today remind us of the value of the glasshouse, which cannot be measured only in financial terms. We need that public realm and a sustainable future for it. That is why the Scottish Government continues to support Scotland's historic environment, and we do so through a range of programmes and partners because there will not be a one-size-fits-all solution.

I am very supportive of community ownership in Stirling, which is my bit of the world, and I want it to happen elsewhere. If the Scottish Government can do things with local campaigners and local leaders, as we have seen today, I am very open to doing so, as is the cabinet secretary. I am grateful to Holly Bruce and others for the debate, and I look forward to working with them on that basis.

Meeting closed at 17:49.

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