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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 30 September 2026

[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 14:30]

Portfolio Question Time

Social Justice and Housing

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The first portfolio this afternoon is social justice and housing. I remind members that questions 3 to 5 have been grouped and that I will take any supplementary questions on them after all three have been answered. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question.

Housing Policy (Western Isles)

1. **Donald MacKinnon (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what measures it is taking to ensure that housing policy supports population retention and growth in the Western Isles, in light of concerns reportedly raised by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar regarding barriers to housing delivery. (S7O-00309)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Government's national islands plan has population retention and attraction at its heart. It includes a commitment to deliver more affordable homes and complements our rural and islands housing action plan, which recognises housing as fundamental to supporting sustainable communities.

We are backing that ambition with significant investment in rural and islands housing. Through our affordable housing supply programme, we are providing £38 million to the council over four years, alongside demand-led support through the £370 million rural and islands housing fund and the £25 million rural affordable homes for key workers fund, which will help communities to retain and attract the people they need.

Donald MacKinnon: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has highlighted to the cabinet secretary its frustration that the resource planning assumption that it has been provided with through the affordable housing supply programme is at risk of being unspent in future years due to the restrictions of the current model. Meanwhile, the comhairle has identified a number of opportunities that could deliver much-needed housing in my constituency, including investment in the croft house grant scheme, the potential for support for private self-builds and home improvement, and shared equity development. Will the cabinet secretary commit to further exploring the possibility of providing flexibility with those funding streams, to meeting the comhairle and to taking a more holistic approach to the delivery of housing in rural and island areas?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I welcome Donald MacKinnon's question. I think that I have already written to the council with an offer to meet it. The material that it sent me included various proposals on how to tackle the issue.

In the meantime, I assure Donald MacKinnon that we are keen to consider how we can use our funds to benefit all parts of Scotland. For example, there is a specific workstream on how our agency will help rural and islands communities, and we are ensuring that our rural and islands grants are delivering what people want, with the criteria matching what people need the funds to do.

I will double check, but I am pretty sure that that meeting should be in my diary or on its way to being in my diary. I look forward to updating Donald MacKinnon on those issues, and perhaps catching up with him in the future, should he wish me to do so.

Laura Mitchell (Moray) (SNP): The Scottish Government's commitment is to deliver, by 2032, 110,000 affordable homes, 70 per cent of which will be available for social rent and 10 per cent of which will be in rural and islands communities. What progress is being made towards delivering that 10 per cent in our rural and islands communities?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: We are committed to that target for 2032, particularly the target for rural and islands communities. Between 23 March 2022 and the end of 2025, we delivered 28,536 affordable homes, of which 5,890 were in such communities. That represents about 20 per cent of the affordable homes that were delivered during that period, so we significantly exceeded the 10 per cent target. As I said to Donald MacKinnon, we are challenging ourselves to ensure that our funding streams work for all parts of Scotland, including our rural and islands communities.

Homelessness (Local Authority Acquisition and Buy-back Schemes)

2. **David Barratt (Cowdenbeath) (SNP):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, in that I am a councillor in Fife.

To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the effectiveness of its support for local authority acquisition and buy-back schemes in reducing homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation. (S7O-00310)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Government recognises the important role that acquisitions and buy-back schemes can play in increasing affordable housing supply and helping households move from temporary to permanent accommodation. Based on management information, Fife has benefited significantly from the £120 million targeted acquisition programme. In total, there has been more than £6.2 million of investment over two years to help to deliver 99 social rented homes for the people of Fife. Acquisitions continue to be supported through the affordable housing supply programme and are targeted according to local housing needs identified by the council.

David Barratt: Fife lost about 40,000 council houses due to the right-to-buy scheme. Despite Scottish Government funding and support to acquire homes and expand social housing stock, only a fraction of those losses have been replaced. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, although the Scottish Government has provided the means to act, Labour-run Fife Council has failed to grasp the opportunity to expand acquisitions of former council houses?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I thank David Barratt for raising two important issues. One is the recognition, which the Government made a long time ago, of the impact of the right to buy. I am pleased that the Prime Minister is now looking to end the grip of that in the English system.

The member also points to the important area of acquisitions. The reason that Fife Council has taken those steps is, in large part, because we had a dedicated fund for it. I am disappointed that the Labour local administration did not see the benefit of that before that fund came to fruition, despite the Scottish National Party's grip on the council, which ensured that the point was made. I hope that the council will continue with acquisitions as part of its affordable housing supply programme, because it is an important aspect of how we can deliver more homes and do so quickly.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I remind members that questions and answers should be short.

Kate Nevens (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green): In Edinburgh, provision of temporary accommodation is still falling far short of what is needed. Last September, the Scottish Government updated the housing emergency action plan, which included a request for local authorities in Scotland proactively to contact all relevant households to discuss the option of flipping their temporary accommodation property to permanent where appropriate. That was to be accompanied by a fund to help replenish temporary housing that had been flipped. What progress has been made in delivering on the commitment to help replenish temporary accommodation lost to flipping, including any funding allocated and any guidance issued to councils?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Flipping tenancies is another important aspect of this issue, as well as acquisitions. Some councils do that tremendously well and others do not. I recognise that the council in Edinburgh now has a strategy and a route map to tackle the temporary accommodation issue, and flipping is one of the areas in that strategy. The member will be aware that it is for City of Edinburgh Council to work with its registered social landlord partners on how that can be taken forward.

I would be happy to provide the member with further details of that in writing.

Homelessness

3. **Paul McLennan (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the latest annual homelessness statistics. (S7O-00311)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Homelessness figures remain far too high, which is why we are shifting our approach from crisis management to prevention and rapid rehousing. Through our £50 million homelessness prevention fund, the £115 million investment in discretionary housing payments, the £2 million fund to leave scheme and the delivery of 1,500 housing first tenancies**,** we are supporting people before they reach crisis point. Our investment of up to £4.9 billion will also support the delivery of 36,000 affordable homes.

With pressures rising across the United Kingdom, I urge the UK Government to scrap the local housing allowance freeze and its plans to defund councils to address home office policy failures.

Paul McLennan: Homelessness charities such as Crisis have warned that Scotland's homelessness statistics will remain stubbornly high without considerable focus and investment in homelessness prevention. Does the cabinet secretary agree that that is necessary? Can she advise what the Scottish Government is doing to implement meaningful change in delivering homelessness prevention?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: In my original answer I mentioned some of the work that we are doing. The reason that we are investing in homelessness prevention is to support people before they experience crisis. We do that through £30.5 million of prevention activity through the

local government settlement, and we have made a record £115 million-worth of discretionary housing payments this year.

Paul McLennan will be well aware of the policies and provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 relating to the ask-and-act duty, which Crisis was absolutely pivotal in developing and ensuring were included in the legislation. I look forward to working with Crisis to ensure that the policy and legislation that we have passed on the ask-and-act duty come to fruition, are implemented, and have the impact that we all want them to have.

Homelessness (Households in Temporary Accommodation)

4. **Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the latest homelessness statistics showing that 19,004 households are in temporary accommodation, the highest recorded figure, whether it considers that it has met its 2023 commitment to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2026. (S7O-00312)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The latest statistics show the scale of the challenge that we face in tackling homelessness. Although the pressures are not unique to Scotland, we are taking decisive action to prevent homelessness and reduce the need for temporary accommodation.

As I mentioned in response to Paul McLennan, we have shifted our approach from crisis management to prevention and rapid rehousing. Our £50 million homelessness prevention fund and the delivery of 1,500 housing first tenancies will support people before they reach crisis.

Liam Kerr: It is appalling that homelessness is at record levels, but the fact that there are now almost 4,000 more households in temporary accommodation than when the Government published its paper on "Reducing the use of temporary accommodation" puts the failure right at the door of this Scottish National Party Government. How much responsibility does the Government take for the ambition that was set out in that paper having failed? Given this Government's apparent inability to arrest the increase, does the evidence point towards further rises by March 2027?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: We are absolutely determined to do everything that we can, as I have mentioned, both in the preventative space and through the supply of affordable homes, to help people out of temporary accommodation. That is exactly why we have committed £4.9 billion to building more homes and to our continued work on homelessness prevention.

I would have more time for the anxiety that the member is expressing today if, at any point during our budget processes, he had argued that we should spend more on housing and homelessness issues. He shakes his head, but coming here to say that more should be done, while never challenging the Government to provide more funding in that area, makes for a slightly less useful discussion between the member and me. If he wishes to have that discussion in the run-up to this budget, he would be more than welcome to do so; my door is open.

Homelessness

5. **James Adams (North East Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to its annual homelessness statistics, which show that homelessness is at its highest recorded level in many parts of the country. (S7O-00313)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): We are taking action to tackle homelessness and accelerate housing supply, including by investing up to £4.9 billion over four years to support delivery of 36,000 affordable homes. The best way to end homelessness is to prevent it from happening, and we are investing heavily in preventative measures, including our homelessness prevention fund.

We will continue to do everything that we can, and we will ensure that we work with the United Kingdom Government, if it is willing to work with us, to address its failures on the local housing allowance and Home Office policy.

James Adams: I agree that preventing homelessness from happening in the first place is the most effective way to end it for good.

As it stands, 15 pilot schemes are being run to test new homelessness prevention duties that were introduced as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025. Those end in December, with evaluation of the pilots not due until the following summer. Does the cabinet secretary agree that it would be a waste if those successful pilots were forced to pause until the evaluation has been carried out? Will funding be made available for the pilots to continue and operate into next year?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Evaluation of the pilot schemes continues. It is already clear from the pilots that some of the work can lead to permanent changes in service provision and ways of working. Rather than having to be extended and additional funding for them having to be provided, the schemes are demonstrating that changes to our ways of working and our systems approach can be embedded in current services. I appreciate that that might not be the case in every area, but that is exactly why I am keen, as I mentioned to

Paul McLennan, to work with Crisis and others to take forward the learning from those pilot schemes and see what lessons we can learn for the future.

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): The homelessness crisis has been exacerbated by the failure to build more homes. In the year to 2026, the number of completions was down 11 per cent when it was supposed to be going in the other direction. Does the cabinet secretary accept that we have a problem with ensuring access to land that we can actually build houses on?

We have the houses on paper, but in terms of them being viable for construction, we have a serious problem. Can the cabinet secretary set out what steps she is taking to ensure that more land is available to build houses on?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Willie Rennie is quite right to challenge me on the issue of overall build numbers, but we have clearly seen a quite substantial uptick in the number of approvals and starts through the affordable housing supply programme, for example. Only today, I met Homes for Scotland to talk about that and other issues, including access to land. I attended that meeting with Hannah Mary Goodlad, in recognition of the interplay between housing and planning.

We have already worked on issues—I have repeated my ask to work jointly with Homes for Scotland—involving sites where planning permission has been given but development is not taking place. I have invited it to work with us in an open-book fashion to test the viability of some of those projects and to see why they are not happening. Is it an issue to do with planning? Is it an issue to do with something in the public sector? Is it an issue to do with financial viability? What funds are available?

In the light of this morning's meeting, I reassure Willie Rennie of the work that we are doing, which I will keep him updated on, as I am sure that stakeholders will.

Iris Duane (Glasgow) (Green): I appreciate the cabinet secretary's candid responses, but we have to be honest about the scale of the challenge that the country faces. A record 10,715 children now live in temporary accommodation. What urgent action will the Government take to address that crisis, and will the cabinet secretary commit to providing additional support in areas such as Glasgow and Edinburgh where the crisis is large?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Although I absolutely recognise the challenges highlighted by the statistics that were published on homelessness, I point to the fact that, in 2025-26, the number of children who were associated with homelessness applications had decreased by 10 per cent when compared to the figure for 2024-25. I hope that that is the start of our preventative measures having an impact and preventing homelessness from happening in the first place. I hope that Iris Duane agrees that that is the right thing to do.

The number of children in temporary accommodation is far too high and the length of time that they spend in it is far too long. That is exactly why we are looking at what more can be done to assist families with children, particularly larger families or those who find it difficult to move out of temporary accommodation because of the type of accommodation that they need, and to help local authorities with the most challenging cases. I am giving very serious consideration to how we address that, and I would welcome Iris Duane's thoughts on it as we look to next year's budget.

Home Adaptations for Disabled People

6. **Amanda Lindsay (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government what immediate steps it will take to reduce waiting times for home adaptations to ensure that disabled people are allocated properties that meet their individual needs. (S7O-00314)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Government recognises the vital role that timely housing adaptations play in enabling disabled people to live independently in homes that meet their needs.

The overall responsibility for the planning and delivery of adaptations lies with integration joint boards. The Scottish Government is taking action to support improvements by reviewing the adaptations system to identify opportunities to streamline processes and better target resources; improving the accessibility of new homes through our updated housing for varying needs guidance and the development of a new Scottish accessible home standard; and protecting the £20.9 million budget for adaptations in registered social landlord properties.

Local authorities and RSLs are responsible for their allocations policies and should take account of individual housing needs.

Amanda Lindsay: There is emerging evidence that disabled people are being offered homes that they cannot use, with some wheelchair users left trapped in multistorey blocks by unreliable lifts. The cabinet secretary will know that the complexity of the adaptations funding system varies by tenure and is widely seen as a barrier that keeps disabled people out of the private rented sector and limits their choice and control. Will she commit to simplifying that system, publish waiting times data by local authority and ensure that the forthcoming

research from Citizens Advice Scotland, the Glasgow Disability Alliance and Shelter Scotland is acted on rather than simply noted?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I am pretty sure that I have a meeting in my diary with those organisations to discuss that publication in due course. The member has asked for something that I am already doing. I said in my original answer that we are reviewing the adaptations system to identify opportunities to streamline the process and better target resources. I hope that I can reassure the member that, as I said in my original answer, that review is being undertaken.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): It would be helpful if questions and answers could be shorter to enable more backbench questioners to be brought in.

Homelessness (Veterans)

7. **Julie MacDougall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to meet the housing needs of veterans who are either at risk of becoming or have already become homeless. (S7O-00315)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Scotland has the strongest housing and homelessness rights of anywhere in the United Kingdom. Anyone who is at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including veterans, is entitled to help to secure a permanent home or temporary accommodation if they need it in the short term. This year, we are providing councils across Scotland with £15.7 billion to fund local services, including homelessness services. Recent homelessness statistics showed an 8 per cent decrease in the number of veterans being assessed as homeless in Scotland. Although the numbers are still too high, that decrease is a sign that our actions are having a positive impact for veterans.

Julie MacDougall: The region of Fife is not just my home but home to one of the highest populations of veterans in Scotland. I have had the opportunity to speak with veterans, both last week at Holyrood and in visits across my region, many of whom have reflected the opinions that were expressed by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner in her report this month. She was disappointed by the Scottish Government's "limited progress" in supporting our veterans, not just on housing but on their economic security and health and mental wellbeing. The Scots who fought for our country deserve better. Does the Scottish Government agree?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: It is worth highlighting that, of the 24 recommendations in the veterans homelessness prevention pathway, three are completed and 17 are in progress for completion. My officials have worked with the Veterans Scotland housing group to identify the five top key priorities for the pathway recommendations, and we will continue to work with partners, including Veterans Scotland and the commissioner, to ensure that progress is made against those recommendations, both to prevent homelessness and to improve housing outcomes for veterans.

Michelle Campbell (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP): In my constituency of Renfrewshire North and Cardonald, Erskine Veterans Charity provides an invaluable range of services, including a modernised model that delivers diverse housing options and support that is tailored to veterans' needs. What further actions is the Scottish Government taking in collaboration with veterans charities such as Erskine to meet the evolving needs of veterans across Scotland?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I join Michelle Campbell in recognising the invaluable contribution that Erskine and other veterans organisations make across Scotland. She points to the important work that they do. Another example of the work that the Government is doing in the area is that we fund Housing Options Scotland, which provides specialist housing information and advice, including for veterans. That partnership approach helps to ensure that services evolve to meet the changing needs of veterans and their families. It is important that we provide that funding but also work alongside charities such as Erskine.

Poverty (No Wrong Door Approach)

8. **Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how its proposed approach to addressing poverty, no wrong door, will ensure that families experiencing financial hardship receive joined-up support at the earliest opportunity. (S7O-00316)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): We are committed to families receiving support when and where they need it and for as long as they need it, and our commitment to whole-family support is underlined by approaches such as no wrong door, which supports partners to take preventative action and ensure that families who are experiencing financial hardship receive joined-up and tailored wraparound support at the earliest opportunity.

Our tackling child poverty delivery plan sets out a range of actions to deliver that support, including the introduction of a £20 million fund for third sector organisations, for this and future years on a multiyear basis, to enable local-led delivery.

Collette Stevenson: Families who experience financial hardship often need to navigate multiple

agencies and services and retell their situation multiple times. I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to community-based key workers, who can support people to access all the support that they are entitled to as quickly as possible, which avoids exacerbating an already stressful situation. Will the cabinet secretary outline how that provision will be expanded, including in East Kilbride? Will she also set out how the impact of the no wrong door approach will be monitored and how it will tackle the scourge of child poverty?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Collette Stevenson raises an important point, because that issue is public service reform in action. She is right to point out that, over time, the public sector has become complicated and therefore complex for people to find their way around. The whole family wellbeing funding that is being provided to South Lanarkshire, which is estimated to be just over £10 million, supports a shift towards prevention and early intervention, changing the way that we provide services to people. I am delighted that family support hubs now operate in four localities, including in East Kilbride, and I hope that the member is reassured that the Government is fully committed to that type of work, which I am sure will have a positive impact on her constituents.

Steven Bonnar (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I hear from families in Uddingston and Bellshill who are facing a range of pressures, on issues such as housing, household costs, employment, childcare and access to addiction services, all at the same time. How will the no wrong door approach ensure that families who present with one problem are not simply signposted elsewhere but get help to identify and address the wider issues that they are facing?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Steven Bonnar is right to point out that, to date, public services—with the best of intent—have often provided signposting. That is welcome, but it is not enough, nor is it anywhere near holistic whole family support. That is why it is important that we seek to change the way that we deliver public services, and that is the right thing to do for the people who we are here to serve.

We need to move past signposting or referrals in order to deliver whole family support in a holistic setting that recognises that—as Steven Bonnar said—although an individual may present with one issue or challenge, there could potentially be many issues behind that. Providing such holistic support will help that individual or family from getting into a crisis. It is right for families and it is the best and most effective way of delivering public services.

First Homes Fund

9. **Jenny Young (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the uptake of the first homes fund since its introduction. (S7O-00317)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): To date, a total of 493 applications have been submitted to the demand-led first homes fund, and it continues to support more first-time buyers into home ownership. The Scottish Government continues to closely monitor uptake of the fund and assess its effectiveness in supporting first-time buyers into home ownership. As part of our ongoing evaluation of the scheme and as we approach phase 2 of its delivery, we are identifying lessons that have been learned and working with partners to further improve accessibility and ensure that the fund reaches those whom it is intended to support.

The first homes fund remains part of our wider package of support for first time buyers, which also includes the open market shared equity scheme. That is also open for applications.

Jenny Young: In its manifesto, the Scottish National Party pledged to help 2,000 people with the first homes fund in the first 100 days after the election. The cabinet secretary has just confirmed that there have been 493 applications, which is less than a quarter of that target. Crucially, the scheme is not actually doing anything to encourage house building or increase supply, which is so critical for the housing emergency.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Andy Burnham has announced an equivalent scheme that will enable people to purchase new-build properties with a 2.5 per cent deposit, supported by a 20 per cent Government equity loan. The United Kingdom Government scheme will be only for new builds, so it will encourage house building and increase the supply of homes, which is needed across the UK. Will the cabinet secretary look at the scheme that Andy Burnham has announced and consider what lessons can be learned to properly address Scotland's housing emergency?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I do not know whether Andy Burnham looked north, saw that the Scottish Government has taken action to support first-time buyers and realised that he should perhaps do so himself. I am a bit puzzled by the suggestion that we should restrict the scheme, if that is the proposition that Jenny Young thinks that we should take forward. As I said to Willie Rennie, I have just met Homes for Scotland, which welcomed the delivery of the first homes fund. I have visited developments that have literally been in the middle of being developed and been told by developers that they are looking forward to the

impact that the fund could have on the new-build and improving markets.

I will take seriously what the member has said, but I will also take seriously what I have been told by developers who think that the fund will make a difference. As I said, phase 2 is coming up, and we are considering possible improvements. I am listening to developers—including today—on how we can work on the scheme for phase 2.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I remind members that questions and answers must be short.

Affordable Homes

10. **Dawn Black (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to reduce barriers and to support housing providers to accelerate the delivery of affordable homes across Scotland. (S7O-00318)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing (Shirley-Anne Somerville): The Scottish Government is taking a range of actions to reduce barriers and accelerate the delivery of affordable homes across Scotland. That includes the introduction of a targeted voids and acquisitions fund, working with the sector to clarify guidance on the flipping of temporary accommodation to permanent housing, and confirming the largest ever multiyear budget for housing of up to £4.9 billion.

Looking ahead, we are reforming the planning system to speed up development, as well as establishing, from April 2027, more homes Scotland, which will be focused on speed, simplicity and scale.

Dawn Black: I recently met Angus Housing Association and Caledonia Housing Association, as well as Scotia Homes in Brechin, which is delivering affordable homes locally with Scottish Government support, and they all told me that differing planning requirements across different local authority areas are causing delays, increasing costs and making it harder to get much-needed homes built.

What action can the cabinet secretary and her ministers take to ensure that planning departments do not get in the way of achieving the Government's housing targets?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: In Scotland, we have a plan-led system that takes an evidence-based approach to development that is led through the national planning framework and the local development plans. Our system also has essential flexibility built into it to ensure that planning authorities can react to changing circumstances.

Over the past year, ministers and the chief planner have written to planning authorities to reiterate the need for an emergency-led approach to plan preparation and decision making. I reassure the member that, in addition, over the summer, the Minister for Public Finance engaged with a number of stakeholders, and that, as we committed to do in our programme for government, we will shortly consult on targeted reforms that will tackle concerns about efficiency and complexity. I am sure that some of the issues that Dawn Black raises will be considered as part of that process.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): That brings to an end the questions on the social justice and housing portfolio. I remind members that it would be helpful if questions and answers could be shorter to enable me to bring in more back benchers; I was unable to bring in quite a number of members on the previous portfolio.

Economy, Tourism and Transport

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The next portfolio is economy, tourism and transport. I remind members that questions 3 and 8 are grouped together and that I will take any supplementaries on those questions after both have been answered.

If a member wishes to request a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question. I again remind members that questions and answers should be brief.

Public Transport (Central Scotland and Lothians West)

1. **Amanda Bland (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the limited evening and Sunday bus provision in some parts of Central Scotland and Lothians West, whether it will commit to working with local authorities and bus operators to ensure that communities currently without adequate services have access to reliable and affordable public transport throughout the week, including evenings and weekends. (S7O-00319)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport (Stephen Flynn): I think that all members would sympathise with the desire of those in the member's area to have better services in place. Ultimately, such matters are primarily a consideration for commercial operators and, indeed, for the local authority. I must express my surprise at having been asked by a Reform MSP for direct state intervention in that regard, because that runs somewhat contrary to the narrative from her party leadership.

Amanda Bland: Thank you for that response. [*Laughter.*]

What proportion of the funding provided through the Government's £55 million bus infrastructure

fund for 2026-27 will benefit communities in Central Scotland and Lothians West?

Stephen Flynn: This is a fantastic opportunity for me to outline the investment that we are making in our public services, which is incredibly important to us. Of course, we have put a considerable amount of money into ensuring that we have a £2 bus fare cap in 60 per cent of Scotland, and we provide national concessionary cards to our young people, our older people and our disabled people. However, it is also important to have buses that run in a timely fashion, which is why we are providing £55 million to improve bus infrastructure across Scotland, and we continue to work very closely with local authorities in that regard.

Again, though, that investment in our public infrastructure appears to run contrary to the aims and objectives of Reform UK as a party, and the member could perhaps reflect on that in future contributions.

Eden Project (Dundee)

2. **Heather Anderson (Dundee City West) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is planning to support the proposed Eden Project development in Dundee through to delivery. (S7O-00320)

The Minister for Business and Fair Work (Tom Arthur): The Eden Project represents a significant opportunity to build on Dundee's status as a world-class visitor destination. The Scottish Government recognises the potential that a project of this kind can have in contributing to our ambitions for local and regional economic growth, and we are committed to working with the project partners to explore how we can best contribute to the project's development.

Heather Anderson: Last year, Dundee City Council found that more tourists visited Dundee in 2024 than in any other year in the previous decade, generating £333 million-worth of economic benefit for the economy in Dundee and supporting 3,500 jobs in the city. Our goal is for Dundee to be recognised as Europe's best emerging city break destination by 2030.

The minister has recognised the key role that the Eden Project will play in achieving our ambitions for tourism. Will he be willing to visit Dundee to hear more about the project's plans and, specifically, how it can help to extend overnight stays?

Tom Arthur: I thank Heather Anderson for her question, and I agree with her outline of the significant strength of the visitor economy in Dundee and, of course, the opportunity for it to grow. I would be more than delighted to come to Dundee and engage with the member and other stakeholders. In fact, I have already had a meeting with the leader of Dundee City Council, at which we discussed a range of issues with regard to economic development opportunities, including the Eden Project. Senior officials will have further dialogue with the local authority in the coming weeks and months, and I am certainly happy to ensure that the member is fully engaged with that, too.

I should also state that the Deputy First Minister has also agreed to meet the Eden Project partners, which again demonstrates the Government's commitment to engaging and supporting the project.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): On a visit to the project site in April, the First Minister said that the Eden Project offered

"an important opportunity to engage people in our transition to a net-zero future."

What role does the Scottish Government see for the Eden Project in Dundee in building public support for and understanding of net zero, and in delivering a greener economy for our future?

Tom Arthur: The member has raised a really important point, and obviously, the Eden Project can play a vital role in that respect. I should share with the member that, just this morning, I visited Edinburgh zoo to discuss these very matters, recognising the importance of the action that we are taking this week to redouble our efforts on climate and, indeed, to address the risks to biodiversity posed by a changing climate. Education plays such an important part in ensuring that we not only maintain but build consent and social licence, and I think that the Eden Project can clearly play an important part in contributing to that agenda.

Bus and Haulage Sector (Decarbonisation)

3. **Graham Simpson (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting the bus and haulage sector to decarbonise. (S7O-00321)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport (Stephen Flynn): I am more than happy to answer that. Through the Scottish zero emission bus challenge fund—ScotZEB—and its predecessor scheme, we have invested almost £200 million to support over 1,100 low and zero-emission buses. We also run the heavy goods vehicle market readiness fund. However, I am sure that the irony of a Reform UK member talking about decarbonisation will not be lost on the chamber.

Graham Simpson: Well, we could do without the snotty responses.

Hydrogen could be an important part of our future energy mix, but progress in using it as a

zero-emission fuel has stalled. The United Kingdom Government-backed HyHAUL project has closed, and Glasgow-based Hydrogen Vehicle Systems has gone into administration. Given the public investment in developing hydrogen and zero-emission heavy vehicle capability in Scotland, what assessment has the Scottish Government made of the outcomes and lessons from that investment to date? What role does it now see for hydrogen for HGVs in Scotland? Finally, can it provide an update on the current status of the low-carbon transport applications centre? Serious questions demand serious answers.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): And there were quite a number of questions there, Mr Simpson. Questions, and answers, must be kept short.

Stephen Flynn: The truth hurts, Mr Simpson.

I assume that Mr Simpson is referring to potential green hydrogen opportunities. Green hydrogen requires significant amounts of electricity from renewable projects. I hope that that is an indication from Mr Simpson that he and his party now believe that offshore wind is not a choice but a necessity as we seek to decarbonise transport in Scotland and, indeed, across the rest of Europe.

Bus Sector (Decarbonisation)

8. **Gary Bouse (Falkirk West) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to boost the decarbonisation of bus networks while supporting domestic bus manufacturing. (S7O-00326)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport (Stephen Flynn): I know that Mr Bouse is a passionate advocate in this area. He knows that, through phase 3 of the Scottish zero emission bus challenge fund, we have awarded £45 million to support the deployment of zero-emission buses and charging and refuelling infrastructure across Scotland. In particular, since 2020, Alexander Dennis has secured around 484 vehicle orders through ScotZEB and its predecessor schemes. I know that that is important to him. We have much more work to do, and we will continue in that regard.

Gary Bouse: Since 2020, the Scottish Government has supported the purchasing of many hundreds of electric buses through the Scottish ultra-low-emission bus and ScotZEB subsidy schemes. However, the constraints of section 17.1 of the United Kingdom's Subsidy Control Act 2022 have meant that some operators have sourced vehicles for municipal bus and private coach fleets from overseas. What further support will the Scottish Government provide domestic manufacturers such as ADL, which would enable Scotland's transport network to benefit from the generations of local engineering experience, reduce embedded carbon emissions and safeguard highly skilled jobs?

Stephen Flynn: Mr Bouse has struck on an important point about the fact that we need to operate within the terms of the Subsidy Control Act 2022, which prevents us from requiring operators to purchase buses from a specific manufacturer. However, as Mr Bouse has rightly highlighted, we have been able to invest in hundreds of buses across Scotland. We intend to do much more going forward. That is on top of the £30 million in research and development support that we were able to provide to Alexander Dennis—[*Interruption*.]

Apparently, Reform UK members find it funny that we invest in zero-emission buses in Scotland. It is important to reiterate that the Subsidy Control Act 2022 is the responsibility of the UK Government. We will continue to engage constructively with the Government in that regard.

Martyn Day (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP): Rail freight produces around 76 per cent less carbon per tonne than road haulage. Given the existing rail capacity at the Grangemouth port, what can the Scottish Government do to establish regular freight services and reduce heavy goods vehicle traffic through surrounding residential communities?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Willie Rennie; my apologies—it should be Stephen Flynn.

Stephen Flynn: I thought for a second that the convener of the Transport Committee had received a promotion. He is welcome to take the hot seat any time that he likes, Deputy Presiding Officer. [*Laughter*.]

This is a serious point. We all want more freight to travel by rail. Over the summer, I was able to visit West Fraser, where £3 million-worth of investment has had a transformative impact and is getting HGVs off the road into rail. That has had a positive impact on surrounding areas and the transport network heading south. If we can do more of that across Scotland, that would be a good thing, and I am happy to work towards those aims with Mr Day.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Mr Rennie to ask a question.

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): The cabinet secretary will have to tread carefully with his answer because of live legal proceedings on ScotZEB 3. What confidence can he give the successful bidders who are committing £118 million on top of the £45 million from the

Government that the Government's funding will be forthcoming, no matter what happens, so that they can go ahead and build the buses?

Stephen Flynn: Mr Rennie is right to say that I must tread carefully due to ongoing legal matters. I give him and other members the assurance that the Scottish Government's commitment to the decarbonisation of our bus fleet is real. We have delivered significant investment over many years. It is my hope and expectation that we will be able to continue with that good work.

Proposed Food Price Cap

4. **Duncan Massey (North East Scotland) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reported concerns from groups representing retail, farming and food manufacturing bodies calling for its proposed statutory food price cap policy to be withdrawn. (S7O-00322)

The Minister for Business and Fair Work (Tom Arthur): I welcome engagement with the Government's proposal to improve the affordability of essential food items during a severe cost of living crisis. We are currently holding a public consultation that will inform our next steps.

We cannot ignore the fact that food prices have risen significantly in recent years and they continue to place pressure on household budgets, particularly for those on lower incomes. We believe that the Government has a responsibility to act where there is a clear public interest in doing so. As I said, we are gathering evidence and engaging with stakeholders across the food system to ensure that all views are carefully considered.

Duncan Massey: I wonder whether the minister has noted that former Scottish National Party minister Fergus Ewing has added his voice to the growing consensus that the scheme needs to be scrapped, calling the food price cap a "dud", "madcap" and "possibly illegal", and adding that the Scottish Government seems to have learned no lessons from past policy disasters such as the deposit return scheme. Will the Scottish Government now recognise those criticisms and cancel the scheme before real harm is done to consumers, retailers, manufacturers and farmers?

Tom Arthur: There is no scheme in place. We are consulting.

Craig Hoy (Dumfriesshire) (Con): In six years in this Parliament, I have seen some humdingers of SNP policies, but this one hums and dings more than any before. Is it not clear that the policy would have huge unintended consequences, including more pressure on producers and more farmers going to the wall, a big increase in the cost of non-essential items as the profit margin shifted from one product to another, and less Scottish produce and more cheap foreign imports on our shelves? Is it not time that the Government simply ditched this madcap triple whammy of damage that could be unleashed on Scotland's retailers and consumers?

Tom Arthur: I welcome the member's engagement on the issue. He obviously has strong views on the matter, and I am sure that he will take the opportunity to respond to the consultation and to engage in that process. I assure him that all responses will be considered.

I will continue, as I did this morning, to engage with a range of stakeholders the length and breadth of the food system in Scotland. At the conclusion of the process of consultation and engagement, the Government and ministers will be in a position to determine what next steps, if any, should be taken. I thank the member for his sustained interest in the matter and I look forward to his continued thoughtful engagement on it.

A96 (Dualling)

5. **Tim Eagle (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the progress of its plans, including preparation of the business case and a timetable, to dual the A96. (S7O-00323)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport (Stephen Flynn): Both I and Mr Eagle are very familiar with the A96. He will know only too well about the commitment in our manifesto, and in the programme for government, to take forward the full dualling of the A96. Work is already under way in respect of the connection to Nairn and the Nairn bypass. If there are further updates to be provided to the Parliament, I will be more than happy to do that.

Tim Eagle: It is exciting, because we are just three years away from the original Scottish National Party promise to dual the A96 by 2030, yet, oddly, nothing has happened. The residents of Nairn, Keith and Elgin are, unsurprisingly, still waiting for a bypass. The 2029 construction start date for Nairn is not even guaranteed, yet 2,000 new houses and significant road works are about to cause further chaos.

I understand that the cabinet secretary is talking about budgets post the spending review. Can he confirm that he has secured the funding and that construction will start in Nairn—with no ifs and no buts—by 2029?

Stephen Flynn: I assure the member that I will always fight to ensure that the commitments that we have made to the people of Scotland will be delivered in line with the timeframes that we have set out.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): The cabinet secretary will know that the costs of current road upgrade programmes range from a low £20 million per mile to more than £30 million per mile for the most recently announced sections. That makes the roads some of the most expensive highways in Europe. Given that reforms to Transport Scotland have been announced, what specific measures will be taken so that we have cost-effective road upgrades? Will those measures be delivered in time for the A96 programme?

Stephen Flynn: I know that Mr Johnson has a keen interest in the matter, and we have had engagement in that respect. I assure him that Transport Scotland's officials and the Government are fully focused on ensuring that we deliver our projects in the quickest and most financially sustainable fashion. I am happy to continue to engage with Mr Johnson in that regard.

Large Commercial Retailers

6. **Zen Ghani (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action is being taken to support large commercial retailers, such as Silverburn shopping centre in the Cathcart and Pollok constituency, which contribute £414 million in economic activity annually and support 8,713 jobs. (S7O-00324)

The Minister for Business and Fair Work (Tom Arthur): The Scottish Government recognises the important role that retail, hospitality and leisure destinations such as Silverburn shopping centre play in Scotland's economy. They support thousands of jobs and bring significant investment to communities. We are supporting those businesses to invest and grow through a range of measures including non-domestic rates relief, which will save Scottish ratepayers more than £870 million in 2026-27. We are also reviewing the non-domestic rates system and consulting on planning reforms to support investment. Together, those actions will strengthen Scotland's retail, hospitality and leisure sectors and sustain the jobs and economic benefits that they provide.

Zen Ghani: Silverburn shopping centre not only provides jobs but also significantly contributes to the local economy. It recruits most of its workers from the local Pollok community. It operates as a real living wage employer and has actively reduced its carbon emissions by more than 44 per cent since 2019. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to promote those responsible business patterns in other large commercial retailers?

Tom Arthur: I recognise the points that the member raises about the responsibility that Silverburn is showing in its commitments around the real living wage and its approach to employing local residents. That is very welcome and it is something that we want to see more of. Silverburn is a major contributor to the economy in the area. I appreciate that this might be before the member's time, but people of my generation will remember it as the Pollok centre and have fond childhood memories of the rather impressive mechanical clock that was there.

We are absolutely committed to working and engaging with the retail sector to promote and support it. It is often the sector that provides people's first jobs and, as such, it represents an important ladder in progressing through employment. Several actions are being taken through our retail strategy and the work of the industry leadership group. I stress to the member that I recognise Silverburn's importance to the local economy and the wider retail sector, and I would be happy to engage with him further on those matters.

CMAL (Procurement Processes)

7. **Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd will no longer publish the names or locations of shipyards bidding for the MV Lord of the Isles replacement contract or any future vessel tenders. (S7O-00325)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport (Stephen Flynn): Decisions about what information is published are a matter for CMAL as the procuring authority. In making those decisions, CMAL must balance openness and transparency with the need to protect commercially sensitive information and support a fair procurement process that ensures value for money for the Scottish taxpayer.

Paul Sweeney: The balance seems out of kilter to me. The new United Kingdom procurement policy note 025 explicitly instructs contracting authorities to treat shipbuilding as a national security priority and it empowers them to restrict procurements to domestic suppliers. However, just months after CMAL handed a major ferry contract for the northern isles to China, it is now hiding behind commercial confidentiality and has concealed the shortlist for that procurement after, in effect, excluding all UK shipyards from bidding.

Why is the Government allowing CMAL to use that sleekit legal loophole to keep the identities of state-subsidised foreign shipyards secret instead of using the new powers to protect Scottish industry? Will the cabinet secretary order CMAL to publish that shortlist today?

Stephen Flynn: I am not sure whether Mr Sweeney listened to my initial answer, so I will

repeat it for him. We expect CMAL to balance openness and transparency with the need to protect commercially sensitive information and support a fair procurement process that ensures value for money for the Scottish taxpayer. That is what CMAL is doing, and that is what I expect it to continue to do.

Colm Merrick (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary confirm that CMAL's approach to publishing information on bidders is intended to protect fair competition and secure the best possible value for island communities?

Stephen Flynn: Yes, I can. That question is a welcome antidote to Mr Sweeney's hyperbole.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Question 9, from Q Manivannan, was not lodged.

Borders Railway (Extension to Hawick and Carlisle)

10. **Duncan Dunlop (South Scotland) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what commitment it will give to extending the Borders railway beyond Tweedbank to Hawick and Carlisle. (S7O-00328)

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport (Stephen Flynn): We are supporting the agreed Borderlands inclusive growth deal work to assess the case for extending the Borders railway to Carlisle. Through the deal, the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments have each committed up to £5 million to explore the opportunities and challenges of the proposal. Scottish Borders Council is leading the work on behalf of the Borderlands partnership, and the findings will inform future decisions on how the scheme should be progressed.

Duncan Dunlop: Bill McLaren famously said that a day out of Hawick is a day wasted. He would surely have championed extending the Borders railway to Hawick and beyond that to Carlisle, opening up the region to visitors, businesses and investment.

Back in the 2010s, it was the Liberal Democrats who delivered the reintroduction of the railway to the Borders. Although I welcome the feasibility study that is under way, campaigners have been kept waiting on the platform for too long and they are frustrated by the timescales for the three phases of the process. Can the cabinet secretary give a commitment to provide clear timeframes to get the project off the drawing board and on to the rails?

Stephen Flynn: This is not a Scottish Government project. It is being led by the local authority. I am pleased that the council has now appointed specialist transport consultants to take forward the strategic outline business case, and my understanding is that the work is expected to be completed within the next 18 months. I assure Mr Dunlop that my officials will be paying close attention to that work, as will I.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): The feasibility study is already under way. I ask the cabinet secretary to come down to Hawick to meet the Campaign for Borders Rail. Aligning bus and rail transport is an important aspect of enabling people to get to work, but that responsibility is often shouldered by local authorities with very limited budgets. Can the cabinet secretary tell me how he will improve and integrate public transport in order to get more people off the roads and on to rail?

Stephen Flynn: That requires significant co-operation and partnership between commercial operators, but we are happy to take on any suggestions that Ms Hamilton has in that regard.

Ms Hamilton has invited me down to the Borders, and my office has been trying really hard to ensure that that visit happens. I am desperate to get to the Borders to have a meeting with Ms Hamilton and the campaigners. My understanding is that the latest proposal is for early December, and I hope that we can get that agreed.

Craig Hoy (Dumfriesshire) (Con): [*Inaudible*.]

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Unfortunately, your microphone does not seem to be working, Mr Hoy. Will you try again?

Craig Hoy: It is working now. I thank the cabinet secretary for his positive response to my colleague Rachael Hamilton. He will be aware that I have invited him to visit Beattock to meet rail campaigners there. If he wants to do a double whammy that day, he could join us in Langholm, which is also in the feasibility study, so that we can discuss how it could benefit from an extension to the Borders railway. While he is visiting Dumfriesshire, perhaps I could also take him on a bus to show him why we need more buses.

Stephen Flynn: I thank Mr Hoy for his multiple, very kind invitations to come down to the Borders. I am more than happy to assess whether it is possible to include him in my diary in that regard. Otherwise, I am sure that he is more than welcome to join me and his colleague Ms Hamilton.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): That brings us to the end of portfolio questions. I apologise to those members from whom I was unable to take questions.

Consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The next item of business is a debate on motion S7M-01376, in the name of Liam Kerr, on consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank.

15:00

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The motion in my name presses the United Kingdom Government to stop prevaricating and grant consent to Jackdaw and Rosebank.

In order to quickly deal with the Scottish National Party and Labour amendments' slopey shouldering to the UK to avoid committing, I remind members of Mr Gethins' amended motion on 10 September, which both those parties voted for. It says:

"the Parliament … recognises that energy policy is a largely reserved competence, but accepts that the Scottish Government should do what it can to provide leadership"

and the Parliament

"agrees to work together to accelerate energy deployment",

so I am delighted to give them that chance today.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): While we are reminding people of things, is it worth reminding the Conservative Party that it is because its Government made flawed decisions, which were found to be incompatible with the law in the Court of Session, that this is in doubt at all? Is it not prudent that we ensure that we get these decisions right? We are only in this position because the Conservative Government made dodgy decisions.

Liam Kerr: No, I do not accept that premise. What I do think is important is that Daniel Johnson clearly thinks that lessons should be learned. I hope that he has told his colleagues down south that they should be consenting immediately and without any of the delays that we have seen so far.

Speaking of the amendments, that of the Greens serves only to remind members just how out of touch and ill-informed they are. It also shows a somewhat sleekit use of polling, not least on the environmental case. Everyone knows that we need generation; the Climate Change Committee projects the UK electricity demand to more than double by 2050, and that has to come from somewhere.

Jamie Langan (South Scotland) (Reform): Will Liam Kerr take an intervention?

Liam Kerr: I will in a second, Mr Langan.

Although intermittent renewables will and must form a key part of the supply, they cannot deal with the need for firm, dispatchable generation.

Jamie Langan: Will Liam Kerr give way?

Liam Kerr: In two seconds, Mr Langan. I am aware that you are there.

What is more, it is well known that the average emissions intensity of imported liquefied natural gas is around three times that of UK domestic gas production—even before the addition of emissions from liquefaction, shipping and regasification. Rejecting North Sea oil and gas does not make emissions disappear; it increases them. That reason alone means that members should not consider the Green amendment further.

Jamie Langan: Does Mr Kerr regret the Tory Government's record on oil and gas and its introduction of the energy profits levy?

Liam Kerr: Although this is a debate about Rosebank and Jackdaw, let us address the EPL issue. The EPL was brought in as a response to market conditions at the time and to Russia's invasion of Ukraine; it was at a level that the industry understood; it was made temporary; and it was brought in along with investment allowances. The SNP and Labour were huge cheerleaders for it at the time and wanted to hike it even further and to remove the investment allowances.

Another cheerleader for the EPL was Councillor Duncan Massey, who is sitting right in front of Mr Langan. At the time, Councillor Massey was entirely on message and a supporter of it; he wanted it.

Duncan Massey (North East Scotland) (Reform) *rose—*

Liam Kerr: Perhaps Mr Langan might spend more time discussing such things with his colleague before opening him up to ridicule, which he is now desperate to come in on—I am afraid that I do not have time.

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): We do have time for you to take the intervention—you just do not want to.

Liam Kerr: Oh. Well, in that case, I will take Mr Massey's intervention.

Duncan Massey (North East Scotland) (Reform): Clearly, the EPL continued to be in place well after I joined the Conservative Party, and I moved to Reform for the very reason of protesting against that tax, which has absolutely killed the industry.

Liam Kerr: I do not find anything on record showing that Mr Massey left the Conservative Party in protest at the EPL. What I can find is that

his leaving the Conservative Party was awfully proximate to his failure to get on the candidates list when he applied for it. [*Interruption*.] I tried to protect the member from that revelation, but he was not having it.

The Liberal Democrat amendment is the very embodiment of that party's refusal to commit to anything and its determination to never actually upset anybody. However, it does recognise the energy security argument for UK production. The UK will continue to need oil and gas, and the more that we get locally, the more we control our energy supply; the less we are exposed to volatile international markets and geopolitical disruption; and the more we leverage our existing North Sea infrastructure and expertise.

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Liam Kerr: I would really like to take Mr Rennie's intervention, but I only have six minutes, and I am five and a half minutes in—

The Presiding Officer: Interventions are not counted against your time.

Liam Kerr: Well, in that case, I will take the intervention.

Willie Rennie: I am glad that the member recognises that we do not set out to offend people like the Conservative Party does. Nevertheless, he has struck on the right issue, which is that we need to deal with demand in this country. Of course, that should be the focus of every bit of Government. Does the member recognise that, so far, this Government has not made the progress on net zero that it should have in order to minimise the impact of those issues?

Liam Kerr: I very much do. I welcome the intervention, and I am glad that I took it, because Willie Rennie makes exactly my point, which, I have to say, is what the Greens have missed in their amendment—namely that demand is not going down and that we have to satisfy it. Frankly, after years of rhetoric, this SNP Government is not making the progress that we—as I think it recognises—need, and it is not committing to making that progress in the way that we need to see happen.

I grounded my motion entirely in the economic benefits, such as the fact that, together, Rosebank and Jackdaw represent nearly £11 billion worth of investment, more than three quarters of which is expected to be spent in the UK. Actually, more than £1 billion has already been invested in Jackdaw by Shell. The platform has been installed, a 31km pipeline has been laid, and drilling of the four production wells was completed earlier this year. I mentioned investment. Approving these projects provides a signal to investors that the UK remains prepared to support major energy infrastructure, which is crucial for ongoing economic investment. Rosebank and Jackdaw will support more than 3,500 UK-based jobs at peak construction.

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

Liam Kerr: I look to the Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: It is up to the member whether to take the intervention.

Liam Kerr: I will take the intervention from Helen McDade.

Helen McDade: I just wonder, Mr Kerr, when you changed your mind from the Conservative position. Was it 10 years ago—[*Interruption*.]—or five years ago? [*Interruption*.] I have been talking to people like Murdo Fraser about this—

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Where were you? You were not here at the start of the debate.

Helen McDade: That is because it started early.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members to speak through the chair.

Liam Kerr: That is an extraordinary intervention. The member might wish to look back, and she will see that my entire parliamentary career has been spent standing up for oil and gas, standing up for the north-east, and standing up for our brilliant oil and gas workers in the north-east and throughout the UK.

Almost 200 contracts have already been placed across the Rosebank and Jackdaw projects with supply chain companies, which offer—

Heather Anderson (Dundee City West) (SNP): [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Liam Kerr: I will take the intervention in two seconds

The companies, which offer things such as engineering, fabrication, marine logistics, consultancy and specialist services, include 171 that are registered right here in the UK.

Heather Anderson: [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Liam Kerr: Two minutes, please, Heather.

All that means that Rosebank and Jackdaw are expected to generate nearly £30 billion in gross value added over their producing lifetimes—including £9.1 billion through supply chain activity—and £1.4 billion in tax revenues by the end of the UK parliamentary term. That will rise to £3.8 billion by 2034. Crucially, consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank will help to sustain the Aberdeen and north-east ecosystem of

companies, skilled workers, ports, vessels, fabrication yards and specialist expertise.

Heather Anderson: Does Liam Kerr acknowledge that the climate science is clear that there is a major issue in approving further drilling? Will he accept that the best way to support workers in the north-east is to support them to transition from the fossil fuel investigation of the past to the renewables of the future?

Liam Kerr: I am afraid that Heather Anderson is missing the point in exactly the same way as the Green Party. Simply saying that we will not drill in the UK means that we will have to import oil and gas from somewhere else in order to meet the demand. As Willie Rennie said in his very sensible intervention, we must reduce demand before we can realistically start talking about where we source oil and gas from. We must have a supply from somewhere, and the best place is the North Sea.

The case against providing consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank asks us to believe that refusing British production somehow removes the demand for oil and gas. It does not. It will leave us importing more, while we sacrifice investment, jobs, tax revenues and the industrial capability of the north-east on the altar of ill-informed and dogmatic virtue signalling.

The case for providing consent for those fields is straightforward: it would provide energy security while we transition, economic investment, and the protection of the skilled industrial base that will help to deliver Scotland's future energy economy. Consent must be provided for those fields.

I have no hesitation in moving,

That the Parliament believes that consent should be granted for the Jackdaw gas field and the Rosebank oil and gas field, recognising the significant economic benefits that this would bring.

The Presiding Officer: That was a shift, with six interventions.

15:11

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy (Stephen Gethins): I welcome the debate that Liam Kerr has secured. I am sure that Reform members will be horrified and shocked that we are having a debate about a reserved issue—one that involves a reserved quasi-judicial decision, at that—but I very much hope that they manage to stay in the chamber until the end of it.

Mark Simpson (North East Scotland) (Reform): Will the minister take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: My word—that was quick.

Mark Simpson: Given how much time was wasted last Wednesday on a reserved matter, we are more than happy to engage on something that is of huge significance to the north-east and the thousands and thousands of people who work in the oil and gas sector there.

Stephen Gethins: I would never accuse a member of being ill informed, but, if he was not here, how does he know?

It is not for me to get in the way of a family feud, so I pay tribute to Mr Kerr, because the sector that we are talking about is important to Scotland and touches on crucial issues relating to energy security and the climate emergency. I am glad that we have the opportunity to discuss those issues.

However, it is important to begin with some points of context. In fairness, other members have made some of these points. The global climate emergency is real and requires all countries to respond, including by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. The North Sea is now geologically mature as an oil and gas basin. On a more positive note, there is a huge economic opportunity for Scotland in the transition to renewables, which is also the path to long-term energy security.

That said, it is equally the case that the North Sea oil and gas sector continues to make a vital contribution to our energy system, our economy and our society. That is especially true in the north-east. Although our domestic demand for oil and gas products is declining as we decarbonise systems such as heating and transport, that demand will continue.

Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I will ask a direct question. Is there not a huge economic opportunity in the development of Jackdaw and Rosebank? Surely there is, so will the minister come off the fence and state categorically that he and the Scottish Government are in favour of that economic development?

Stephen Gethins: Stephen Kerr has asked me to come off the fence, but I do not want to fall into the same trap that the UK Government did previously in a very expensive way, which is why we are having the debate today. To be fair, Mr Johnson has already pointed that out.

We can see a parallel-track approach to energy transition, in which North Sea oil and gas production is managed alongside the increasing deployment of renewables, but let me touch on that point and be clear about consenting for oil and gas fields, including Jackdaw and Rosebank. These are quasi-judicial matters that are reserved to the UK Government. Although I wish that that was not the case; Stephen Kerr likes that it is the case.

Stephen Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: No, I am going to make some progress.

I wish that that was not the case, but I must operate within the political system that I have, rather than the one that I would like to have. I welcome all converts to the case of independence, but we are not quite there yet. However, Mr Kerr is certainly doing his bit.

We continue to call on the UK Government to approach such decisions in a way that is rigorously evidence-led and to do so case by case. That is the responsible thing to do. Ensuring statutory climate compatibility tests and energy security are key considerations. The process must be followed. Both fields were previously granted consent under the Conservative Administration, but that consent was then removed, which is why we are where we are today.

Let me move on to my own amendment, and a point of substance. The UK remains one of the only states on earth not to have established some kind of futures or sovereign wealth fund. Our neighbours in Norway, who discovered oil at the same time as Scotland, established one in the 1990s. It is now worth £1.5 trillion. Norway is not alone. Azerbaijan, where I worked in the late nineties and very early noughties, established a fund at that point. I remember that country then; it was not the country that it is today. It had just emerged from the Soviet Union. Even so, it established an intergenerational fund, which

"accumulates and preserves the nation's oil and gas revenues for future generations."

It was done elsewhere—in Tanzania, Colombia, Mexico, Angola, Gabon, Mauritania and Timor-Leste. It was even done at a sub-state level in Alaska, Alberta and Shetland. All those places established funds, but the UK did not. That is perhaps the defining failure of energy policy in the UK over the past half-century, and it makes the inevitable transition all the harder.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: If he can answer that point, I would love to hear it.

Liam Kerr: If the principle is that Scotland should convert a finite natural source of wealth into a permanent future financial asset, why was the £750 million from the ScotWind auction not put into such a fund?

Stephen Gethins: First, we have said that we will establish a ScotWind wealth fund during this parliamentary session, which was not done 50 years ago by Labour or Conservative Administrations, to our cost.

I want to touch on the amendment in my name, because there is still a point to be made on that. Even at this late stage, I call on the UK Government to do the right thing and get behind it. I hope that, given his intervention, Liam Kerr will get behind it, too.

During the past four years, the energy profits levy, which was introduced by the Conservatives, has generated £12 billion from North Sea oil and gas—dwarfing the ScotWind funds that Liam Kerr talked about. That policy is driving decline in the North Sea and, shamefully, it is being used to plug short-term spending gaps in the UK. That is grossly irresponsible and places a just energy transition at risk. We continue to call on the UK Government to replace the energy profits levy with a fair system that taxes excess profits but protects jobs, energy security and investment in our energy sector. I very much hope that we will see some progress on that in the budget in the autumn.

I conclude by restating the Government's unwavering commitment to supporting Scotland's valued and highly skilled oil and gas workforce during the transition. That workforce gives us a competitive advantage, and we will continue to do all that we can with the limited powers that are currently available to us to support them.

However, we have to start doing things differently. Although colleagues will focus on two individual decisions today, I urge them to look at what can be done, even at a late stage, to help with the transition.

I move amendment S7M-01376.5, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"recognises that the UK Government will be making quasi-judicial decisions in relation to Jackdaw and Rosebank, and in doing so, will have to make assessments, in line with the updated statutory guidance issued following recent court cases, of the full climate impact of those proposals, while also taking due account of energy security considerations; believes that all applications must be fully assessed on a case by case basis within the appropriate legal framework; supports efforts to deliver a just transition and to take climate action to support the utilisation of clean energy to benefit the creation of jobs in the north east and protect the environment, and calls for the creation of a Future Generations Fund from all further income from oil and gas resources taken by the UK Treasury, dedicated to help grow Scotland's renewables industry, support the communities who have generated hundreds of billions of pounds in taxation for the UK Government, and strengthen the supply chain to ensure ongoing investment and job creation in Scotland."

15:19

Duncan Massey (North East Scotland) (Reform): I am pleased that we have another opportunity to discuss our oil and gas industry. In particular, I hope that the Scottish Government will change its current policy and start backing new

projects and new drilling, including at Jackdaw and Rosebank, which seem to have become the most famous oil and gas fields in the history of the entire North Sea.

On the other hand, I am less pleased by the Tory debate. The Tories kid on that they are great champions of the industry after giving it an absolute kicking while they were in government. They were the architects of net zero and, despite what Liam Kerr says, the vast majority of the parliamentary Tory party still are. They introduced the net zero laws that are used to block these much-needed projects, abolished maximum economic recovery as the long-standing national strategy for the industry and replaced an oil-focused regulator with a sinister transition authority. In addition, they introduced the EPL at 75 per cent, which Labour then increased to 78 per cent, further crushing the industry.

I return to this place and the actual debate. This Government—

Stephen Gethins: Will the member give way?

Duncan Massey: No. I am making my case.

This Government still seems to have a presumption against new oil and gas. It has not updated its energy policy yet. In the programme for government, it calls on the UK Government—

Stephen Gethins: On a point of fact, will the member give way?

Duncan Massey: Go on, then.

Stephen Gethins: I am seeking a bit of clarity. I will not sit here and defend, as he puts it, the "sinister" Conservatives or some of their policies. However, the policies on net zero are there to tackle climate change, regardless of whether we agree on the way in which they are being implemented. Does he agree that we should have net zero? Does he agree that we should be tackling climate change?

Duncan Massey: I do think that we should be tackling climate change, but there must be a global policy. Reducing emissions in the UK and Scotland has zero effect; it simply offshores emissions to China, India and the United States. Everyone in this place knows that.

I return to the programme for government. It calls on the UK Government

"to take an evidence-led and case-by-case approach to decisions on North Sea projects, with climate compatibility and energy security as primary considerations."

The Scottish Government is sitting on the fence. It is pathetic.

The other day, I asked the cabinet secretary what more evidence the Government needs to change its policy and be more supportive. We all seem to acknowledge that the reality, under all scenarios, is that the UK and Scotland will need oil and gas for decades. In the UK, 75 per cent of primary energy still comes from oil and gas. Transport fuels, key chemicals and gases are vital for heating and industrial processes. Of course, the more renewables we add, the more flexible gas back-up we need for generation.

We know that we are still very dependent on oil and gas, that we are facing high prices due to disrupted supply and that emissions are lower for domestic production of oil and gas. Why can we just not acknowledge that and back our North Sea oil and gas industry, which is probably still our largest single employer, our largest taxpayer and our largest single source of project engineering capability? Why not just change the policy and acknowledge that?

The current backdrop could not be more worrying. We may be heading for the mother of all energy crunches this winter. Across Europe, we need more diesel, we need more aviation fuel and we need lots more natural gas. Geopolitics is the proximate cause of the crunch, but decades of delusional policy making have left Scotland, Britain, and all of Europe badly exposed to energy reality. We have less domestic production, we have closed refineries and plants across many sectors, and we have some of the highest energy prices in the world.

Given that backdrop, would it not be good if we could simply start up some ready-to-go new fields? Does anybody know some?

I call again for this Parliament to become a vocal champion of the North Sea oil and gas industry, and not be negative, as it has been in the past, and not to sit on the fence, as it is now. I call for Parliament to give clear, unambiguous support for Jackdaw and Rosebank, for new drilling and licences and, if necessary, for new UK laws.

I also call for clear support for activities that drive jobs, enable supply chains to continue investing and strengthen the North Sea, providing major tax revenues, a stronger balance of payments, greater energy security and the opportunity to reduce imports and costs.

Lloyd Melville (Angus South) (SNP): Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: The member is winding up. He is over his time.

Duncan Massey: These policies are reserved, but support from this Parliament and from this Government really does matter. Please back our industry, and please back my amendment.

I move amendment S7M-01376.2, to insert at end:

", and agrees that, for the long-term success of the industry, exploration drilling and licences should be resumed."

15:24

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues, because they are serious, they are important, and indeed, they are urgent.

However, we need to decide what kind of debate we want to have. At times, Liam Kerr was trying to make the reasonable argument and balance the difficulties, but it does not help when he then lapses into slightly unnecessary and, dare I say, slightly hypocritical point scoring.

The reality is this: we are trying to balance four difficult, competing and at times conflicting principles in this debate. The first is the maturity of the UK continental shelf. Secondly, there is an imperative to decarbonise and electrify, not least because of climate change but also because of the maturity of the continental shelf. The third is our ongoing reliance on gas, whether we like it or not. The final point, and I am surprised that no one has brought this up, is the resilience and security of our energy supply.

At times, those things conflict over the short, medium or long term and need to be balanced, but anyone who claims that doing so is simple or binary is not telling the truth. We need to take a balanced approach and have a strategy, but that ultimately relies on making decisions that are robust and defensible, which the Conservatives would do well to think about.

If we look at the continental shelf, the simple fact that anyone who talks about turning on the taps must realise is that 80 to 90 per cent of our extractable resource is gone. To put it another way, we would need four to five times our current gas supply from the North Sea in order to meet domestic demand. We passed the point of self-sufficiency in 2004. However, that contrasts with the point that 2.1 million homes in Scotland are reliant on gas. We need to be very mindful that our heat pump roll-out is proceeding at a rate of just 7,300 a year. At that rate, it will take 280 years for every household to be able to electrify its heat.

I say to those who say that we should not develop the fields that it does matter where our gas comes from. I acknowledge the point that Liam Kerr made, because less than half of our current supplies can come from the UK. Seventy per cent of our imports come from Norway in order to make up that balance. However, the remaining third of our imports comes from other parts of the world, and their carbon footprint is threefold that of gas that comes from the North Sea. Therefore, if we want to reduce our carbon footprint in the short term—this is where the short term and the long term conflict with each other—it makes sense that we use our own supplies. We also need to be mindful of security, because there are those who seek to disrupt our supply.

If it was down to me, I would say yes, because I think that it makes sense to look at these fields, but it is not down to me. The decision that is taken must be robust and, as Mr Gethins pointed out, it is quasi-judicial.

Liam Kerr: I recognise Mr Johnson's contribution, but does he acknowledge that, as he said in the debate two weeks ago, it is very important that the chamber shows leadership on this issue? The North Sea transition task force has reported that 25,000 jobs have been lost in the industry since Labour was elected. Surely Daniel Johnson wants to signal in the strongest possible terms that we need to license Jackdaw and Rosebank. Will he?

Daniel Johnson: We need to reach a decision that can be relied on and that will not be challenged in the courts again, which is why we are here. That sums up the hypocrisy and the irony of this debate: although the Conservatives want to point to every other angle in the chamber, this would not be an issue if the decisions had been robust. The delay to approval would not have happened if the environmental impact assessment had taken account of scope 3 emissions and looked at the wider downstream carbon emissions of such extraction. The approvals would have stood if the decisions in 2022 and 2023 had been robust, but they were not, so perhaps the Conservatives should look at themselves.

I appreciate a short motion, and the Conservative motion is short, but if the Conservatives wanted a short motion, perhaps it should have said, "Sorry, we should have made a better decision." However, I tell you what: if we were going to have motions like that from the Conservatives, there would be little parliamentary business time to consider anything else.

I move amendment S7M-01376.3, to leave out after second "that" to end and insert:

"oil and gas production will remain part of Scotland's energy mix for decades to come and is vital to energy security and the economic security of working families and communities; notes that decisions on whether to grant consent for the Rosebank and Jackdaw developments will be taken at ministerial level by the UK Energy Secretary through a quasi-judicial process, with final consenting decisions resting with the North Sea Transition Authority; recognises the need for a wider programme of reindustrialisation, supporting jobs, domestic supply chains and investment in communities across Scotland, and believes that the transition to a lower-carbon economy must be a just transition that protects workers and communities while creating new industrial opportunities in the energy industries of the future."

15:29

Kristopher Leask (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I agree with the minister's point that, frankly, we are seeing a great deal of hypocrisy, given the debate that we had last week and the opposition that there was to speaking about our constitutional future. Had Mr Kerr's motion truly tried to deliver for workers in the oil and gas sector and called for concrete action that the Government can deliver, that would have been commendable. Instead, today's debate demonstrates, once again, that the Tories and Reform do not, in fact, care about the working people in the oil and gas sector and their families. They do not seek to deliver action that we can deliver here.

I take this opportunity to state the blindingly obvious. Tory and Reform members are intentionally misleading Scots to score political points when they say that more oil and gas will create long-lasting jobs, increase energy security or bring down bills. The reality is that, in just a decade, hundreds of new licences have been issued and new fields consented but the number of jobs that are supported by oil and gas has more than halved, from 441,000 to 214,000. Over their lifetime, the new fields are expected to produce a measly six months' worth of UK gas demand and two months' worth of oil—so much for job creation and energy security.

Mark Simpson: Will the member take an intervention?

Kristopher Leask: No, not today. The member can get his party's Facebook clips on someone else's time.

Russia's war in Ukraine has forced the UK to pay an estimated £183 billion in additional energy costs, which, according to the CCC, is £80 billion more than it would have been necessary to invest to enable the entire UK to reach net zero. Therefore, instead of having cheaper clean energy, folks are left with higher energy bills and more exposure and vulnerability to international price shocks.

The evidence could not be clearer: more oil and gas will not save jobs for the future, increase energy security or bring down bills. However, more oil and gas will line the pockets of corporation executives and their shareholders. BP's profits just increased exponentially, more than doubling year on year to reach over £4 billion. The worst part is that taxpayers contributed to those sky-high profits to the tune of hundreds of millions of pounds. North Sea fields are now so uneconomical that the projects require tax breaks—and they have done for decades.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Kristopher Leask: No, I am going to continue.

In the case of Rosebank alone, we can expect a net tax loss of more than £250 million, while the field's owners, Equinor and Ithaca Energy, will earn £1.5 billion in profit.

The Scottish Greens will not support any of the other amendments today or the motion. Although we support the broad principles of the future generations fund that the minister calls for, determining licensing applications on a case-by-case basis is, as the minister knows, a point that we disagree on.

Likewise, although Daniel Johnson's amendment makes commendable points on the work that is needed to support a transition for workers, it fails to recognise that more dependency on oil and gas is not the same as greater energy security.

Equally, the Liberal Democrat amendment has much the same logic, although I welcome the Liberal Democrats' recognition of the need to electrify en masse and deliver greater energy efficiency.

Finally, Reform is still grappling with what a finite resource means, and its amendment calls for no actual action to help anyone, be it workers or families, or for lower energy bills, so nothing has changed there.

I encourage—perhaps in vain—members to support our amendment and get squarely behind our oil and gas workers' and supply chain's futures for the long term.

I move amendment S7M-01376.1, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"agrees that consent should not be granted for the Jackdaw and Rosebank oil and gas fields; believes that the exploitation of these fields would neither deliver secure energy jobs for oil and gas workers nor cheaper energy for consumers, but would instead facilitate profiteering by corporate executives and shareholders; highlights polling published earlier in 2026 indicating that almost two thirds of people in Scotland oppose new oil and gas drilling in the North Sea whilst 90% care about climate change; urges both the UK and Scottish governments to support renewable energy, particularly community- or publicly-owned projects, as the only pathway to provide economic security for workers and energy security for the nation, and calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that the Just Transition Fund delivers genuine economic transformation and resilience for workers and communities."

15:32

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie (Edinburgh Northern) (LD): We are, once again, talking about two fields that, although quite different propositions, have together become, to some, a kind of litmus test as to whether someone cares about the climate crisis. The issue of consent for the two fields has become

emblematic in a way that is deeply unhelpful and does not do much to move us towards where we all know we need to get to: a society that has weaned itself off fossil fuels.

We also have to be honest that the debate today will do nothing to bring down bills overnight and, no matter how we vote today, it will not solve the climate crisis overnight either. I know that many of us in the chamber take the climate crisis very seriously. I do, and it is one of the main reasons why I am in politics. I have made changes in my life to reduce my dependence on fossil fuels, but I recognise that oil and gas still play a big part in my day to day life, from the way that the food I eat is produced and transported—

Stephen Gethins: Will the member give way?

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: I will.

Stephen Gethins: I thank the member for giving way so early in her speech and for the comments that she has made. I think that she will agree that there have been failures in energy policy. Our amendment seeks to send a message on where the funding should be—it should be used in establishing a futures fund. The UK is about the only country that has discovered oil and gas but has never established such a fund. Given the good sense that I know that she has, will she endorse that approach?

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: In response, I only have to point to ScotWind and the points that were made earlier. For the record, I reject the idea that Scotland has not benefited from oil and gas in the past, and we would have concerns about—

Stephen Gethins: Will the member give way? I think that she might have misunderstood my intervention.

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: I will keep going.

I recognise that oil and gas still play a big part in my day-to-day life, from the way in which the food that I eat is produced and transported and the way in which the buildings that I work in are heated to the way in which the electricity that powers the laptop that I wrote this speech on was generated. The inconvenient truth is that, as a society, we still use too much oil and gas. The fact that we are still, in 2026—with everything that we know about the climate crisis and the causes of it—talking about whether to grant licences shows a failure on the part of successive Governments and society to bring down demand. It is as simple as that. The question must now be how we deal with current demand in the most responsible way while creating a credible and reliable pathway away from oil and gas that is fair to workers. That is the real and complex challenge that Scotland faces, which I think we all recognise in the Parliament.

The oil and gas industry has long been a totemic part of Scotland's economy, having provided employment, supported businesses and created a generation of highly skilled workers. There are communities that still rely heavily on the industry for their livelihoods. An effective and fair transition must be practical and rooted in the reality that communities in the north-east and other areas face. That means supporting workers and businesses through change and investing in skills and innovations.

While we ramp up the development of renewables projects, it is important that supply chains of skilled workers and infrastructure are maintained. Leaders in the renewables industry will point out that the success of future offshore wind developments relies on those supply chains being in place.

We know that the transition is not moving nearly fast enough, and we need to see more urgency on the part of the Scottish Government, particularly in rural industries such as agriculture, forestry and fishing, where advancements in new technologies are slow. As we know, rural communities are particularly—

Stephen Gethins: Will the member give way?

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: No, I will make some progress—I am sorry.

Rural communities are paying for the ever-rising cost of fuel and continue to be disproportionately dependent on fossil fuels for heating and transport.

Given that we cannot simply wish away existing levels of demand right now, we have been clear that, if it makes more environmental sense to satisfy some of our current demand for gas ourselves rather than import it from far-flung countries with questionable practices—and we are talking about only a few per cent of our demand—then the UK Government should seriously consider doing so. If we can replace some of our imports that perform worst in carbon intensity, we should consider doing so. Equally, if—as I am being told—it is important for the future of our renewables capacity to maintain supply chains of skilled workers, logistics and infrastructure, that needs to be part of the conversation. However, if, as expected, the UK Government decides to grant consent for Jackdaw, that should be viewed as limited respite in the context of the transition away from fossil fuels.

We should all recognise that the real carbon cost is not in the production of oil and gas, because, fundamentally, it does not really matter where they are produced; the problem is that we are all still burning them. Therefore, reducing Scotland's reliance on oil and gas must remain central to our response to the climate crisis. That means

accelerating the electrification of heating, transport and industry; promoting better energy efficiency in our homes and buildings; and scaling up renewable energy production across the country in a way that does not alienate the communities that host those projects. In that way, our energy demands can increasingly be met by renewable energy sources, oil and gas can stay in the ground, energy prices can come down and Scots whose livelihoods have depended on the energy sector for generations are not simply abandoned but are instead part of an effective and fair transition. Rather than more of these debates, people want their politicians to get round the table and get stuff done.

I move amendment S7M-01376.4, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"notes that the UK Government is due to make a determination on the Jackdaw gas field and the Rosebank oil and gas field; recognises that, in an ever-changing geopolitical climate, there is a real need to consider Scotland's energy security; believes that, in the case of the Jackdaw development, there could be arguments in favour of consent, including lower carbon intensity, improving UK energy security and economic benefits for those communities directly linked to the oil and gas sector that risk being left behind without a strong just transition; further believes, however, that any decision on consent should not delay the transition away from fossil fuels nor the work required to reduce demand for oil and gas; believes that there is a strong need for a greater electrification of heating, transport and industry, an improvement in energy efficiency in homes and an expansion of renewable energy in order to meet net zero objectives, and calls on both the Scottish and UK governments to work together to reduce emissions, drive down demand on fossil fuels and deliver a just transition."

The Presiding Officer: We move to the open part of the debate.

15:38

Stuart McMillan (Inverclyde) (SNP): I was not too sure whether the Conservatives were trying to play party politics or games today, but thankfully, when Liam Kerr spoke, he referred to the fact that the debate is on a reserved issue, which was not referenced in the motion that he moved. [*Interruption*.] Sorry, does the minister want to make an intervention? No? Okay.

The Presiding Officer: Please do not heckle speakers from a sedentary position, minister.

Stuart McMillan: Particularly when they are from the same side.

Thankfully, the Liberal Democrat and Labour amendments referenced the fact that it is a reserved issue.

Liam Kerr: Will the member give way?

Stuart McMillan: I have just started, Mr Kerr. I do not want to have round 2 after last week, so I will see what happens as I continue my speech.

Given that the debate is on a reserved matter, I was waiting for Reform members to stand up and walk out the chamber. Sadly, they are still here and their amendment has been moved. This debate highlights how pathetic their stunt last week was—

Duncan Massey: *rose—*

Stuart McMillan: If the member will apologise for last week, I will take his intervention.

Duncan Massey: The point that we are making is that the Parliament should be an unambiguous supporter of the oil and gas industry and put pressure on the UK Government to make the decision to give consent.

Stuart McMillan: That was not an apology for last week.

I turn to the motion and the amendments before us. The Scottish Government's amendment states that the UK Government will be making

"quasi-judicial decisions in relation to Jackdaw and Rosebank".

The minister touched on that, and the point is also raised in Daniel Johnson's amendment for Labour. The Government's amendment also states its belief that

"all applications must be fully assessed on a case by case basis within the appropriate legal framework",

which Daniel Johnson touched on earlier. In addition, it states that the Government

"supports efforts to deliver a just transition and to take climate action to support the utilisation of clean energy".

I sincerely wish that we did not have to wait for the UK Government to take decisions about the industry in Scotland. I want Scotland to be a normal independent country, where we can decide energy policy to ensure that we reap the benefits of our extraordinary energy resources. No one can argue that the Norwegians, who have a sovereign wealth fund of $2 trillion, have done a bad job in managing their energy affairs. I say to Stephen Kerr that that is in stark contrast to the daylight robbery that has happened in the North Sea since the 1970s, which has meant that the north-east and other parts of Scotland have not fully benefited from our natural resources.

It was not until 2007, when the SNP came to power, that the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which had been spoken about for many years, could be delivered. I have family who live up in the north-east, and we had spoken about it many times in the past. It was not until the SNP came to power in 2007 that the AWPR could be

delivered, despite all the billions of pounds. [*Interruption*.]

I remind Stephen Kerr that £350 billion went to Westminster, and the money did not always come back to Scotland. For decades, Labour and the Tories have raided Scotland's energy revenues and treated our oil and gas industry as a cash cow where jobs are expendable. Scotland's oil and gas wealth has flowed south to fill the coffers of the UK Treasury, leaving Scotland with the economic scraps from Westminster's table. I will repeat that figure—the Treasury has taken more than £350 billion of Scotland's energy wealth for Westminster. Despite that, Scots are currently paying some of the highest energy bills in Europe. [*Interruption*.] Mr Kerr, why should my constituents in Inverclyde be worried about—

The Presiding Officer: Speak through the chair. It is not a two-way love-in, if you do not mind.

Stuart McMillan: It is certainly not a love-in with Mr Kerr.

In an energy-rich Scotland, why should my constituents in Inverclyde be worried about turning on the heating? It is a scandal that some people in Scotland are worried about putting on the heating because of Westminster's failure.

However, despite the fact that we have missed out on the full benefit of our oil and gas bonanza, with our vast low-cost renewable energy supply—

Stephen Kerr: Will the member give way on that point?

Mark Simpson: Will the member take an intervention?

Stuart McMillan: My goodness. I am in my last minute, and I intend to continue.

With our vast low-cost renewable energy supply, Scotland has a second chance to get it right. I am pleased that both the Tories and Reform are calling for the Parliament to state its case today. That might suggest that they are on a journey towards calling for independence; I do not know. I look forward to their contributing to future debates on all energy, social security and taxation powers coming to Scotland, and I particularly look forward to Reform contributing to future debates on rejoining the European Union.

The Tories and other unionist parties have squandered our first energy economy and our first energy opportunity. Let us not let them plunge more households into energy poverty as we move towards renewables.

I am conscious that I am over my five minutes, so I will end on that point.

15:43

Jack Middleton (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): I thank my north-east colleague Liam Kerr for bringing such an important conversation to the chamber. It is a conversation that dominated the summer's news cycle, and a conversation that it is essential for us to have if we are to address Scotland's energy needs of today and outline the support that is required to build our industry of tomorrow.

I contend that nowhere was that conversation louder than in Aberdeen Central. My constituency is the principal hub of Scotland's oil and gas industry, and the local workforce that I represent has powered the UK for decades. Unfortunately, those workers have been let down by politicians of all parties who have allowed this conversation—

Craig Hoy (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Will the member give way?

Jack Middleton: I will give way to Mr Hoy shortly.

We have allowed this conversation to descend into a false choice between left and right, whereby being pro-North Sea somehow means that we are anti-renewables, with all room for nuance squeezed. All the while, it is Scottish workers who pay the price for wide-scale job losses.

Craig Hoy: The member mentioned Aberdeen Central. If the SNP's credentials with regard to oil and gas are so in tune with those of the Scottish people and those who live in Aberdeenshire, why did it get absolutely trounced in the Aberdeen South by-election?

Jack Middleton: I am pleased that Mr Hoy has given me the opportunity to remind the chamber that I won in Aberdeen Central by 7,000 clear votes. Thank you very much, Mr Hoy.

I have been up front with my constituents, with whom I have an outstanding relationship, about where I stand on these very projects, and I am grateful for the opportunity to express those beliefs on the parliamentary record today.

Liam Kerr: I am very grateful to the member for giving way. I am genuinely listening to him very carefully, and I hear his position on Jackdaw and Rosebank, but I note that, in August, senior SNP MSP Paul McLennan said that Jackdaw and Rosebank should categorically not be consented to. The member seems to disagree, so at decision time, will he do what he believes in, or will he do what he is told?

Jack Middleton: I urge Liam Kerr to have patience and let me make progress with my speech. I assure the chamber that I am big enough and ugly enough to have my own opinions on

these things—and if the member gives me the chance, I will formulate them for the chamber.

I share my dismay that the institution with total and absolute decision-making powers on this—the UK Government—has delayed its judgment to suit its own narrow interests. Labour has made the political choice to leave our workers, our industry and our economy in the lurch, because it does not want the energy reality that we all face to be on the ballot paper in the Holborn and St Pancras by-election. Liam Kerr has previously described that decision as a disgrace, and I whole-heartedly agree.

However, I ask in good faith, if that delay is reprehensible, what should we make of the fact that the Conservative Government botched approval of these developments and set them back by years? Of course, the only reason we are having this conversation about Jackdaw and Rosebank in September 2026 is that the Tories, by cutting corners, left the projects legally vulnerable.

Mark Simpson: Will the member give way?

Jack Middleton: I am going to make progress.

I know that I have limited time, and I digress. From whatever angle we approach this conversation, the reality that we all face is that oil and gas meet 75 per cent of our energy needs. It is totally reasonable to argue that we will have to reduce that reliance, but our need for oil and gas in order to survive will not end next week or next year—or, indeed, next decade—and blocking Jackdaw and Rosebank will not end that need, either.

In fact, blocking Jackdaw's gas from flowing directly into our grid to heat more than a million homes this winter would place these islands in a perilous position. With gas supplies running low, the Strait of Hormuz blocked and in crisis, and blockages on the gas that we receive from Norway, we would be forced to double down on our ever-increasing reliance on fracked gas from Donald Trump's regime in America. That gas is liquefied and shipped halfway around the world at a rate of carbon intensity that is significantly higher than that of what we produce domestically.

Let me be clear: while we continue to need oil and gas, I will continue to support using Scotland's domestic resources over foreign imports. I believe that doing so will provide a much-needed vote of confidence in our workforce and our industry and, more important, it will create wealth for all of Scotland.

How we utilise that wealth, which is generated in Scotland and unlocked by a Scottish workforce harnessing Scottish resources, is deeply important. Mr McMillan touched on the fact that my corner of Scotland has sent more than 300 billion quid in taxes from the North Sea to the UK Treasury. Aberdeen residents like me, Liam Kerr and Mr Massey know that, in comparison with cities in energy-rich, independent nations—I am thinking of Stavanger—my hometown sadly has very little to show for it. Our wealth has been squandered.

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): I appreciate Mr Middleton taking my intervention, and I appreciate, too, his candour in respect of his position on oil and gas. How many of his colleagues share his view?

Jack Middleton: As I assured Liam Kerr earlier, I am big enough, ugly enough and, despite some commentary last week from former Government ministers, clever enough to formulate my own opinions and stand on my own two feet to convey them.

We know that these Scottish developments will create close to £1.5 billion in tax revenue by 2029 alone. That is wealth that is created in Scotland and which must stay in Scotland and be invested directly in Scotland's renewable industry to power our future. That has been my direct plea since giving Jackdaw and Rosebank my full and public support, and I am happy to see that reflected in Stephen Gethins's amendment.

Earlier this year, a YouGov poll found that almost two thirds of Scots agree that that money should be spent exclusively in Scotland. I hope that my parliamentary colleagues in the Conservative Party can join the majority of their constituents and back my calls on the matter. I am afraid that the Tories are increasingly looking to ape Reform's rhetoric in their calls for investment to be pulled from renewables projects, much to the dismay of the energy industry. Those calls are setting Scottish workers up to face a cliff edge, just like Labour has done. The Tories' anti-renewables rhetoric seems to stem from the top of the party in Westminster and it ignores the £150 billion of additional GVA that would be created for our economy by hitting net zero targets and scaling up the energy transition.

The question that we face at decision time is not a binary one about oil and gas or renewables: we need both, and that will continue to be the case for some time. We must accept that reality and work at pace to grow the industry of the future and to create Scottish jobs. That is why I support the amendment in Stephen Gethins's name.

15:50

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): As others have said, the motion is strangely silent on the fact that licensing is the responsibility of the UK Government and on the fact that a Tory UK Government lost in court for not

adhering to net zero legislation. I notice that Liam Kerr did not mention that that legislation was about net zero; that may be because Kemi Badenoch does not allow the Tories to talk about net zero any more.

I will let Stephen Kerr intervene, if he agrees that we still need to work towards net zero.

Stephen Kerr: The Conservative Party's position is very clear: we believe in a balanced approach to meeting our energy needs. I will make a point to Alan Brown about his question on what is not in the motion. I have sat in the chamber for more than five years listening to SNP members regularly opine about all kinds of issues that have nothing to do with the direct remit of this Parliament. What is preventing Alan Brown and other members, following the example of the member for Aberdeen Central, from standing up and saying, "Let's get on with the development of oil and gas opportunities for the sake of the Scottish economy"?

Alan Brown: Stephen Kerr's intervention lasted longer than I have spoke so far and I notice that he still didnae mention net zero.

As others have said, licensing is a quasi-judicial process and needs to be treated as such. However—maybe Stephen Kerr will want to listen to this—I believe that, if climate compatibility tests can be met and if oil and gas imports from other countries can be reduced, there is a logic to considering important revenue implications in relation to the associated licensing. Clearly, job creation and job retention are good for the Scottish economy, given that there has been a decline in the North Sea over the past few years. If we take at face value the information that the company Adura put out, £3.8 billion in tax revenues is to be welcomed.

That reiterates what Scotland's North Sea sector provides for the UK Treasury and underlines that it is still not too late to create a wealth fund. Many in the chamber, including Liam Kerr, who went on about it earlier, get exercised about how the £700 million of ScotWind funds have been utilised. However, none of those members ever raises a peep about the lack of an oil and gas fund. They shrug their shoulders when we point to Norway's $2.3 trillion sovereign wealth fund. The £700 million from ScotWind pales against the squandering of the North Sea's revenues by Westminster for decades. It shows that there has been a big lost opportunity, but it also shows that it is never too late. The £700 million from ScotWind is still a greater legacy than the UK Government has ever created.

Angela Ross (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform): Why did the Scottish Government not create a wealth fund with the money that it received from selling the seabed?

Alan Brown: That is ScotWind. I am sorry—the member will need to educate herself. That is the £700 million.

A future consideration has to be the ongoing development of the offshore energy sector and the development of our supply chain and manufacturing capability, which takes us to the need to reverse the decision on the possible £1.5 billion Ming Yang turbine manufacturing facility at Ardersier.

I will give way one more time.

Liam Kerr: On the point about a wealth fund, what is Mr Brown's answer to why the Scottish Government did not put the £750 million into a ScotWind fund and why it has instead spent around £80 million of it so far?

Alan Brown: As a fellow member of the Finance and Public Administration Committee, Liam Kerr knows the constraints of the Scottish fiscal framework and why the Scottish Government is having to manage that fund in the way that it is.

On legacy and our future direction, it is also critical that the pathways for the strategic spatial energy plan do not penalise Scotland's offshore sector. It is bad enough that the existing grid charging system impedes Scottish wind farm developments, without pathways possibly being chosen that do not provide future support for Scotland's offshore wind farms and grid connections.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP): There is a lot of misinformation in relation to ScotWind. Does Alan Brown recognise that it is about not only the windfall from the licensing of ScotWind but that, once the projects are up and running, there will be annual income from rental, which will lead to an ongoing legacy for generations to come, under Scotland's control?

Alan Brown: I thank Bob Doris for that intervention. I was going to mention that later. He is absolutely right. It is developing the projects to provide the revenues associated with power generation capacity that will create a proper wealth fund for future generations.

At present, when it comes to grid charging, we are told that it is only right that Scottish wind projects pay more money in grid charges than those in the rest of the UK, because that electricity has to be moved south. However, an explanation is never given as to why generators in the south of England are actually paid to connect to the grid.

National Energy System Operator figures show that an intermittent generator in north Scotland pays £28 per kilowatt while, in the Cotswolds, an

intermittent generator gets paid £14 per kilowatt. How is that fair or logical, and how does it even adhere to the laws of physics? It is not as if the south of England grid does not require upgrades either. National Grid figures show that £17 billion of grid upgrades are planned for East Anglia, south England and London. How do the negative generation charges pay for that? When will we get a fair grid charging system that does not impede development in the north of Scotland?

There is also a chance for Scotland to be a world leader for floating offshore wind. We are world leading in marine energy, which is another opportunity that can be won or lost, depending on future UK Government support in the contracts for difference auctions. These are technologies that the UK Government could invest in directly as part of a just transition. How beneficial would it be to invest £18 billion directly into those technologies, rather than Sizewell C nuclear station?

We need to see a coherent and wider offshore energy strategy overall. Where are the calls for support for the Acorn carbon capture scheme? The plug was first pulled on Acorn by the UK Tory Government back in 2015. Eleven years on, and what was originally the most advanced cluster now lags behind north of England clusters, which can also access £22 billion of revenue that is allocated for carbon capture and storage. Why are there not louder voices across the chamber calling out the UK Government for its lack of support for Acorn? Why was Grangemouth not supported by the UK Government, when the UK Government can pay £1.3 million a day for British Steel? What effect has the Grangemouth closure had on energy security and transport fuel costs?

Careful consideration must be given to the licensing for Rosebank and Jackdaw and the associated climate compatibility tests and checks. However, much greater efforts have to be put into supporting Scotland's opportunities for clean offshore energies and creating that wealth fund for future generations.

15:58

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): We are in Scotland's climate week, which is a celebration of positive action that people are taking across Scotland to lower our climate emissions and to increase our resilience to climate impacts.

The Tories have clearly let that pass them by, just like they must have missed the report four weeks ago from that well-known virtue signaller, the United Nations Environment Programme, that said that the crucial 1.5° warming limit that was agreed in 2015—including by the then Conservative UK Government—will be breached in the next few years, because of the failure to reduce emissions.

The Tories have also somehow missed decades of scientific evidence that the burning of fossil fuels is climate vandalism. Indeed, as long ago as 1977, ExxonMobil's own research predicted, with terrifying accuracy, that continued burning of fossil fuels would produce dangerous global warming. It is almost as if they do not care. All that matters, it seems, is corporate profit. The oil and gas industry has been complicit in driving climate catastrophe and covering up the evidence.

Today's motion wants to allow the industry to push us even further and ever faster towards total climate breakdown. We must change course—and fast.

A report that Robert Gordon University's Energy Transition Institute released this summer makes for uncomfortable reading for the Scottish Government. We have not delivered the jobs transition plans that oil and gas workers in the north-east need or deserve. Simply talking about transition and funding different ad hoc projects does not amount to a plan or strategy. The institute is clear that the next five years will provide the Goldilocks window during which we must match the decline in fossil energy jobs with growth in renewables and other green economy activity to avoid a permanent skills and capabilities decline that would make the transition much harder.

If it is well planned and well spent, the just transition fund could be a game changer for the communities and workers in the north-east of Scotland and elsewhere that currently rely on oil and gas—it could genuinely drive demand reduction. However, the problem is that the fund is not being properly planned, and it is not even being spent. A list of projects is not a plan.

We need a proper strategy that draws together licensing, procurement, funding, supply-chain support, education and skills, and which not only drives down demand but enables the north-east to be the powerhouse of our new green economy. I have been asking the Scottish Government for that plan for years. A draft was consulted on nearly four years ago, but nothing has been published since; when I asked the First Minister about it in February this year, he had no answer. So, after a summer of devastating climate change-induced fires that have ravaged our country, I ask the minister where that plan is and hope that he will answer that question in his closing remarks.

As well as the fact that £500 million is nowhere near enough funding, we are spending what has been agreed for just transition far too slowly—only one fifth of that budget has been allocated so far, with Government allocations at just under £16 million per year from now until 2029-30. Let us be

clear that those failures to plan and to invest are a gift to fossil fuel companies, which want to keep drilling, polluting and raking in the cash, and to their supporters in the chamber, who want to help them to drill, pollute and exploit even more. We must do better; otherwise, the disaster capitalists will keep dragging us towards climate chaos.

Communities and workers must be at the heart of our strategy for the future and empowered to own and control their own renewable energy generation and distribution. We must plan for genuine resilience against unpredictable global markets and price spikes that trap people in poverty. The fossil economy will never deliver that resilience; it belongs, as the Conservatives do, in the past.

16:02

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): It feels as if every few weeks we stand in this chamber, trapped in an endless cycle of political short-termism and false binaries as we repeat the exact same arguments about Scotland's energy mix. I get the frustration, though. World energy markets are in turmoil, and families up and down the country are being squeezed to breaking point at the pumps and by utility bills. Meanwhile, the long, slow decline of the North Sea basin over the past 12 years poses colossal economic challenges to every tier of government—I saw it a decade ago when I was an account manager at Scottish Enterprise. Yet, time and again, the response in the Parliament is to scramble for quick fixes and short-term solutions instead of confronting the foundational truth of how we got here.

We are surveying the wreckage of 40 years of failure of the political economy in this country and 40 years of systemic economic vandalism, engineered by the Conservative Party, which left the proud university city of Aberdeen dependent on resource extraction, handed our strategic sovereign energy assets to foreign multinationals and ensured that an oil and gas boom that was built by Scottish entrepreneurial genius and state support was monetised and strip mined, with privatised profits taken overseas.

Let us remember our economic history. As I have said before, when Margaret Thatcher took power in 1979, the British state still had the power to shape the future of the North Sea and reap its benefits for the people of this country because of Labour Government policy. British Petroleum was majority publicly owned; the British National Oil Corporation, headquartered in Glasgow, was owned outright by the public; and British Gas held direct strategic assets beneath the bed of the North Sea, with a big national storage reserve.

Civil servants warned ministers, and world-leading economists advised ministers, to build a sovereign wealth fund. Likewise, from Parliament to the picket line, the labour movement said, "Take those revenues and deposit them in a national investment bank." The choice was staring us in the face then: on one side was long-term stewardship, state-led industrial strategy and honest recognition—to quote Labour's 1983 manifesto—that

"the oil won't last forever",

and on the other side was ideological dogma, rapid privatisation and the squandering of our national wealth.

We know what choice the Conservatives made. The party that dared to lecture this nation on fiscal prudence became the party that, in the words of Harold Macmillan, sold off the family silver to bankroll tax cuts and engineer a short-term speculative bonanza in the North Sea.

Stephen Gethins: [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Alan Brown: [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Paul Sweeney: I have to give way to the minister.

Stephen Gethins: I thank Mr Sweeney for giving way. We have heard about ScotWind and producing a wealth fund from an infinite resource. Does he therefore agree that we should have a fund from a finite resource, which is something that Harold Wilson, Margaret Thatcher and so on failed to create? That fits with the member's argument beautifully.

Paul Sweeney: I absolutely support the creation of a wealth fund in that regard, and I would like to see it financed, but I am concerned by ScotWind being dependent on foreign direct investment. I am also concerned that only 30 per cent of the £29 billion supply chain is destined to come to Scotland. We need to concern ourselves with that.

The Conservative Party, which has dominated British politics for the past 40 years, took the greatest resource bounty in British history—a black gold wave that should have underwritten our schools, hospitals, infrastructure and industrial future for generations—and used it to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest and the welfare bill from the mass unemployment that it deliberately created through an inflationary surge in the pound and the Dutch disease that ensued. The Conservatives sacrificed our steel mills, our shipyards and our coalfields on the altar of free-market dogma, leaving permanent scars that continue to sear with pain across the working-class communities of this country. They could have protected the north-east, built a transition fund and safeguarded the workers

in Aberdeen and across Aberdeenshire, but they did not care. They abandoned those workers, and that is precisely why the Scottish people rose up in 1997, including in the old Conservative heartlands, wiped the Conservative Party off the political map of this country and voted to build this Parliament.

Colleagues, it did not have to be this way. We need only look across the North Sea to Norway. In 1990, Norway made a different choice. It took its petroleum wealth, stood up a state oil company and built a sovereign wealth fund. That required fiscal discipline and vision, but today that fund stands at more than $2.2 trillion. That is a permanent national legacy. The fund guarantees public services, funds state-of-the-art infrastructure and protects future generations for ever.

Alan Brown: Will the member give way?

Paul Sweeney: I am glad that Mr Brown is in such violent agreement with me, but I will not be giving way.

The Conservative Party robbed that future from the people of Scotland and the United Kingdom, so let us face that reality today. The North Sea is a mature basin that is in terminal decline. Fluctuations in world commodity prices might yield temporary blips, but the trend is clear. We cannot leave our country or the north-east region hostage to the whims of global market volatility, foreign-owned capital or resource depletion.

The economic ruin left to us by decades of Conservative failure will not be fixed overnight, but through a genuine state-driven green just transition, underwritten by public investment, strong trade union jobs and local supply-chain content, we can reindustrialise Scotland. We can ensure that the wealth created by Scotland's wind, wave and energy potential stays in the hands of the working people who build it and is not exported to foreign shareholders again and again.

However, we seem to be repeating the same mistakes, with our dependence on foreign firms, the selling off of key assets such as Wood Group and the failure to invest the ScotWind proceeds. As I mentioned, only 30 per cent of the supply chain is coming to Scotland, which is not good enough. I urge the Scottish Government to do better and support the amendment in the name of my friend, the member for Edinburgh Southern.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Mark Simpson. We have no time in hand.

16:08

Mark Simpson (North East Scotland) (Reform): I will briefly sum up. I will start with what Jack Middleton said, because I quite liked what he said. It is a shame that it took him five minutes to say that he supported oil and gas drilling, but it was good that we got there in the end. We know Mr Middleton's view quite clearly—he supports oil and gas drilling—but I suppose it would be quite useful for Scotland to know how many of Jack Middleton's colleagues share his view. There we go—silence.

I point out to the Greens that in a debate, it is disappointing that they do not wish to debate. I will just issue a quick reminder that Scotland accounts for 0.07 per cent of global emissions.

In the debate, it is important to zoom out a bit and take a look at the bigger picture to try to understand why we are in this sorry state in the North Sea. The answers come from the party on the benches behind me. During the Conservatives' years in power, they were the strongest advocates for net zero. Theresa May said that the UK should be "truly proud" of legislating for it. Boris Johnson came out and said that he was setting the

"most ambitious targets to cut emissions"

in the world.

We are very fortunate that Richard Tice, the then deputy leader of Reform UK, warned that net zero policy would drive up bills and said that Britain should become self-sufficient using its own oil and gas. I am delighted to say that, once again, the wisdom of Reform UK was proven to be correct. If Reform UK had not raised those concerns about the costs and impact of net zero and had not surged in the polls, I wonder whether the Conservatives would have ever changed course and abandoned net zero. I sincerely doubt that they would have done.

In September 2021, Kwasi Kwarteng was the energy secretary. He accepted that, as wholesale gas prices surged, suppliers would go bust. We ended up with 30 suppliers going bust, which affected 4 million customers and cost the taxpayers about £2.7 billion. After 11 years of Government, how had the Conservatives created a market so fragile that a wholesale price shock could wipe out numerous suppliers?

Lloyd Melville: Mark Simpson is putting the words of Kwasi Kwarteng into the *Official Report* and seems to be in support of them, from what I can glean. What other lessons does he take from the man who single-handedly crashed the UK economy four years ago?

Mark Simpson: I am quite confident in saying that I have never supported Kwasi Kwarteng.

Stephen Gethins: Malcolm Offord did.

Mark Simpson: I am not Malcolm Offord, for the avoidance of doubt. I will let Malcolm Offord speak for himself.

In April 2022, when Boris Johnson was Prime Minister, he admitted that Britain had

"drifted into dependence on foreign sources"

of energy because of

"policy fudges, decision-dodging and short-term thinking".

The record is damning: net zero targets, the imposition of the energy profits levy and an admission of failure and bad policy after the damage was done. Reform UK warned about that and has been proved right. Sadly, it was the public who paid the price for the Conservative failure.

Rachael Hamilton: Does Mark Simpson believe that it would be wise to register Reform's interests while he is speaking, particularly since Christopher Harborne is a major donor to Reform?

Mark Simpson: I am sorry—I am talking in a debate about oil and gas. Why would I be registering Christopher Harborne?

Rachael Hamilton: Well, that is my point—

Mark Simpson: So the answer is no.

I turn to the motion. Jackdaw is 150 miles east of Aberdeen. It is a gas field that is already installed and linked to existing infrastructure. Operators say that it could be connected to the UK network within months and, at peak, could provide more than 6 per cent of the UK's gas supply, which could heat around 1.4 million homes. Rosebank is Britain's largest untapped oil field. Together, they could account for 10 per cent of UK domestic gas production.

Opponents say that we should instead import gas. That is the same short-term thinking that Boris Johnson admitted to in 2022. We know that imported LNG is, on average, far more carbon intensive—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Mr Simpson, you have had your intervention time back. Unfortunately, we have very little time, so please draw your comments to a close.

Mark Simpson: The Parliament should agree that consent should be granted for the Jackdaw gas field and the Rosebank oil and gas field, recognising the significant economic benefits that they would bring.

16:13

Stephen Gethins: I again thank Liam Kerr for securing the debate. I do not want him to get thrown out of his own party for references to net zero. Councillor Massey certainly would not get thrown out of the Conservative Party for some of his beliefs. It has been hard to be in the middle of what has been, for a great deal of the debate, a family dispute, but, sad as that is, there are even more serious issues that need to be tackled.

I am really glad that Reform members managed to make it all the way through a debate about a reserved issue without walking out; I congratulate them on that. It is quite the transition: not only are they now sitting through and contributing to debates on reserved issues but they now think that we should be influencing policy from China, as well. I am afraid that, just as I cannot influence a UK Government decision on the issue, I certainly cannot influence the decisions that are made in Beijing. That has been quite the jump.

On Labour's perspective, I thank Mr Johnson for a serious intervention, because the consent is a quasi-judicial decision. Mr Johnson was right to reflect on that situation, given the mess that the Conservatives have made in relation to the matter and the fact that that is what has brought us to this point today.

We will back Labour's amendment and our amendment, but I gently point out that the sole difference between the amendments is a commitment to the sovereign wealth fund—a future generations fund—that was endorsed by Mr Sweeney earlier. I congratulate Mr Sweeney on coming round to that, and I look forward to Labour voting for it, given that it said that it is something that it will back.

Paul Sweeney: It is important to note, as a point of procedure, that pre-emption applies, so that is not possible. However, we agree, in spirit, that we would support the idea.

Stephen Gethins: When it comes to a multibillion pound sovereign wealth fund, I am sure that the member can overcome his concerns around pre-emption, especially given that the energy profits levy has raised £12 billion in just four years—an amount that dwarfs what it is possible for ScotWind to produce.

On that point, let me turn to the Liberal Democrats. I find it astonishing that the Liberal Democrats want us to produce a sovereign wealth fund for an infinite resource—I agree with them on that—but not produce a sovereign wealth fund for a finite resource, when that has been established everywhere else in the world. Can Sanne Dijkstra-Downie explain her thinking behind that?

Willie Rennie *rose—*

Stephen Gethins: Maybe Willie Rennie can do some of the talking for her.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Behave yourself.

Willie Rennie: Yes, I think that that is inappropriate. Sanne Dijkstra-Downie is more than capable of speaking for herself.

Is this not just a bit of a distraction from the fact that the SNP has failed for years to set up a wealth fund, based on the resource that it has? Is the SNP not seeking to divert attention to a UK Government for a failure that—as it recognises—it has also made for a number of years? Surely the minister should focus on what his Government can do with the money that it has, given that it has failed to act on that so far.

Stephen Gethins: I will happily give way to Sanne Dijkstra-Downie on this point, if she wants to come in.

No?

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie: Please carry on.

Stephen Gethins: "Please carry on." Thank you very much.

On that point, this is a Conservative motion on the oil and gas industry. It is a Conservative failure on a futures generation fund, which simply was not set up under Labour and was not set up under a Conservative-Liberal Administration when they had the ability to do so. This Government has put such a fund for the infinite resource of renewables in the programme for government. That is not in the UK Government's programme for government, and it is entirely appropriate for us to make that case. I fail to see why the Liberal Democrats think that a fund should be set up for an infinite resource but not a finite resource.

Mr Leask accepts those broad principles, and I thank him for that.

Paul Sweeney: [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Stephen Gethins: I should make some progress.

With regard to my colleagues, Stuart McMillan is right to say that this is a reserved issue, and the difference between independence and union is illustrated by the fact that £450 billion has been squandered, making the transition to renewables more difficult. That is a failure of half a century of Westminster energy policy.

Jack Middleton was right to highlight some of these issues. We are now waiting for the Holborn and St Pancras by-election before we even get a decision. Jack Middleton has been a champion for his city and this sector. Alan Brown was right to say that there has been no mention of net zero and to talk about the lack of support for the Acorn project and for Grangemouth.

Mark Simpson: Will the member take an intervention?

Stephen Gethins: No, I am reaching the end of my speech, and I do not want to get Mark Simpson into any more trouble than he is already in with his party. He talked about Reform's surge in the polls. It was such a surge that it came third. Talking about by-elections, it was such a surge that, in the by-election in Arbroath and Broughty Ferry in the north-east—the same place that he stood—the SNP's vote went up.

The lack of a wealth fund has been the most monumental failure of half a century of Westminster control over oil and gas. It makes the transition to renewables more difficult. I would not have thought that our amendment was terribly controversial. Lots of people agreed with it, and I therefore hope that they will back our amendment.

16:19

James Adams (North East Scotland) (Con): I am in a bit of shock, because I have found myself agreeing with multiple parties from across the chamber during the debate. I agree with Duncan Massey that this Parliament should be a champion of the oil and gas sector. That is why I am standing here today. I was so close to agreeing with everything that Jack Middleton said—I agreed with him until the end of his speech. I welcome his tone and his dialogue, and I hope that that will continue.

Today's debate is about whether we stand up for the communities in the north-east that rely on the oil and gas sector, and it is about how workers in that sector contribute to our security and our economy. As we heard from Liam Kerr, Labour is currently obsessed, as we saw at its party conference, with leading the world in virtue signalling. The SNP has a continued presumption against new oil and gas exploration, but, from what the member for Aberdeen Central said, that might be mellowing a bit. Such policies have had a direct impact on investor confidence. They have cost thousands of jobs and billions of pounds in lost revenue.

The Green position is clear: they fantasise that shutting off our domestic production will somehow make the demand for hydrocarbons magically disappear. However, as Willie Rennie noted, that demand—currently, oil and gas account for about 75 per cent of the UK's whole energy supply—will not disappear. What will disappear are the jobs, technology, expertise and capital funding that are needed to deliver a successful home-grown energy transition.

The Scottish Conservatives have been consistently clear: Jackdaw and Rosebank should be approved without further delay. Giving those projects the green light is not radical or controversial; it is just common sense.

According to the latest regional estimates, the UK oil and gas sector supported about 83,700 Scottish jobs and contributed some £14 billion to the economy in 2023. Those are not abstract numbers. They represent livelihoods, supply

chains and world-class skills and technologies across Scotland, which cannot simply be switched off like a tap and switched back on when another industry eventually needs them. Every month of delay creates more uncertainty and sends a message to investors that this country is not serious about supporting domestic energy production. We should be serious about keeping the jobs, skills and technologies alive in the oil and gas sector.

The approach makes no environmental sense. Importing liquefied natural gas is more carbon intensive, and shutting down domestic production would not end demand but would simply export production, emissions, jobs and much-needed tax revenue elsewhere.

The approach also makes no sense for our energy security. At a time when countries across the world are prioritising home-grown energy, Labour appears to be spending billions of pounds on increasing dependence on imports rather than backing the resources and skills that we already have in Scotland.

Members have argued that we need more renewable energy, and I do not necessarily disagree. The UK has decarbonised more than any other developed country so far, but we are not there yet. We need oil and gas, so it makes sense to produce our own as much as we can for as long as we need it.

I welcome Michael Marra's unequivocal support for Jackdaw and Rosebank. He gave that support, as any sensible loon from the north-east of Scotland would—much like Jack Middleton—but leadership means bringing his party with him. Today's test is whether Scottish Labour MSPs will vote for the position that their leader has publicly adopted.

John Swinney says that his Government supports Scotland's oil and gas workers, but he has repeatedly refused to say whether he backs Rosebank and Jackdaw. He and his MSPs finally have an opportunity to get off the fence. Today's choice is straightforward: members can support responsible domestic production, Scottish workers and billions of pounds of investment in this country while we continue to build our renewables sector, or they can vote for more delay, greater import dependence and the continued erosion of our world-class home-grown supply chain. Ultimately, the decision is for the UK Government. Andy Burnham has promised pragmatism in relation to the North Sea, but the Scottish Parliament should now demand delivery.

Income Tax

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The next item of business is a debate on motion S7M-01377, in the name of Craig Hoy, on protecting Scots from income tax rises. Members who wish to speak should press their request-to-speak button now.

16:24

Craig Hoy (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Each and every day, another analyst, watchdog or business group warns of the fiscal peril that Scotland faces. Audit Scotland, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Scottish Fiscal Commission have all sounded alarm bells because, under Labour and the Scottish National Party, we are locked in an economic doom loop.

As growth slows, taxes rise, and as taxes rise, growth slows. That is why the net contribution from Scottish income tax fell by £39 million in 2024-25 despite the new advanced rate of income tax and an increase in the top rate of tax. It is crystal clear that the SNP's fiscal experiment has failed. As Scotland's budget black hole mounts, it is clear that this is a present danger to Scottish taxpayers, as our motion makes clear.

SNP ministers will seek to blame someone else for their present predicament. They will say that inflation, Donald Trump and the war in Iran are to blame. They will say that the fiscal formula and the previous Conservative Government are to blame. They will say that it is the fault of the union, as if independence will somehow balance the Scottish Government's own spending plans. Ministers will even claim that they are fixing the problem through public service reform and £1.5 billion in planned efficiencies, but where are they? We found out today that those plans are "off course".

Is it not the truth that, after 20 years in office, blaming others simply will not work? A Government that wants to take responsibility for decisions on the Scottish economy will not take responsibility for the economic decisions that it has already taken. Scotland now faces a £5 billion budget deficit. To plug that gap, taxpayers could face increases of up to £5,000 per year. That is the true cost of John Swinney's income tax bombshell.

Our analysis shows that, if the SNP sought to plug that gap through income tax increases, every single Scottish taxpayer would be hit by an additional bill of £1,400 per year. The SNP loves to say that Scotland has the fairest tax system in the world—so much so that it engineered what one of its tax advisers described as the

"smallest income tax cut in history".

It looks likely that filling the black hole is set to be pushed on to those who earn more than £43,000 a year. By 2030, that will be the majority of full-time workers—nurses, teachers and heavy goods vehicle drivers. To raise the amount that is required, nearly 1 million higher-rate Scottish taxpayers would have to pay an additional £4,900 per year. That is a 5 grand bill for the SNP's repeated failure to realise that it cannot tax its way to economic growth.

However, it does not have to be like that. It was a political choice for the Government to spend more on social security. It was a political choice to employ more civil servants than the rest of the UK and to pay them more. It was a political choice to distract from growth with the pipe dream of another independence referendum. Our motion confirms that we would reduce the size of the state and the size of the benefits bill by ensuring that we get back to a balanced budget.

On the Reform motion, I have to say that imitation is the best form of flattery. I refer members to a BBC report from 7 April 2026, in which my colleague Russell Findlay and I proposed a zero-rate tax cut to uprate the personal allowance. That said, our costed proposals were set out clearly in pounds and pence and not in dodgy cryptocurrency, so perhaps Malcolm Offord and his colleagues could not equate them.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): The Conservatives' proposals to balance the budget and close the £5 billion gap that the Scottish Government faces rest on substantial cuts to social security. When the Conservatives were in office at Westminster, they made substantial cuts to social security. A study in the *BMJ* estimated that that resulted in more than 300,000 people dying earlier than they otherwise would have. What impact assessment have the Conservatives made of the changes they would make to Scotland's social security system, and how many people's lives would be ended earlier as a result of those changes?

Craig Hoy: The member will be well aware that that study is highly contested. The best thing that we can do for people who are at home is get them treatment through the national health service to get them back out to work. That is the best solution for their health and the wealth of the nation.

To return to our motion, we are simply asking for the SNP and its ministers to remain true to their word and to confirm what was in their manifesto. That is why, today, we say that the SNP must rule out new income tax bands and rate rises, shrink the size of the state and get Scotland growing again. However, I doubt that the SNP Government can do so, because it will not slash welfare spending, and social security spending continues to rise. It will not get real about public sector reform, because recent headcount data show that things are going in the wrong direction, and it will not take the decisions that are needed to prioritise economic growth.

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform (Ivan McKee): Will the member take an intervention?

Craig Hoy: I will take an intervention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): You do not have time for an intervention, unfortunately.

Craig Hoy: It is not—[*Interruption*.]

I thought that we did not have time for an intervention. I cannot hear the minister.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I indicated that we do not have time for an intervention, unfortunately. Mr Hoy had only five minutes and needs to bring his remarks to a close.

Craig Hoy: The minister appears to be "off course" for the second time today.

It is not too late to stop John Swinney's £5 billion tax bombshell detonating on Scottish workers, but we do not have much time left. If we do not act now, it will be hard-working Scots who will be left to pick up the pieces.

In a final appeal, and in an urgent economic reality check, I move,

That the Parliament notes with concern the Scottish Government's projected £4.77 billion funding gap by 2029-30; warns that, on the current trajectory, Scots risk facing further income tax rises to balance the budget, and calls on the Scottish Government to reaffirm its commitment not to introduce new income tax bands or increase income tax rates.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Jenny Gilruth to speak to and move amendment S7M-01377.4. You have up to seven minutes.

16:31

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government (Jenny Gilruth): I very much welcome the opportunity that the Conservative Party presents this afternoon to debate the Government's approach to public finances. I spent the morning giving evidence to the Finance and Public Administration Committee, and I did not shy away from the need for tough decisions or from being clear with the public about what is achievable.

The public deserve to know where each party stands on taxation. The SNP's manifesto set out our clear aims on income tax. The Government has committed not to increase income tax rates or

the number of bands during the lifetime of this Parliament. We also commit to ensuring that the majority of income taxpayers pay less than they would if they lived in the rest of the United Kingdom. Those are policy choices that recognise the fiscal challenges that lie ahead in this new parliamentary session. Incidentally, I accept Mr Hoy's points and his contribution.

Our manifesto reiterated our commitment to fair taxation because we believe that it is right that those who are better off pay a little more so that we can all benefit from higher-quality public services. That is why we have committed to introducing a mansion tax on those who live in properties worth more than £1 million. We think that that is the right approach to improving fairness at the top end of the council tax system. In addition, we will introduce a specific rate of air departure tax for private jets, to ensure that those who can afford to do so pay their fair share.

Helen McDade (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform): Does the minister accept that, in a place such as Edinburgh, there might be an old lady who lives in a house that is worth more than £1 million? If she does not have that capital—that cash—to hand over, how does the minister suggest that she proceed?

Jenny Gilruth: There will always be local mitigations that would be a matter for the local authority. This is a broader point to Ms McDade's question, but it is the case that the Government has taken a progressive approach to taxation, which has been reflected in the changes that we have introduced on council tax. There may be an opportunity in this Parliament to revisit more substantive changes to the council tax system through public service reform, for example.

It is generally the case that parties that win elections can implement their manifestos in a democracy. I would observe that the Conservatives have gone from leading the Opposition to fifth place, and from 31 to just 12 MSPs. They have gone from being the defenders of the union to being the smallest party in Holyrood. We ought to interrogate how it is that the Tories now find themselves so far away from power, at the back of the chamber. Could it be their own uncosted tax promises, such as the manifesto commitment to cut taxes, which the Institute for Fiscal Studies estimated would cost around £3.7 billion by 2032, or could it be the fact that they wanted to bring back the two-child limit for universal credit by targeting it at recipients of the Scottish child payment and those on disability benefits?

Craig Hoy: The minister should apologise to Willie Rennie.

Ultimately, if the minister wants to level with the Scottish people, why is she running away and not coming to Parliament with an autumn statement, as she promised when she said that there would be no medium-term fiscal strategy? She committed to coming to Parliament to tell us the state of the finances. Why will she not do that?

Jenny Gilruth: I apologise to Willie Rennie and to Mr Hoy.

On the wider statement, I was before the Finance and Public Administration Committee this morning. There will be a Government debate in Government time tomorrow, and I intend to give an update at that opportune moment. I hope that Mr Hoy will be there to contribute his views.

Those are the Conservative Party's policy choices: uncosted tax cuts and taking benefits away from some of the most vulnerable. The people of Scotland roundly rejected those proposals in the most recent election. The Institute for Fiscal Studies was very clear that it is

"not credible that additional savings of the scale proposed by the Scottish Conservatives could be made without cuts to the range and quality of services provided to the residents of Scotland"

whom we all serve. Let me be clear with the Parliament what paying for tax cuts would have meant for taxpayers. It would have meant fewer nurses, fewer doctors, fewer police officers and fewer teachers.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Jenny Gilruth: I would like to make some progress, because I am mindful of the time.

I am proud that Scotland has the most progressive income tax system in the United Kingdom. I would like to pick up on the point that I think that Mr McKee was trying to make in response to Mr Hoy earlier. The Scottish Fiscal Council estimates that income tax will raise £21.5 billion in the Scottish budget in 2026-27—more than £1.2 billion more than was the case in 2025-26. That additionality is being used to support our vital public services, and I am proud that the Government has taken that approach.

How much time left do I have, Deputy Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): You have seven minutes.

Jenny Gilruth: Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer. I want to make some progress on what we are doing with that additionality.

The social contract—

Murdo Fraser *rose*—

Jenny Gilruth: I am mindful that Mr Fraser is on his feet. I will take his intervention.

Murdo Fraser: The cabinet secretary is concerned about unfunded tax cuts, but I noticed that yesterday she was backing the campaign to reduce value added tax in hospitality to 10 per cent. How would that tax cut be funded?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): You will get time back for interventions.

Jenny Gilruth: To respond to Mr Fraser's point, VAT is a reserved matter. We would like powers over VAT to flow to this Parliament so that we could take decisions that would impact on the sector here. I would have thought that Mr Fraser would be in the same place as this Government in supporting such approaches to alleviating pressures on businesses. [*Interruption*.] Given the heckling, I am not sure that the Conservatives do support that additional support flowing to businesses. I am not sure whether they are now positioning themselves as anti-business. However, I will return to focusing on the content of today's debate. There might be fewer Tories, but they are—[*Interruption*.]

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): We need to hear the cabinet secretary.

Jenny Gilruth: The social contract that the people of Scotland benefit from can be evidenced in things such as the Scottish child payment, our approach to funded prescriptions, higher education, free personal care for the elderly and the abolition of peak rail fares. As a Government, we are proud to stand by those policies. More broadly, the programme for government sets out a range of different measures that we will propose to support our people. IFS estimates suggest that the lowest-income households have benefited to the tune of around £2,700 a year per person because of some of the interventions that we, as a Government, have made in relation to income tax and benefits.

Scotland's fiscal outlook is not immune to pressures. The situation mirrors those that are being felt across the United Kingdom and globally. We have the impacts of the middle east conflict, rising energy prices—the news today comes at a very challenging time, as we approach winter—long-term demographic pressures and rising demand for our public services. That demand means that there is much more reliance on our public services, with more families needing support, and the cost of public services is significantly higher than it was only a few years ago. It is against that backdrop that a key priority for this Government has been to maximise the impact of every pound of spending and to continue to deliver on our priorities. That is exactly why the programme for government is so targeted on rewiring the Scottish state so that our services meet the needs of our constituents across the country.

The Scottish Government's approach is responsible, progressive and deliverable. It protects services, supports families and is based on what Scotland can realistically afford. The Conservative alternative is the opposite of that approach: it is expensive and cruel, and it targets the poorest in our society by harming public services for those who need them most. This SNP Government will continue to get on with the day job of growing our economy and supporting the people of this nation.

I move amendment S7M-01377.4, to leave out from "notes" to end and insert:

"recognises that Scotland's income tax system is the fairest and the most progressive in the UK; notes that the majority of income taxpayers in Scotland continue to pay less tax than in the rest of the UK; recognises that, in a time of economic volatility, Scotland's income tax policy should be founded, as far as possible, on stability and certainty, and understands the Scottish Government has previously stated that it has no plans to increase the number of bands or their rates over the lifetime of this Parliament."

16:38

Kim Schmulian (Glasgow) (Reform): Let me start with where I agree with the Scottish Conservatives. The £4.77 billion funding gap is real, not an accident. Audit Scotland has told this Government plainly that it is the product of policy choices and rising workforce costs. It is a spending problem dressed up as a revenue problem.

However, that is where we part company. The Conservative motion looks at a Government that has given Scotland six income tax bands, a 42p higher rate that starts at £43,663 and a 50 per cent marginal rate for nurses and police sergeants and it asks the Government to promise not to make things worse. That is not ambition; it is capitulation.

The pledge that the motion asks be reaffirmed still lets frozen thresholds pull more Scots into higher bands every year. It is a promise not to raise the rate while the drag does the work of a tax rise through the back door. Let me be clear, before anyone on the Government benches tries it, that Reform opposes any rise in any rate of income tax. Our amendment would remove that line not to weaken the pledge but because it is not enough. We are not asking the Government to stand still; we are asking it to move. Our amendment calls for a new 0 per cent band above the personal allowance, so that the first slice of what Scots earn stays in their pockets.

Craig Hoy: Will the member take an intervention?

Kim Schmulian: No—not this afternoon, thank you.

However, we are aware that ever-changing tax brackets are not good for our economy. They do not help businesses to plan and cause an undue administrative burden for those who are processing tax. We ask that, when the mansion tax and private jet departure tax come into force, on 1 April 2028, the Government give something back and introduce the nil rate up to a £15,000 threshold. That would cost around £1.1 billion. However, as we are told by the Scottish Government that public service reform will save billions, the Government can afford it—if it is being honest, of course.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention from a colleague on the Finance and Public Administration Committee?

Kim Schmulian: I am not taking any interventions today, thank you.

So, why start at £15,000? It is because a 0 per cent band would give every taxpayer the same cash, and that means that it matters most to those who have least—the care worker in Castlemilk, the shop assistant in Springburn, the mum in Pollock juggling two part-time jobs, and the caretaker in Possilpark working late nights to ensure that his community hall stays in profit. They are all real people to me.

Jenny Young (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

Kim Schmulian: No, thank you.

Today, the SNP's great gift to those people—the 19 per cent starter rate—is worth, at most, about £40 a year. That is the prize for living under the most progressive tax system in the UK. The first £1 that someone earns above the allowance does not belong to the state; it belongs to the person who got up in the dark and earned it. Government should have to justify every claim that it makes on that £1, but, in Scotland, it has stopped trying.

The Conservatives will say that that proposal was in their manifesto. It was, but it was for inflation-based rises to the current band, and they left that out of their motion today.

To those who say that we cannot afford it, I again point to the First Minister's programme for government, under which 14 health boards are to be cut to two, 32 councils are to be replaced by regional and community authorities, and quangos are to be merged. None of that was in the SNP's manifesto, and the First Minister promises to do all of it without reducing the number of people on the payroll. If the same people do the same jobs at the same cost under a new letterhead, that is not reform; it is rearranging the pillars that are propping up an oversized state. We will hold the Scottish Government to its savings promises.

The Scottish Government also promises economic growth and a broadening of the tax base, so it must be confident of its revenue-raising powers.

Ivan McKee: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member will need to wind up. She has not taken any interventions, so she has no added time.

Kim Schmulian: Reform supports real reform, with fewer layers, fewer managers and fewer quangos, technology instead of paperwork, and a smaller public payroll. That is what pays for a tax cut.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member will need to wind up and move her amendment.

Kim Schmulian: The people of Glasgow do not want a Parliament that argues about how fast their taxes should rise—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member will need to wind up now.

Kim Schmulian: —they want one that, for once, asks how and when taxes will fall.

I move amendment S7M-01377.1, to leave out from "reaffirm" to end and insert:

"introduce a new 0% rate of income tax to increase the amount that taxpayers in Scotland can earn before having to pay income tax."

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Joe Fagan to speak to and move amendment S7M-01377.3.

16:43

Joe Fagan (South Scotland) (Lab): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, which shows that I am a serving councillor.

The scale of the fiscal gap that the Scottish Government faces by the end of this decade underlines the need for three things: candour about why Scotland's public finances are in the position that they are in, a coherent public service reform agenda that will achieve the system-wide shift towards prevention that Scotland has long aspired to, and good growth in Scotland's economy to improve Scotland's economic position and our financial position under the fiscal framework.

I will come to each of those three points, but let me start with taxation. Scottish Labour believes in the principle of progressive taxation—that those

with more taxable income should pay a higher rate than those with less. However, at the heart of the debate about tax and spend in Scotland—and, indeed, in any democracy—lies a compact with the people. That compact is strained by the relatively high marginal tax rates that some earners face, and it is undermined when public services do not function as they should and when outcomes do not reflect the commitment that taxpayers feel that they are asked to make.

Labour ruled out supporting income tax rises over the course of the current parliamentary session. As Scotland's economic position improves, our ambition is to help earners who face those high marginal tax rates and who feel that the compact does not work for them. The income tax system must be fair for working people.

However, if we are collectively prepared to show the leadership and make the compromises that are needed now to sustain and improve our public services, the Parliament must seize on a wider tax reform agenda. Council tax reform has been delayed for too long. There has been an undertaking to review council tax, which has been endorsed by the Parliament, and Labour is prepared to engage constructively with the Government to reform the council tax system in this country. There is also a welcome consensus that business rates should be revamped. I urge the Scottish Government to seriously consider how online retailers and warehouses can pay a fairer share and to future proof the system so that hyperscale data centres are fairly taxed, too.

As I said, this debate underlines the need for candour about the public finances, coherence in public service reform and good growth to strengthen our economy and fiscal position. Here in Scotland, there is a Scottish Government and certainly a cabinet secretary that are agitating to rewire our public services and the finances that underpin them. Their proposals should and will face intense scrutiny, but we can all agree that there is a case for reform. Here in Scotland, too—as across the UK—there is a new Prime Minister who is calling for rewiring of the economy and the forging of a new economic consensus. Those big rewiring jobs are connected.

Scotland faces such a large fiscal gap because, as the Deputy First Minister said, there have been shocks to the world economy, but also because demand for public services is rising. The Improvement Service has said that, if spending had kept pace with demand and demographic pressures in local government, council expenditure would have risen by £10 billion since 2010, and that is just in local government. Spending has not kept pace with demand, but nor have services been reformed to mainstream better outcomes, which means that there is unmet need and failure demand in the system. I warn members that austerity casts a long shadow that costs us all more in the long run.

There is also a deeper challenge: to address our sustained failure to turn the Christie commission principles into action. That is why a real progressive public service reform agenda is so crucial now, and it is also why we need to get the economy moving again. The fiscal framework demands that we improve Scotland's economic performance relative to the rest of the UK and grow median salaries. We need to change the fiscal trajectory that Scotland is on. Too often, it feels that growth has been deprioritised.

I therefore urge the Scottish Government to use all the levers at its disposal to drive good growth; build shared prosperity; get real household incomes rising, as promised in the programme for Government; drive down economic inactivity—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member will need to bring his comments to a close.

Joe Fagan: This is my final point, Deputy Presiding Officer. I urge the Scottish Government to unlock regional growth with a new generation of devolution deals that are aligned with skills policy and a renewed focus on economic and industrial strategy.

I move amendment S7M-01377.3, to insert at end:

"; believes that addressing the pressures on Scotland's public finances requires reform of the wider devolved tax system, including council tax and non-domestic rates; notes that the Parliament has previously supported the immediate convening of cross-party talks on council tax reform, and calls on the Scottish Government to respect the will of the Parliament and convene those talks without further delay."

16:48

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): The fiscal situation that faces Scotland is dire. We all recognise that, and it is incumbent on us all to take it seriously. We come from different ideological traditions and we will have different solutions to tackle the crisis, but our solutions should be credible.

What I find frustrating about the Conservative position is the unwillingness to use tax powers to help to tackle the crisis and a default to cuts to our public services. Since the financial crash of 2008, and certainly during the years of the Conservative UK Government, we have heard about the need for us to make difficult choices and difficult decisions. Difficult for whom? The choices that the Conservatives made were not difficult for them or their party's donors. The choices that they made were not only difficult for the most vulnerable

people we represent; they have been devastating for the most vulnerable people in our communities.

The options that the Conservatives do not raise are telling. If we are talking about where in our public sector we could make savings, what about the small business bonus scheme? Each year, almost a quarter of a billion pounds of Government money is spent on a tax break scheme despite the Government's own review finding no evidence of economic benefit. I have absolutely no issue with using the tax system to support small businesses, but we have evidence that we are spending a quarter of a billion pounds a year on that scheme and it is not working. If the Conservatives are determined not to use our tax powers but instead to reduce public expenditure, why is that not on the list of suggested savings that we should be talking about? Why is the amount of money that will be spent on Scotland's two freeports over the coming years not on that list?

We know that the fiscal situation is challenging and that the way out of it is cuts to public spending, tax reform or—and this is likely, given the composition of the Parliament—some combination of both. However, let us imagine that we were facing not a £5 billion gap but a £7 billion gap because we had followed the Conservatives' advice and not used our powers over income tax over the past decade. Let us imagine the situation that we would be in if we did not have that additional £1.8 billion to spend on our public services this year alone.

Craig Hoy has heard me say before that there are very limited options still available to us when it comes to income tax, certainly if we want to raise substantial amounts of additional revenue. The only way to do that would be to impose tax rises on low and average earners, and none of us wants to do that.

I do not want us in the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government to collectively box ourselves in in the way that the Labour Party has done at UK level. The Labour Party headed into Government in 2024 knowing what the UK's fiscal situation was, but it made manifesto commitments that have bound its hands so much that it now faces a situation in which it is impossible to reconcile its manifesto with the situation that it is faced with in the Treasury.

I want to attempt to find some common ground. As I said a moment ago, the Greens are not proposing substantial further changes to the income tax system. I suggest that that is because it is largely the system that we have spent the past 10 years designing, and we are quite happy with the result. However, we want there to be a shift in tax away from work and towards wealth. The top 2 per cent of households in this country have more wealth than half of the population combined. That level of wealth inequality is bad not only for our society and for families on the sharp end of it, but for our economy as well. More equal economies are more prosperous and successful economies.

On a UK-wide level, that can be tackled through more effective use of a straightforward wealth tax, but we know that we have existing devolved powers to tax wealth more effectively. That is why the Greens support the Labour amendment.

An overhaul of council tax is long overdue. I will say more about that in my closing speech, but members who were here in the previous parliamentary session and the one before that will be sick of me pointing out that our council tax system is older than I am. It has not been in date and has not worked in my lifetime. Most people in this country pay the wrong rate of council tax. The Parliament should regard that as a collective humiliation. It is a problem that we have failed to solve and one that we must solve in this session.

If we are serious about tackling Scotland's fiscal challenges, we need to be serious about tax reform. We should not back ourselves into a corner in the way that the motion suggests, because we have ample warning from the current UK Government that that results in a series of unintended consequences that are ultimately devastating for our public services.

I move amendment S7M-01377.5, to leave out from "with concern" to end and insert:

"that the top 2% of households in Scotland hold more wealth than half of the population combined; believes that, having already made substantial progress in delivering a fairer income tax system in Scotland, there is now a need to shift the balance of taxation from work to wealth in order to promote economic prosperity and fairly fund public services; calls on the UK Government to devolve the fiscal powers necessary to develop a robust wealth tax system; further calls on the Scottish Government to improve the taxation of wealth through existing devolved powers, in light of the conclusion in its own literature review of wealth taxation in Scotland that 'reform of existing taxes on wealth may offer a more practical route to improving the taxation of wealth in Scotland' than a Scotland-wide wealth tax."

16:52

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I echo the sentiments that Ross Greer expressed in relation to council tax. I have heard him make the point before, but I very much echo it.

I welcome today's debate on a topic that sits at the heart of the key challenge that the Government and, indeed, the Parliament as a whole must meet and match during this session. We all recognise the acute pressures that arise from the current dire fiscal position and the inevitability of our having to take difficult decisions at a time when businesses and households are crying out for help, but those

decisions must be rooted in the long-term need of our economy and our society for fairness, sustainability and opportunities for all.

When it comes to taxation policy, Scottish Liberal Democrats have always been pragmatic about using the Parliament's powers, but we have also recognised the importance of maintaining confidence in the tax system. The Government's amendment repeats its claims about Scotland's tax regime, but, as the Finance and Public Administration Committee has heard over recent weeks, recent changes have stretched that confidence. One of the witnesses, Sandy Begbie from Scottish Financial Enterprise, pointed to behavioural responses to income tax changes that were introduced without a clear commitment on the future direction of tax policy.

Most witnesses have agreed that, as the Labour amendment clearly suggests, non-domestic rates, land and buildings transaction tax and council tax are all crying out for reform. Some of that reform is under way, but it is long overdue and there is no clarity on what it might look like. That being said, however, I welcome the recognition in the Government's amendment of the importance of stability and certainty.

As for the black hole that is identified in the medium-term financial strategy and referred to in the motion, ministers will point—very fairly, I think—to the influence of pressures that are very much outwith their control, yet they must also acknowledge the part that their decisions, and often indecision, have played in contributing to the fiscal gap.

The warnings have been mounting for years. In 2018, the Auditor General warned that the NHS was

"not in a financially sustainable position".

In 2022, Audit Scotland warned that the Government's

"ability to achieve financial sustainability in the years ahead"

was at risk and that

"Failure to make the necessary changes to how public services are delivered"

would likely mean

"further budget pressures in the future".

Audit Scotland returned to the issue in 2023, warning that

"public services in their current"

form were

"not affordable"

and saying that ministers urgently needed to

"develop a clear roadmap"

laying out how public services would be reformed to make them financially sustainable.

Ministers will argue that that reform is under way, but the details to date have been sketchy, and stated intentions have often been contradictory. Stephen Boyd of the Institute for Public Policy Research Scotland told the Finance and Public Administration Committee:

"the policy framework … does not provide a credible and coherent plan for dealing with the fiscal challenge".—[*Official Report, Finance and Public Administration Committee*, 9 September 2026; c 27.]

Most witnesses have been quick to point out that major reorganisation of this kind inevitably involves up-front costs—a point that I think the cabinet secretary acknowledged this morning. Early signs are not encouraging. The commitment to reduce public sector head count each year over the four-year period has seen numbers actually increase in the first year, raising the prospect of even more pain further down the line.

Many witnesses have been consistent in making the case for tax policy to be developed with sustainable economic growth in mind. Key to sustainability will be expanding the tax base, which will require improvements to economic performance, increased investment and productivity, and higher employment. That was reflected in the amendment that I sought to lodge for this debate. By breaking down barriers that prevent people from participating fully in the workforce and by supporting people into work, we can achieve better outcomes for individuals and businesses while also boosting the public finances.

The rising number of those who are economically inactive due to long-term health conditions should concern us all, too, as should the increased rates of economic inactivity among young people. Willie Rennie and Alex Cole-Hamilton have frequently raised the need for neurodevelopmental support to allow individuals to reach their potential, and the same is true for those with musculoskeletal conditions and, indeed, the hundreds of thousands of people who are on NHS waiting lists.

I want to touch on another issue that was flagged in the amendment that I sought to lodge, namely the critical role of colleges in meeting the skills needs of businesses, providing routes into skilled employment and, ultimately, contributing to the fiscal sustainability of public services. So many colleges are still in a precarious position at the moment when we need them to do what they do best—that is, helping individuals, businesses and communities to fulfil their potential.

The challenges that we face are significant, and fundamental changes are needed to meet them,

yet the Government's track record in delivering instead of simply talking about change is not promising. We now need ministers to match words with deeds, to set out the detail and then to gather the evidence to demonstrate the impact of reforms, so that we can begin to lift Scotland out of the financial hole that ministers have helped to dig.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): We move to the open debate.

16:58

Michelle Campbell (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP): I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of interests as I am a councillor in Renfrewshire and a nurse in the NHS.

At first glance, the Conservative motion sounds straightforward, yet behind the headline lies the familiar spectacle of a party whose own record on public finances raises serious questions now seeking to present itself as a voice of fiscal responsibility. However, before we take lectures from the Conservative Party on economic management, it is worth reflecting on its own record.

Many of the challenges facing public services today are the result of years of Conservative mismanagement and catastrophic decisions taken at Westminster. Austerity-squeezed local government budgets placed increasing pressure on public services and left many communities dealing with the consequences long after the headlines disappeared. And who could forget the economic chaos that was unleashed by Liz Truss's disastrous mini-budget? It was an episode that undermined confidence, increased borrowing costs and demonstrated precisely what happens when ideology triumphs over sound economic judgment. When the Conservatives stand in this chamber presenting themselves as guardians of fiscal responsibility, the irony will not be lost on the Scottish public. After the economic consequences of their years in government, such claims are more laughable than credible.

The central flaw in the motion is that it presents Scotland's financial future as a debate that is solely about taxation. It is not. The answer to long-term financial pressures is economic growth and public service reform. That is why the Scottish Government is not simply standing still and hoping that circumstances will change. Through its programme for government and the ongoing programme of public service reform, the Government is already taking forward measures that are designed to improve productivity, drive efficiency and ensure that public services remain sustainable for the future.

The public understand that maintaining the status quo is not an option. They want to see services modernised, duplication reduced and public money used as effectively as possible. They want earlier intervention, rather than more expensive crisis responses. They want innovation, prevention and better outcomes. That means recognising that meaningful reform requires partnership. It requires collaboration between national and local government, public sector organisations, front-line workers, businesses, communities and the third sector. Frankly, people are fed up with political point scoring. They want Governments and Parliaments to get on with the job of improving public services and delivering for the people they serve.

Alongside the work on reform, we must continue our focus on growing Scotland's economy. A stronger economy is the most sustainable route to stronger public finances. That is why the commitment to building a wellbeing economy matters. It is an approach that recognises that economic success should not be measured solely by the size of our economy but by whether prosperity is being shared, whether people have opportunities to succeed and whether communities are able to thrive.

Investment in skills, innovation, infrastructure and the industries of the future will create the conditions for long-term growth. It strengthens our economy, supports jobs and helps to generate the revenues that are needed to sustain the public services on which people depend. That is the serious work of Government.

The Conservatives want to debate the focus of hypothetical future taxation decisions. I believe that the public are far more interested in what Governments are doing today to improve services, strengthen the economy and ensure that public money is spent effectively. The Scottish Government is already delivering a programme of reform to improve productivity and efficiency. Rather than another exercise in political posturing from a party with a deeply questionable record on economic management, let us focus on the real task that is before us: reforming public services, growing the economy and working collaboratively to deliver better outcomes for the people of Scotland.

17:02

Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is posturing to refuse to take an intervention on the basis that you do not want to have a debate because you are so insecure in the argument that you are putting forward. I would love to know where the detailed programme for increasing Scotland's productivity is. I would love to see the detail on that.

The motion asks a simple question: will the SNP Government rule out another raid on working Scots? [*Interruption*.] Was that a yes? That is good. Let us move on. Ladies and gentlemen, the Conservative motion has been passed without any further debate. [*Laughter*.]

Lloyd Melville (Angus South) (SNP): [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Stephen Kerr: I am willing to take an intervention from Lloyd Melville so that he can elaborate on that.

Lloyd Melville: It is in our amendment. Perhaps the member should read it before he next stands up.

Stephen Kerr: Excellent. I presume that members on the SNP benches will be supporting the Conservative motion.

Let us move on and talk about the £4.77 billion gap by 2029-30. That is not a Conservative Party claim and it is not an exercise in political point scoring—Michelle Campbell is an expert at that. It is in the Scottish Government's financial strategy. There will be a resource gap of £2.64 billion and a capital gap of £2.146 billion. Scots are entitled to ask how ministers intend to close that gap, but we have heard nothing about that. The whole country is very confused about its public sector reform proposals, because they seem to have no specific vision, objectives, or end product outcome in mind. That sounds like a pretty naff approach to reform anything.

We have seen this pattern before. First comes the funding gap, then comes the lecture about fairness, and then comes the income tax rise—because that is inevitably what will happen.

Scotland already has the most complicated income tax system imaginable in any part of the United Kingdom.

Jamie Langan (South Scotland) (Reform): As a former Conservative MP, does Stephen Kerr regret that Britain hit a peacetime tax burden high in 2024 under a Conservative Government?

Stephen Kerr: I absolutely regret high taxes. That is why I am a Conservative. My whole political outlook is that we have lower taxes. We certainly do not have lower taxes on the horizon from this SNP Government. We have 48p as an income tax rate, and we have a massive fiscal hole to be filled.

Audit Scotland has warned that short-term fixes are not delivering fiscal sustainability. All the fidgeting and faffing about that the SNP engages in is not reform and does not change anything about the trajectory of our public finances.

The Scottish Fiscal Commission and the IFS have warned that taxpayer behaviour matters.

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): Please wind up.

Stephen Kerr: If people work less, move income, leave, avoid promotion or choose not to come to Scotland, the tax yield disappears. The answer cannot be to turn the tax screw again.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, Mr Kerr.

Stephen Kerr: The motion asks ministers to reaffirm their own commitment. If they mean it, they should vote for the motion. I think that they will, according to Lloyd Melville.

17:06

Paul McLennan (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP): I am glad to speak to the amendment in the name of the Deputy First Minister, Jenny Gilruth.

Let us be clear what this debate is really all about. Conservatives, as per usual, want to manufacture fear about income tax. They want Scots to believe that higher taxes are inevitable and that the only answer is their tired, failed ideology of cuts and austerity. It is not the Scottish way—the Scottish electorate rejected them just a few months ago—and it is not the SNP way.

Let us be clear: Scotland's income tax system is the fairest and most progressive in the United Kingdom. That is not a slogan; it is a fact.

Craig Hoy: Paul McLennan is referring to the Government amendment to the motion, so I will also refer to it. It states:

"the Scottish Government has previously stated that it has no plans to increase the number of bands or their rates".

Last night, I had no plans to go to the pub. I then bumped into Douglas Ross and I went to the pub. Does Paul McLennan agree that plans can change based on circumstances and that, if the Government wanted to be explicit, it would say that it would rule out tax increases for the duration of this session of Parliament?

The Presiding Officer: That would turn anyone to drink.

Paul McLennan: I will take you up on that, Presiding Officer.

Let us look at the facts. Lloyd Melville talked about that point in an intervention on Stephen Kerr. I will not take any lessons from the Tories. When the Tories came into power in 2010, the national debt was £1 trillion. When they left power in 2024, it was £3 trillion. That is a fact.

Murdo Fraser: We had to pay for Covid.

Paul McLennan: The national debt tripled.

Stephen Kerr: Will the member give way on that point?

Paul McLennan: The majority of income taxpayers in Scotland continue to pay less tax than they would if they lived elsewhere in the UK.

The Presiding Officer: Press your button if you want to intervene, Mr Kerr.

Stephen Kerr: Will Paul McLennan give way on that point?

Paul McLennan: If I will get the time back, I will give way.

The Presiding Officer: Of course you will get your time back.

Stephen Kerr: I sat in this chamber, as well as in the House of Commons chamber, listening to SNP members call for more Government spending, more borrowing, more extensive furlough, more grants—more this, more that, more the next thing. Paul McLennan has the nerve to stand up in here and talk about borrowing and debt. In all honesty, he must have the brass neck of all brass necks.

Paul McLennan: Again, I will come back to the point: national debt tripled from £1 billion to £3 trillion. UK national debt is 94 per cent of GDP. The last 14 years, from 2010 to 2024, were under the Conservative Government. The Conservatives are to blame for that.

The Scottish Government has designed a system that asks for those with the broadest shoulders to contribute a little bit more, so that it can protect the public services that every community relies on—our NHS, our schools, our social care and, of course, support for the most vulnerable. That is not something that the Tories like to hear.

In terms of economic volatility, stability and certainty matter. That is why the Scottish Government has been clear that there are no plans to introduce new income tax bands or to increase existing rates over the lifetime of this Parliament. The Deputy First Minister's amendment simply restates that commitment. It provides the reassurance that households and businesses need.

Of course, there is a projected funding gap in the medium term. The Scottish Government has been transparent about the challenges, which are set out in the medium-term financial strategy. The pressures are real. They are driven by an ageing population, rising demand for public services, workforce costs and decisions taken at Westminster that constrain Scotland's funding—indeed, Scotland's fiscal framework is not sufficient. The UK Government has the same funding issues as most European Governments, but the Conservative response, as per usual, is to wave the gap around as a threat of tax rises while offering no credible alternative. That is political opportunism.

What the Conservatives will not admit is that our progressive approach is already delivering, as Ross Greer touched on previously. It is expected to raise significant additional revenue—£1.8 billion in 2026-27 alone—to support vital public services. That money is going into the NHS, education and housing, and into the services that my constituents in East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs rely on every day. The alternative that the Conservatives offer is the same old story: to cut taxes for the better-off and cut the services that ordinary people depend on. What they will not talk about is the fact that cutting taxes would automatically lower the block grant—I have never heard that debate in the chamber on the Tory side. We have seen where their approach leads—to longer wait times, underfunded schools and communities that are left behind. Year after year, election after election, Scotland has rejected that approach.

Instead, the Government is focused on growth, reform and efficiency. We are investing in the green economy—which East Lothian, with our renewables potential and net zero jobs, is perfectly placed to lead on—as well as driving public sector reform and managing public finances responsibly within the limited powers that we have, and we will continue to make the case for full fiscal powers that will give Scotland real control over its economic destiny. I agree with Joe Fagan on the need to progress council tax reform; we need to have that debate as wider public service reform discussions continue, and the Deputy First Minister mentioned that in her remarks.

The people of Scotland did not vote for a race to the bottom on tax—they rejected that in the last election several months ago. They voted for a progressive, fair system that protects public services and asks the wealthiest to contribute fairly and for stability. The Government's position delivers that stability, so I urge members to reject the Conservative motion and support the amendment in the name of the Deputy First Minister. Let us back the fairest tax system in the UK, protect the majority of taxpayers who already pay less and get on with the job of growing our economy and reforming our public services so that Scotland's finances are sustainable for the longer term. That is a responsible and progressive path, and it is the path that the Government will continue to follow.

17:12

Bob Doris (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP): I will set Scotland's tax position in context, and I hope that I can do so on a consensual basis.

When our Parliament agrees a budget, and any relevant tax rates, the income that will be generated for the year in question is estimated by the Scottish Fiscal Commission. As part of the overall budget process, the Scottish Government must spend to the predicted tax take. However, as with any economy and tax base, we only know the actual tax take some time later.

The complexities and interaction between Scottish and UK tax policies and our fiscal framework mean that there is a significant lag—up to three years in the budget cycle—between when the tax take is predicted and the actual tax take is known. In 2026-27, which I will look at shortly, we estimate that Scotland will have to repay £720 million to the UK Exchequer as the actual tax take in 2024-25 was lower than had been estimated at the time. That cuts both ways: in 2025-26 and 2024-25, Scotland secured returns of £351 million and £492 million respectively, as our tax take outperformed what had been predicted.

Why do I highlight that in this debate? It is because the Scottish Government does not have adequate borrowing powers or fiscal levers to smooth out tax volatility. Let me give an example. If the UK Government were to increase its base tax rate by only 2 per cent, Scotland's block grant would immediately be cut by around £1 billion, with real-time, direct consequences for the budget, for all parties in this place. As the fiscal framework is about to be reviewed, that point matters.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Bob Doris: Let me finish the point, then I absolutely will.

Despite our political differences, we should make common cause and ensure that the new fiscal framework works better for this place, no matter which party is in government.

Rachael Hamilton: If the Scottish economy had grown at the same pace as that of the rest of the United Kingdom, the SNP Government would have had £1 billion more to spend over the past 20 years. Does Bob Doris not accept that fact?

Bob Doris: I am really disappointed that, when I asked for common cause to be found in the Parliament in order to protect our finances, Rachael Hamilton singularly failed to step up to that challenge.

Let me illustrate a further point. Although there can be great volatility in tax performance, we must offer stability and certainty to the taxpayer. That is precisely what the SNP Government plans to do in maintaining the number of tax bands—that is its plan—and the rates for this parliamentary session.

With any tax system, there will be so-called winners and losers. I do not like that terminology, but that is the reality. My Government rightly highlights that 55 per cent of people here in Scotland pay less tax than people in the rest of the UK; however, the converse is that others, including us in this chamber, will be in the remaining 45 per cent—some folk will pay about the same as people in the rest of the UK, and others will be the so-called losers.

We must recast the whole debate. In practice, what it really means is that we will raise an estimated £1.8 billion more in the coming financial year compared with what the tax take would have been if we had stuck to UK tax policies. That is a factual, real-life number. Rather than talk about the concept of winners and losers, I would rather talk about how we fulfil our social contract with the people of Scotland with that £1.8 billion.

We use that tax take to help our Scottish Government to maintain many aspects of that social contract. It pays for prescriptions, it means that there are no tuition fees and it ensures school meals for those on low incomes and for all children in primary 1 to primary 5—that provision is universal, irrespective of their household income. That money will be used to build on our childcare offer of 1,140 hours and to provide affordable wraparound care, which will be transformational over this parliamentary session.

I could go on, and talk about free bus passes, the £2 bus fare cap and the Scottish child payment, but, in the interests of time, I will not do that.

Any proposal to reduce taxes more widely will reduce the tax take, which will erode our social contract. That is what the Conservatives really want to do—that is their agenda. If the Parliament wishes to do that, the Conservatives and others should be honest about the consequences for the social contract that we have with the people of Scotland.

However, I recognise that there will always be a tipping point in relation to taxation policy, where tax regimes are either too imposing on family budgets or the tax take is too low and the social contract is undermined. That is why we are looking at public service reform—to make sure that the predicted budgets that are coming to this place align with fulfilling the social contract. I hope that everyone in the chamber will come together on a non-partisan basis to look at what public service reform will mean for the people of Scotland.

I convene the Public Service Reform Committee, and I say to my Government that public service reform must start with improving Scotland's public services, not with saving cash. Getting it right will allow cash to be saved and

reinvested in the social protections that I outlined earlier, alongside improving public services.

I want to put this point on the record before I conclude. We talk about the tax take, and the Government talks about stability and certainty. Scotland's third sector is vital when it comes to public service reform, and it needs stability and certainty in its income for the long term if we are to be successful in delivering public service reform.

The Presiding Officer: We move to winding-up speeches.

17:18

Ross Greer: I do not think that there is any harm in our debating income tax this afternoon, but as a number of members have said, the real need for a debate in this Parliament, and in this country, is on local taxation. Joe Fagan and Liam McArthur made that point, and I made it earlier in relation to council tax.

To build on that, I will give an example of how broken our council tax system is. This is a shared problem for Scotland and England, but not for Wales—its system is not perfect, but it has made important changes to it over the years. Buckingham palace pays just over £1,800 in council tax. I pay more than that for a two-bed flat with a leaky roof. That should not be the case. My flat is clearly in the wrong band, but it shows the scale of inequity that is built into the council tax system.

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): On a scale of one to 10, how confident is Ross Greer that the SNP Government will embrace his plans and his vision for reform of the council tax?

Ross Greer: It is always tempting to offer a score. To be fair to the Government, it embraced the Greens' vision for the income tax system—over the past 10 years, Patrick Harvie and I have had more to do with Scotland's income tax system than most members. I say to Mr Rennie that I will give it an optimistic seven out of 10.

If we are going to engage in a cross-party process on this—I agree with Joe Fagan on that—we need to start with a revaluation exercise. We cannot possibly decide what the end goal is on a property tax for Scotland until we know what property values in Scotland are this century—we have not had a revaluation exercise since 1991, so that is essential.

There are other steps that we can take in the interim, such as introducing a multiplier effect on additional homes. We have taken a step in relation to second homes, but no steps for a third, fourth or fifth home. One local member of the House of Lords bragged to me recently about his six properties. We might want a multiplier for individuals such as that.

There is a clear need for reform of non-domestic rates. We talk about them as being business rates, but they are nothing to do with the business; they are a rate on the property, on its rateable value. We have businesses in this country whose bill bears absolutely no relation to their ability to pay it. There is a need for non-domestic rates reform, so I would certainly agree to that. That process might start off as separate to council tax reform, but the two would need to come together.

On that point, the Greens have a desired end goal in mind: land value tax. However, we are open to discussion, compromise and agreement on that, because, after decades of failure, there must be progress on reform of our local taxes. The Conservatives are trying to force the Government into a position in which it will inevitably have to make cuts that Conservative MSPs will then object to in this Parliament. We have the opportunity to reject that this afternoon.

Fundamentally, the only way in which we can close the fiscal gap, build the more prosperous society that we want to see and defend our public services is with a redistribution of wealth. This is a wealthy country, but the wealth is still held incredibly unequally. The solutions are available to us. We do not have the full range of tax powers that my party and I would want us to have, but we certainly have not exhausted the powers that are available to us. Some of them are horrendously out of date and outright broken. We have an opportunity in this parliamentary session to begin the process of fixing that.

17:21

Jenny Young (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to sum up the debate on behalf of Scottish Labour.

Craig Hoy began with a bit of Conservative Party bingo, perhaps forgetting that it was the Tories who, in 2024, left the UK with the highest tax burden since the second world war.

Jenny Gilruth made a fair point about the principle that those who earn more should pay a bit more, which we on the Labour benches certainly agree with. However, my point is that that relates to higher-quality public services: if people are contributing more and more, which might be necessary, we need an improvement in public services. When people are waiting years for NHS treatment, and when we see a decline in public services, they question the value for money.

Kim Schmulian really wanted us to think of the private jet owners. I will not spend too much time doing that or shedding too many tears for them.

She was not willing to take my intervention, but I had just wondered whether it was her friend Nigel who had been beseeching her on behalf of his crypto friends.

Joe Fagan and Ross Greer made lots of fair points about the taxes that the Parliament can reform, particularly council tax and non-domestic rates, to which I will return in a moment.

Liam McArthur was right to say that the big black hole in our finances was both predictable and, indeed, predicted for many years. The Scottish Parliament and, in particular, the Scottish Government have to reckon with that. I would gently say that removing reference to that through its amendment suggests that the Government is not taking it as seriously as it should be.

I was interested in what Michelle Campbell had to say when she warned about what happens when ideology triumphs over sound economic judgment. That is surely the best case against Scottish independence, but we will leave that there.

Much has been said in the debate about taxes. Before we look at further taxes or powers to be devolved to the Parliament, could we first prove that it is using the full range of taxes and powers at its disposal well? I can tell members that, just now, it is not.

Julie MacDougall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform): Does Jenny Young agree that it has been discussed a great deal today that the Parliament has not been functioning well with the parties that, until now, have been elected? Despite the constant barrage of comments towards Reform UK, it seems as though a lot of our ideas are really shaking up the Parliament, and we are starting to talk about things that those parties have had two decades to deal with.

Jenny Young: I guess that I am just waiting to hear what the constructive and credible ideas are.

Returning to my point about the powers and the taxes that this Parliament does have responsibility for, it took the Government the best part of a decade to set up the aggregates tax, which was devolved following the Smith commission and which, to a large extent, mirrored the UK aggregates levy that it replaced. The Government is still to sort out air passenger duty, which is finally due to come into effect next April, 11 years after it was devolved.

As others have said, there are a number of taxes in the control of the Parliament that could be reformed, so perhaps the Government could turn its new zeal for reform to council tax or non-domestic rates. Ross Greer and I must be a similar age, because I was in primary school when Alex Salmond came to power on a promise to scrap and replace council tax, but I am still paying it.

As others have said and as Joe Fagan made clear, the Parliament has previously supported the convening of cross-party talks on council tax reform. I urge the Scottish Government to press on with those, and it will certainly find a willing partner in the Scottish Labour Party in that discussion.

On business rates, there have been some tweaks around the edges and some moves in the right direction, but there are fundamental challenges in the way that the system operates that place high street businesses at a competitive disadvantage, while online retailers get away with paying a fraction of the rates. There were hints in the right direction in the SNP's manifesto, but vague language really is not enough. We need to see clear proposals on that, and I hope that that will be in the upcoming budget.

Land and buildings transaction tax was also not mentioned in the SNP's manifesto, and the IFS said that that is arguably the tax most in need of reform and that it has been made

"even bigger and more damaging"

under the SNP Government.

We are heading for a difficult period in Scotland's public finances. That was entirely predictable and predicted, but, nevertheless, here we are. We urge the Government to be honest about what it is planning to do and to urgently address the many taxes for which it is responsible.

17:26

Angela Ross (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform): This is an important debate, because income tax is one of the things that we have control of. However, it is not a lever for growth unless it is lowered. I agree with Craig Hoy that we need to protect it from being increased. I do not agree with Ross Greer that we need a wealth tax, but we need to find a way forward.

I have archaeology in my past, and, if I may take a moment, I would like to look back three centuries. We set sail from Scotland to Darien in Panama, and we were seeking to build and create wealth and to expand commerce in that area. We wanted a secure and brighter future for Scotland, much as most of us want today. Back then, we tried to trade, but it resulted in disaster and fortunes were lost. We found ourselves facing profound economic hardship, much like today. We are now facing a near-£5 billion black hole and, according to "Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland", an accounting gap of £25 billion.

Alan Brown: Angela Ross will understand that, if the zero tax rate policy were implemented, it would lead to a cut in the block grant, which would increase the tax gap. How much would her party's proposals cost because of that adjustment to the block grant?

Angela Ross: I am always looking for ways to create efficiency, and it is really important that we allow the economy to actually grow. The SNP has not done a good job of that in the past two decades. Let us look for things that actually work.

I go back to the Darien experiment and the fact that we were in deep economic difficulty. We face similar challenges now. What followed back then was remarkable. In 1707, we joined the union and we had access to markets that ensured that we established financial security. We were able to focus on discourse and academia because society became dynamic and traditional authority backed off.

Heather Anderson (Dundee City West) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Angela Ross: I will continue, because we are short of time.

The Government took its hands off the public's money. [*Interruption*.] Scotland became a nation of thinkers, inventors, entrepreneurs and industrialists. The Scottish enlightenment that ensued is something that we should be very jealous of today. It helped reshape economics, philosophy, engineering and science. Scottish ideas, Scottish innovation and Scottish enterprise helped to change the world and sparked the industrial revolution. [*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: There is too much muttering. Can we listen to the speech, please?

Angela Ross: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

From the depths of economic difficulty came a period of prosperity and influence that was hard to imagine at the time of that deep and difficult economic division. We now need to focus. There is a lesson here: when the conditions are right, prosperity can be generated again. When people have the freedom to innovate, invest, trade and build, remarkable things can happen. Economic growth cannot simply be commanded into existence by a Government; it must be enabled. Higher income tax is not the answer. Lower income tax rates empower people.

Too often, in debates such as this, we focus on how wealth is distributed before we consider how it is created. Without growth there is less investment, fewer opportunities, lower wages and, ultimately, less revenue available for the public services on which we all depend.

Our focus today is on income tax. It was introduced during the Napoleonic war as a temporary measure to address a crisis of immediate financial need. It was never conceived as a tool for economic growth, but still we have it.

Every additional burden that is placed on people, work, enterprise and investment acts as a brake on growth, not a facilitator of it. If we want a stronger economy, better wages and better public services, we must first create the conditions that allow businesses to succeed, entrepreneurs to invest and workers to keep more of what they earn.

17:31

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform (Ivan McKee): I was going to start by acknowledging the contributions from across the chamber but, to be honest, they have been quite varied in their quality and relevance, so I might leave that there.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I urge the minister to express his regret about the Darien scheme right here and now.

Ivan McKee: Well, Reform members are probably well versed in the politics of the 17th century or early 18th century.

We all recognise that public sector finances are under pressure in Scotland, as they are across the UK and more widely across the world. Against that backdrop, it is more important than ever that we engage in constructive and serious debate about our nation's future. Failing to take action now will only push problems down the road and undermine the ability of members in the Parliament to take meaningful action in the future to improve people's lives.

The Conservative Party motion recognises the pressures but offers no solutions. Instead, it resorts to fearmongering about tax rises that are plainly not on the table. That has already been stated, but I will reaffirm it now: in our manifesto, we ruled out increases to income tax rates. [*Interruption*.] I have already ruled that out three times, but I can rule it out again.

Murdo Fraser: I thank the cabinet secretary for ruling that out. Of course, that is exactly what his party said in the previous parliamentary session—it ruled out tax increases—but it broke its promise. Should we not judge him on his past performance? [*Interruption*.]

Ivan McKee: As my colleague has just reminded me, Liz Truss might have had something to do with what happened in the previous parliamentary session, given what she did to the UK economy more generally.

We are delivering a clear plan to address the pressures that our budget is facing. I can contrast that with the approach of the Conservatives, who offered the electorate almost £4 billion of tax cuts ahead of the election—an election in which they did not fare particularly well—and expected that, by a sleight of hand, the impact on public services would be ignored. Of the Conservative Party's manifesto, the IFS said:

"this may be a costed plan on paper but whether it would survive contact with reality is far from clear."

I cannot be the only one in the chamber who hears those words and thinks back to the turmoil that was caused by the Liz Truss mini-budget, which promised tax cuts but did not include a clear plan to pay for them. Put simply, such approaches are not serious or credible, so it falls on all responsible parliamentarians to plot a different course.

Craig Hoy: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Ivan McKee: Will I get the time back, Presiding Officer?

The Presiding Officer: Yes.

Ivan McKee: I will give way

Craig Hoy: Until the election this year, there was a Scottish tax advisory group, on which the cabinet secretary sat, with broad representation from academics, professors and business representatives. For some reason, the Scottish Government got rid of that group. Was that because the Government did not like the advice that it was getting—it might have been the wrong advice—or was it just an example of the SNP's arrogance writ large?

Ivan McKee: That tax group was set up during the previous parliamentary session so that we could engage with those who could contribute to the generation of the tax strategy. That work has been done, so we have moved on.

In the limited time that I have left, I will refer to some of the contributions that we have heard. Bob Doris's contribution was valuable. It clearly positioned public service reform as being about saving money—yes—but, more importantly, about improving service delivery. We should remain conscious that that is the primary objective of our public service reform agenda. If we get it right, savings will flow from it. He also highlighted the key role that the third sector has to play, which I reinforce.

The Government is taking action to ensure that we have sustainable public finances. That will allow us to make progress against our priorities for this parliamentary session without the need for tax rises.

Public service reform is at the heart of our fiscal strategy. Fundamentally, it is about service improvement and delivering for people while ensuring that services are fiscally sustainable, whether that is through prioritising prevention to reduce demand for crisis services, better joined-up services to improve outcomes and reduce cost, or delivering more efficient services. Public service reform has a hugely important role to play in ensuring our fiscal sustainability.

There has been a range in the seriousness of contributions this afternoon, as there always is. As we move into the budget process, I am sure that we will hear constructive suggestions. However, based on today's debate, I am not sure that the Deputy First Minister, who is leading that process, will hear much of those from many of the parties in the chamber, which, unfortunately, is a bit disappointing.

In conclusion, I ask members to support the Government's amendment.

The Presiding Officer: I call on Murdo Fraser to wind up the debate. You have a rollicking four minutes.

17:36

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I fear that, in four minutes, I will not get round every single contribution made in the debate. I will therefore pick only the most egregious contributions and respond to those.

I will start with the cabinet secretary for finance. She was very clear that tax cuts had to be paid for. Of course, she was rather wrong-footed when I mentioned that, only yesterday, I saw in the media that she had been backing a very worthy campaign to cut the VAT on hospitality to 10 per cent, but she could not answer when I challenged how that would be funded.

However, she should not be disappointed, because she is not alone. I have a long list of senior SNP ministers who similarly called for tax cuts. We might remember Alex Salmond. I do not know whether we are allowed to mention Alex Salmond in the chamber anymore; he seems to have been airbrushed from SNP history. Alex Salmond called for corporation tax cuts, and he had no idea how they would be paid for.

When Fiona Hyslop was culture secretary, she called for a cut in VAT on building repairs, with no idea how that would be paid for. When Fergus Ewing was the minister for tourism, he came to the chamber week after week demanding cuts in air passenger duty to give Scotland a competitive advantage. He had no idea how they would be paid for, either. Even the current First Minister, John Swinney, was recently in the media saying

that the chancellor should cut spirits duty in his budget to help the Scotch whisky industry.

I do not disagree with any of those proposed tax cuts. All of them would be good for the economy and all of them would help to grow our economy. However, all those cuts were called for by the SNP when it had no idea how they would be funded. The SNP says that tax cuts have to be affordable. It is interesting that all those other tax cuts would have to be funded by other people—other Governments. The SNP does not apply the same principles to itself, here in the chamber.

Paul McLennan: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: Oh, yes. Perhaps Mr McLennan can explain how all the tax cuts will be funded.

Paul McLennan: What the member failed to explain is that, under the current fiscal framework, a tax cut would result in the block grant being cut straight away. What does he say to that? If there is a cut in income tax, that would result in a cut to the block grant straight away. How does he deal with that?

Murdo Fraser: Mr McLennan did not answer my point. It is all very well for the SNP to call for others to cut taxes, but it does not want to cut taxes itself.

Every single tax that has been devolved has gone up—

Paul McLennan: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: I will, in a second.

Income tax has gone up, land and buildings transaction tax has gone up, additional dwelling supplement has gone up and council tax has gone up. We are now getting a mansion tax and a new tax on private jets instead of tax cuts. Mr McLennan needs to explain why it is all right for another Government to be called on to cut taxes, but the SNP does not want to cut taxes itself.

Paul McLennan: Under the current fiscal framework, a cut in tax will result in an immediate cut to the block grant. If that is the point that the member is seeking to make, he should be looking to change the existing fiscal framework. It is not fit for purpose.

Murdo Fraser: We have just had a review of the fiscal framework, which was agreed by the current Scottish Government. If Mr McLennan has a problem with the fiscal framework, he should not come moaning to me. He should raise the issue with his SNP Government.

Talking of egregious examples, let me move to Ross Greer. There was a bit of old-style socialism from Ross Greer. Eat your heart out, Andy Burnham. The real socialists are here in the Scottish Parliament.

The whole approach of the Greens seems to be that wealth is something that the state is there to help itself to. Ross Greer wants to squeeze the rich until the pips squeak. The problem with that is that, if we squeeze the rich too much, they will simply go somewhere else. They will take all their wealth and tax revenue with them.

Ross Greer: Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: If I have time to do so, I will give way.

The Presiding Officer: I call Ross Greer.

Ross Greer: Given that we are debating income tax, can Mr Fraser, if he believes in this theory of capital flight, explain why there are more higher-rate income tax payers in Scotland today than there were when we started making the reforms to income tax? That is not due to fiscal drag; it is because we have been able to attract more high-salaried individuals to Scotland due to the services that we provide with the taxes that we raise.

Murdo Fraser: Mr Greer needs to look more closely at the data. The reality is that growth in the number of taxpayers in the rest of the United Kingdom is higher than growth in Scotland. Scotland is underperforming the rest of the UK in terms of growth in the number of taxpayers.

The reality is that, if we tax the rich too heavily, they will simply go somewhere else, and then there will be nobody left to fund all the fancy wine bars that members of the Green Party want to spend their money in when they should be here in the chamber doing their work.

Craig Hoy was right. We have a £5 billion fiscal gap. Higher taxes simply are not working, because we see a tax performance gap between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Bob Doris referred to negative reconciliation. The Scottish economy and the Scottish tax base have underperformed the UK as a whole. That will cost the Scottish budget £720 million next year. More than two thirds of a billion pounds must be found because of our underperformance.

Bob Doris: Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: If I have time, I will give way.

The Presiding Officer: Of course.

Bob Doris: Murdo Fraser will also recognise that I said that, in the two preceding years, the Scottish tax take had overperformed. It is not reasonable to airbrush that out of existence.

We will conclude the next fiscal framework review in 2028. Will Murdo Fraser get on board

and bat for Scotland to get the best deal for this Parliament?

Murdo Fraser: I have dealt with that point. We have just had a review of the fiscal framework, and the Scottish Government agreed its terms. If SNP members do not like the position, they should take it up with their Government, not us.

We now know that the Scottish Government's increase in the top rate of income tax to 48p cost money, resulting in a loss of £22 million a year. If we increase taxes too much, the result is that we lose money rather than raise it.

Ross Greer: Will the member take an intervention?

Murdo Fraser: If I have time.

The Presiding Officer: You are actually over your time, but I will let you take this intervention.

Murdo Fraser: Oh, go on, then. Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Ross Greer: I am glad that Murdo Fraser has raised that point, because that is the suggestion of one economist, Dan Neidle. When commenting on that, Laurie Macfarlane, a Scottish economist, said:

"At most, it presents a plausible but highly uncertain guesstimate, built on assumptions that are not well supported by the historic data. Given these methodological concerns, no major policy decision should be taken based on this analysis alone until further data is available."

Does the member acknowledge that it is a theory by one economist that is far from proven? Even Dan Neidle has distanced himself from the media coverage that Mr Fraser seems to be quoting.

The Presiding Officer: I call Murdo Fraser to respond and to wind up.

Murdo Fraser: Ross Greer is wrong, because Dan Neidle is a very well-respected economist. The individual that the member is quoting is no more respected than Dan Neidle.

The simple fact is, as Arthur Laffer, the famous American economist, said,

"You cannot tax your way to prosperity".

If we want to have money to pay for public services, the way to achieve that is through stronger economic growth. Using tax as a lever to support stronger economic growth is exactly what this Government has not been doing and what it should be doing. That is why it should support Craig Hoy's motion.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on protecting Scots from income tax rises.

Alexander Dennis Ltd

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is a statement by Stephen Flynn on Alexander Dennis Ltd. Questions will be taken at the end of the statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

17:44

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport (Stephen Flynn): I welcome this opportunity to update the chamber on developments in relation to Alexander Dennis and the ways in which the Scottish Government is working with the company to ensure that it remains a key part of our industrial base.

In June 2025, the then Deputy First Minister, Kate Forbes, came to the Parliament to update members on the news that Alexander Dennis, a subsidiary of the Canadian NFI Group, had commenced consultation on a new strategy for its United Kingdom manufacturing operations. The strategy proposed to consolidate all UK bus body manufacturing operations into a single Alexander Dennis site at Scarborough in England, closing the Falkirk site and suspending production at Larbert. That devastating news meant that up to 400 roles were placed at risk of redundancy, which affected nearly one quarter of the company's workforce.

At that time, our priority was to support the skilled manufacturing workers of Alexander Dennis. Their interests and the interests of their families, the local communities of Falkirk and Larbert and the broader supply chain have always been paramount. Our determination to support those workers has not changed.

Over the past 15 months, that determination has seen ministers engage closely and regularly with the leadership of Alexander Dennis and the unions that represent its workforce. Only last month, the First Minister met the chair and the chief executive of NFI Group alongside the chief executive of Alexander Dennis to discuss the outlook for the business, support for bus decarbonisation and any potential further support. I believe that we share a determination to ensure that Alexander Dennis is a successful business that delivers the products that customers demand and trust and offers high-quality job opportunities now and into the future.

The trade unions—Unite the Union and GMB Scotland—have also been invaluable in amplifying the voice of the workforce and engaging constructively to find a solution to Alexander Dennis's decision to consolidate manufacturing operations in Scarborough. Both the Government and the unions have consistently and actively sought alternatives to redundancy. I am clear that, in the case of the Scottish Government, we have

done everything in our collective power to protect skilled employment in this case.

We have a long and proud history of supporting Alexander Dennis to innovate in the face of intense international competition, support bus travel and help bus operators to make the switch to electric vehicles. Alexander Dennis is Scotland's only bus manufacturer and is key to our country's advanced manufacturing base. The company's expertise and industrial capability are important to Scotland's ability to participate in and benefit from the transition to net zero transport.

For those reasons, we have invested heavily in Alexander Dennis over many years to support technology development, skills and cultural transformation. Over the past decade, Scottish Enterprise has awarded £30.5 million in research and development support to Alexander Dennis to spur the development of ultra-low-emission and zero-emission technologies. In 2016, a grant of £7.3 million was provided to support the development of innovative low-carbon buses. In 2020, an additional £10 million was provided to develop zero and ultra-low-emission buses. In 2023, a further £13.2 million was awarded for the development of zero-emission technology to support the creation of new battery electric and hydrogen powertrains.

In addition to those research and development grants, the Scottish Government also offered subsidy to support the company's furlough scheme. Last September, following a thorough review of options and in consideration of the economic value that Alexander Dennis brings to Scotland, the Scottish ministers agreed to award a grant to Alexander Dennis in support of its company furlough scheme, in line with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. It should be noted that the UK Labour Government made no such offer.

Funding of up to £4.1 million was offered to support the company's furlough scheme for up to 26 weeks. It was applicable only to shop-floor workers based in Scotland whose roles were linked directly to bus production. The grant that was offered was a time-limited, proportionate and targeted intervention that was designed to preserve zero-emission bus production in Scotland, while limiting the burden on taxpayers.

Our aim was to retain a valuable skills base during a period of market uncertainty and to prevent the loss of capabilities that would be difficult, costly and time consuming to recreate. This was a truly innovative and exceptional intervention—the first and only time that the Scottish Government has offered subsidy to support a company-administered furlough scheme. As we made clear to Parliament at that time, if all the conditions of the furlough grant were met, including evidence of head count retention and contracted orders for buses to be built in Scotland, Alexander Dennis would be entitled to recover from the Scottish Government up to 80 per cent of the basic wage costs of its manufacturing staff in Scotland, up to a maximum claim of £2,500 per employee per month.

The terms and conditions of the grant were developed and negotiated jointly with the business, with a view to making our shared objective of sustaining the workforce through a temporary gap in orders. Alexander Dennis accepted those terms and conditions, including those on the evidencing of contracts and continued bus building in Scotland before any payment from the Scottish Government could be made.

However, since the furlough grant was offered, the company has changed its plans and is now pursuing a different option, based on all bus production taking place at Scarborough and chassis production work being brought in house at Larbert. As a result, the grant conditions are not met and the Scottish Government is not able to make payment to Alexander Dennis. Although extremely disappointing, that is consistent with the arrangement that we agreed with the company. However, as I said earlier, we continue to work closely with the company to secure continuity of employment for the highly skilled workers at Alexander Dennis and the future of manufacturing in Scotland.

I emphasise that the Government has taken the actions needed to promote the best outcomes for the workers at Alexander Dennis. Since the company's announcement in June last year, ministers have worked intensively with Alexander Dennis and trade unions to pursue every possible initiative to retain the jobs in Scotland. We have always sought to understand the core issues and explore all available avenues of support. That is why we agreed a unique furlough support grant worth up to £4 million, based on a set of conditions that included securing a minimum number of orders and safeguarding a minimum number of bus manufacturing jobs in Scotland.

The fact that those conditions have not been met is deeply disappointing. We are encouraged, however, that the company has invested in chassis manufacturing at Larbert to retain skills and keep open options to return future bus building to Scotland. The Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise are continuing constructive discussions with the company as part of our engagement to protect jobs and keep skilled manufacturing in Scotland.

I will be happy to answer members' questions, and I commit to returning to the chamber when further updates are available.

The Presiding Officer: I will allow around 20 minutes for the cabinet secretary to answer questions on the issues raised. Members who wish to ask a question should press their request-to-speak buttons now.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance sight of his statement, which merely reaffirms the Government's position that Stephen Flynn has already outlined this week.

Stephen Flynn described the mooted furlough scheme that was announced by Kate Forbes as

"a truly innovative and exceptional intervention".

It would have been had it happened, but it did not. Had the reopened Scottish zero emission bus fund—ScotZEB2—process, which he did not mention, delivered the expected volume of buses in the timescale expected, the terms of the furlough scheme would have been met. It was the Scottish Government shifting the goalposts on ScotZEB2 that forced Alexander Dennis to pursue a different outcome for Larbert. Alexander Dennis feels that it has been hung out to dry by the Government. It expected at least some of the furlough money but instead has had to heavily invest in turning Larbert into a chassis-making centre. All the while, taxpayers' money is being used to buy buses from China.

Here is an idea that I would like the cabinet secretary to consider. Could the £4.1 million that was allocated for furlough be repurposed as part of a wider package of financial support from the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise to help to pay for some of the infrastructure investment at Larbert and/or to support the company's new product development? However we have arrived at this point—it kind of does not matter—that would be a constructive and positive outcome for Alexander Dennis and its workforce, as well as for the Scottish Government.

Stephen Flynn: I am not entirely sure from Mr Simpson's remarks whether he believes that we took the right course of action on the furlough. I will be explicit to him, as I was yesterday to his party colleague: the conditions of the furlough were not met. It would not be correct, nor would it be right, for the Scottish Government to make payment given that those conditions were not met. I hope that Mr Simpson would agree with that principle, given that we are talking about public money.

I assure Mr Simpson and members that our engagement with Alexander Dennis will continue on a constructive basis. Scottish Enterprise is fully engaged with the company to ensure that it has a successful future in Scotland. We have a shared ambition in that regard, and I am keen to ensure that it happens.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement. There is a key question about timelines. The furlough window closed at the end of March, and I understand that Alexander Dennis sought to draw down at that time. My understanding is that all the facts that are being relied on by the cabinet secretary were known at that time. Therefore, why has it taken until now for those facts to be brought forward by the Government? Why did the Government not set those facts out to the Parliament before the summer? Did the delay create any impediment to the management and the trade unions that have worked so hard to preserve jobs? It would be a matter of public concern if there were any delays that caused issues.

Stephen Flynn: In response to a question on the same theme this morning from Mr Rennie at the Transport Committee, I outlined my written response to a question—I believe from Mr Stephen Kerr, whom I spot at the back of the chamber—in which I was explicit about the non-payment of the furlough because the conditions had not been met. I am here, in the chamber, now, to answer questions from members on why that was the case. I have been explicit to the Parliament that conditions were not met. Given that is the case, it is right and proper that the Scottish Government does not pay out.

Gary Bouse (Falkirk West) (SNP): I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for his statement this afternoon on an important manufacturing business that is based in my constituency. The cabinet secretary will recognise that the workforce and my constituents are concerned that Alexander Dennis failed to meet the agreed conditions of the furlough scheme, which were put in place last year. The company should set out clearly why it failed in that regard. What ongoing work is the Scottish Government undertaking to support bus manufacturing? I asked that question earlier this afternoon, but I would like to hear the answer this time, because there was a certain amount of hilarity when I first asked it. There should never be hilarity when we are talking about people's jobs. Will the cabinet secretary also assure me that the Scottish Government continues to press the UK Government to make the necessary legislative changes to the Subsidy Control Act 2022?

Stephen Flynn: For members who were not here earlier in the afternoon, the hilarity that Mr Bouse refers to was laughter from the Reform benches with respect to this issue, which was deeply regrettable in my view—and clearly in Mr Bouse's view, too.

Over the course of recent years, the Scottish Government has, through the ScotZEB scheme and its predecessors, been able to provide significant sums of money to companies in order to allow them to procure buses from Alexander Dennis, which has helped to sustain the company. Over the course of the past year or so, we have engaged proactively and constructively with Alexander Dennis on the furlough. Unfortunately, the conditions have not been met. On top of that, some £30 million-worth of R and D funding has been provided to Alexander Dennis to allow the company to innovate and compete in a robust international market. That was done in good faith.

We will continue to act in good faith with the company, because we want to do everything that we can to support the workforce that Mr Bouse represents.

The Presiding Officer: I call Gillian Mackay, who is participating remotely.

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Green): The cabinet secretary has laid out a number of measures that have been taken to help to support Alexander Dennis, but those measures will not be helping the workers, who will be concerned for their livelihoods, given what is now unfolding at the business.

Other schemes have been put in place for people who have lost their jobs around the Falkirk area, including at Ineos in Grangemouth. Is any such work being undertaken in the event that that is the way that jobs go at Alexander Dennis? What other support can the Scottish Government provide in the light of the ongoing issues?

Stephen Flynn: As I outlined in my statement, the company has committed to chassis manufacturing at Larbert, which I think is a positive step. If the opportunity arises for the company to return bus manufacturing to Scotland, I would be very supportive of that.

The workforce deserves our continued support, and we will certainly continue to provide that on behalf of the current and future generations.

Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is no wonder that Gillian Mackay's son was crying.

Thank goodness I asked a written question, because if a written question had not been asked, we would never have had a statement. I say to the cabinet secretary that, frankly, it is a disgrace that he would not have volunteered the information to the Parliament unless I had asked that written question. I think that that is appalling. The First Minister, by the way, was busy claiming that the jobs in question had been saved. At election time, SNP candidates were busy parading around all over the place with leaflets that said, "We've saved these jobs." It was an election con. That is how it comes across.

The Presiding Officer: We need a question, Mr Kerr. A lot of members want to ask questions.

Stephen Kerr: I understand that.

Why did it take three months from the point at which the company requested that a portion of the grant be paid for the Government to get back to it and tell it that it was not going to get a penny? Why did that take three months? Was it because of the election? Why has Stephen Flynn not spoken to a UK minister about the biggest issue in connection with this whole saga—the imported Chinese buses? Why has he never had a single contact with the UK Government about that? Why has he not spoken to the company even now? That needs explained. What is he going to do to secure manufacturing jobs at Larbert? Will he answer the question that Graham Simpson asked about other support that might be better for the company?

Stephen Flynn: The member seems very interested in my diary arrangements, but let me be very clear with him. There is no higher office in this land—[*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: Mr Kerr, if you ask a question, please wait for the answer.

Stephen Flynn: Presiding Officer, I will deal with him, if you are happy for me to do so.

There is no higher office in this land than the office of First Minister. If Stephen Kerr had listened to my statement, he would have heard that the First Minister met NFI and Alexander Dennis on 31 August. We are keen to ensure that there is constructive and continued dialogue with the company, to help ensure that it is able to maintain operations in Scotland. We have a shared interest in that regard, and we will continue to work to that end.

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): It looks as though we have to guess what the cabinet secretary is hiding before he is prepared to tell us.

The cabinet secretary now has £4.1 million that he was not expecting to have in his budget. As we have a joint determination for the company to succeed, is he now trying to find a different avenue for getting that funding to the company, so that we can have more Scottish buses on Scottish streets?

Stephen Flynn: As I outlined earlier, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Government remain in continued dialogue with Alexander Dennis to discuss its plans at present and, indeed, its plans for the future. I assure the chamber that, if there are any further updates to be provided in that regard, I will provide them.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. Every party has had a member ask a question, and we are already 12 minutes in. I am afraid to say that not everyone is going to be able to ask a question, given the length of questions.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP): I share the cabinet secretary's concern that Alexander Dennis did not meet the agreed conditions and welcome the continued efforts of the Scottish Government to support skilled workforces and preserve manufacturing bases here in Scotland. It is vital that, across Scotland's industries, we continue to support Scotland's supply chains and manufacturing capabilities. Can the cabinet secretary say any more about the Scottish Government's work to that end?

Stephen Flynn: We have spent a significant amount of money—and rightly so—on ensuring that we decarbonise our bus fleet across Scotland. Alexander Dennis is one of many companies that have been able to receive that support. I think that around 40 per cent—37 per cent, if I remember correctly—of ScotZEB money has been linked directly to Alexander Dennis.

That builds on the wider investment that we are making across Scotland in our bus network, whether it be the direct financial support through the network support grant to ensure that our buses can run—the £6.5 million due to recurring costs—the £55 million bus infrastructure fund that I announced this summer or the considerable concessionary card payments that we make to companies to ensure that people right across Scotland can benefit from bus travel. That package is intended to deliver for the people of Scotland, and we are very proud of it.

Amanda Bland (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform): The First Minister has met the company, but the cabinet secretary has not done so since being appointed on 20 May 2026. Does he now plan to meet the company?

Stephen Flynn: As I made clear to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee just yesterday, I was unable to attend the meeting with the First Minister on 31 August.

Craig Hoy (Dumfriesshire) (Con): Where were you?

Stephen Flynn: Where was I, Mr Hoy? I was at a funeral.

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me—speak through the chair, please.

Stephen Flynn: I was at a funeral for a good friend of mine, who had sadly passed away. I am sorry that I was not able to meet the company on that day, but I will endeavour to engage with it proactively and constructively moving forward.

Martyn Day (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP): I understand that Transport Scotland has been working with the UK bus manufacturing expert panel to develop a demand pipeline for zero-emission buses. Can the cabinet secretary provide an update on that work, which could have huge potential for domestic manufacturing?

Stephen Flynn: The UK Department for Transport published on 16 March 2026 its 10-year zero-emission bus order pipeline, which brings together data on anticipated zero-emission bus orders from local authorities and bus operators for the period from 2026 to 2035. That welcome, though much-delayed, development shows the size of the prize that is available. The challenge for UK ministers now is to ensure that their subsidy and procurement rules do not impede domestic manufacturers from claiming that prize.

Jenny Young (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Lab): This is a deeply worrying development for my constituents in the Falkirk area, and my thoughts are very much with the workforce and trade unions based at Alexander Dennis.

I want to press the cabinet secretary on a question that he has avoided answering a couple of times now. The Government knew in March that Alexander Dennis was moving to chassis manufacturing and that, as a result, the conditions had not been met. Why did it take three months to inform the company of that, and why has it taken six months for this to be dragged out of the Government by the Opposition?

Stephen Flynn: Members on the Labour benches seem very vexed at my being in the chamber today to give a statement on this particular issue, but not a single one of them has yet mentioned that not a single finger was lifted by the UK Government to offer any sort of financial support to Alexander Dennis. Perhaps they should have conversations with their colleagues in London on why they did not seek to provide further support, whereas we did.

Dawn Black (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary provide details of the Scottish Government's latest engagement with employees and trade union representatives to ensure that their voices inform the Scottish Government's next steps?

Stephen Flynn: Dawn Black's question gives me an opportunity to reiterate my thanks to the unions for their constructive dialogue over many months on this deeply challenging situation. I met them shortly after coming into office and I had a discussion with them earlier this afternoon. They

should be incredibly proud of their determination to do the best by their workforce. I assure them and the chamber that I will work with the unions to try to do our level best to support people in the local area.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): When a once locally owned business can be bought by a foreign owner, leaving local jobs at the mercy of remote decision makers, that is surely a reminder that the private sector cannot be relied on to deliver the investment that we need in a just transition. What we need is a Government with an active industrial strategy so that skilled workers are not at the mercy of corporations.

Stephen Flynn: If Mr Harvie has any suggestions that he would like to propose to me that are fully costed and deliverable, I am more than happy to engage with him on that basis.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): The cabinet secretary outlined that there were two conditions for the furlough scheme: head count retention and the retention of bus manufacturing orders in Scotland. Did the company keep the head count? How many jobs are at risk? The cabinet secretary said that the company wants to keep open the option to return to bus manufacturing in Scotland. How realistic is that?

Stephen Flynn: That will very much be determined by the number of orders that the company can secure from the market across the UK. As I alluded to earlier, it is important that the UK Government reflects on its procurement and subsidy rules in that regard.

With regard to the workforce numbers, the company did not meet the expectations that were agreed between the Government and the company, which is why the furlough grant was not paid.

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): Given that the UK Government has explicitly confirmed that shifting to a direct state procurement model would allow Scottish contracting authorities to use the Procurement Act 2023 to legally disregard bids from non-treaty state suppliers such as China and embed domestic social value, will the cabinet secretary commit to scrapping the failed ScotZEB model in favour of a state-backed purchase and leasing scheme in order to legally ensure the return of full bus manufacturing in Scotland?

Stephen Flynn: Labour members have finally found their voice with that suggestion—perhaps they could have used their voice more acutely when the company required support. Of course, only the Scottish Government chose to step forward at that point.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the ministerial statement on Alexander Dennis Ltd.

Business Motion

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S7M-01390, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 6 October 2026

2.00 pm	Time for Reflection
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by	General Questions
followed by	First Minister's Questions (Backbench Members)
followed by	Ministerial Statement: Improving Outcomes for Neurodivergent People, Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities
followed by	Scottish Government Debate: Scotland's Prosperity and Future in Europe
followed by	Committee Announcements
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Wednesday 7 October 2026

2.00 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.00 pm	Portfolio Questions: Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Finance and Local Government, Parliamentary Business and Veterans; Public Service Reform, Europe, External Affairs and Energy
followed by	Scottish Government Debate: Supporting Scotland's Fishing Industry
followed by	Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Debate: Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Thursday 8 October 2026

1.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
1.30 pm	General Questions
2.00 pm	First Minister's Questions (Party Leaders)
followed by	Ministerial Statement: Planning for Winter and Improving Hospital Flow
followed by	Scottish Government Debate: Strengthening Scotland's Cyber Resilience
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Tuesday 27 October 2026

2.00 pm	Time for Reflection
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by	General Questions
followed by	First Minister's Questions (Backbench Members)
followed by	Scottish Government Business
followed by	Committee Announcements
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Wednesday 28 October 2026

2.00 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.00 pm	Portfolio Questions: Justice; Health and Care
followed by	Scottish Liberal Democrats Business
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Thursday 29 October 2026

1.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
1.30 pm	General Questions
2.00 pm	First Minister's Questions (Party Leaders)
followed by	Committee Business
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 6 October 2026, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.

The Presiding Officer: I call Max Bannerman to speak to and move amendment S7M-01390.1.

18:13

Max Bannerman (Highlands and Islands) (Reform): I rise to oppose the Government's business motion. Last week, utterly appalling statistics on drug deaths were released, which showed that 1,133 of our fellow Scots died because of drug use in 2025. That was an increase of 11 per cent nationally on 2024 numbers. In Aberdeen, it was an increase of 32 per cent; in Falkirk, an increase of 71 per cent; in the Borders, an increase of 86 per cent; in North Ayrshire, an increase of 108 per cent; and in East Ayrshire, an increase of 128 per cent. That is happening in every constituency that is represented by MSPs in the Parliament. It is no longer just another national issue; it is a national emergency that must be tackled through direct political intervention.

On this, more than any other issue, what the Parliament directs the Scottish Government to do will be a matter of life and death. Members across the chamber, many of whom have personal experience with addiction and drug deaths, have explained more eloquently than I can that those deaths cannot be seen as just another yearly statistical event. Behind every death is an individual loss, with friends and family whose lives have been changed for ever.

Last week, after the Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs made a statement, the Parliament had a paltry 20 minutes to question the Government on the figures. Although, sadly, this is not a new topic of discussion in Holyrood, the new drug deaths numbers are significant.

Since the national mission was declared, the number of deaths had been going down year on year. However, this year, for the first time, we have seen the number of deaths go up. That is why the Government must be held to account.

Reform proposed a motion of no confidence in the minister last Thursday to force a debate in the Parliament on the issue. At that stage, we did not receive the support required. I am today proposing an amendment to the business motion so that, next week, we would hold a plenary debate on addressing Scotland's drugs emergency on Tuesday, to replace the Government's proposed debate on Europe.

The point is as follows. There are differences of opinion across Parliament on the right way to tackle the drugs emergency. That divergence in approach was clear in the chamber last week. There was discussion of renewed focus on access to rehab facilities, bringing back the right to recovery bill, the success or otherwise of the Thistle in Glasgow, and placing the emphasis on harm reduction and safe consumption. All of that speaks to the reason why Parliament should have the opportunity and the time to discuss this; we are in a debating chamber, after all. This ought to be a Parliament that is not afraid to test ideas, look at new solutions and scrutinise policy.

Presiding Officer, you were very clear in your guidance last week that there are legitimate parliamentary methods to oppose the Government's business programme. That is why we in Reform will not nod through a pointless, predictable, ultra vires debate on Europe—an area that this Parliament has no direct legislative competence over. At the recent election, 2 million Scots did not even bother to vote. That should focus everyone's mind.

Instead of being a talking shop, Parliament should devote its energy to fixing problems. The scourge of drugs has been a blight on Scotland's political discourse for far too long. The question that members of Parliament must decide this evening is whether they will join us in forcing proper parliamentary scrutiny of the Government's drugs strategy. I believe that there is a broad consensus in the chamber that such a debate is timely and needed now more than ever. That is why I am putting this question to Parliament today.

I move amendment S7M-01390.1, to leave out "*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Scotland's Prosperity and Future in Europe" and insert:

"*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Addressing Scotland's Drug Deaths".

The Presiding Officer: I call the minister, Jamie Hepburn, to respond on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau.

18:17

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Jamie Hepburn): In that vein, I should make it clear to Mr Bannerman that he is speaking against not the Scottish Government's business motion but the Parliamentary Bureau's motion. Let me remind Mr Bannerman that he is, in fact, a member of the bureau.

I should also say at the outset that I have no problem, in principle, with the notion of us scheduling a further debate on the impact of, and the challenges that we face in relation to, drug harms in this country. However, I regret the manner in which Mr Bannerman has sought to bring forward the issue.

I have a fairly positive and decent track record of hearing requests for scheduling parliamentary business from other parties and taking those forward positively. Indeed, we just had a statement on Alexander Dennis, which we scheduled in response to a request. On 17 September, we scheduled a statement on the programme for

international student assessment statistics, after a request. On 9 September, at Mr Carson's request, we scheduled a statement on bluetongue virus serotype 3. Indeed, the current business motion, which I hope that members will vote for, schedules a statement on improving outcomes for neurodivergent people, autistic people and people with learning disabilities, following a request for such.

Let us remember that there are means by which people can reasonably come forward and make a request, without going through the palaver and the nonsense and the performative nature of lodging an amendment, as Mr Bannerman is doing today.

The Parliamentary Bureau agreed to the business motion just yesterday. I know that "Europe" is a four-letter word for Reform UK, but we agreed at the Parliamentary Bureau to debate Scotland's prosperity and future in Europe next Tuesday, and that is what I think that we should do.

Let me make another point. Mr Bannerman understands and knows, as do all members, that there are many ways in which—

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform): Will the member give way?

Jamie Hepburn: I will not be giving way to Mr Simpson.

There are many means by which members can bring issues to the chamber.

We made a statement on addressing drug harms last week, which Maree Todd delivered. That gave members of all parties an opportunity to ask questions on the back of the statistics that were published. Incidentally, Mr Bannerman said that the time assigned to that was paltry. I did not hear him say at any stage before we scheduled that statement that there was not sufficient time for it. He could have raised that as an issue at that time.

All parties can, of course, use regular parliamentary question sessions, such as the two general question times, back-bench and party leaders First Minister's question times and portfolio question times, to scrutinise the Government. The First Minister answered further questions on drug deaths last week, including one from Malcolm Offord. This week, on Tuesday, not a single one of the three general questions and the three back-bench FMQs from Reform UK MSPs was on that particular issue; tomorrow, Helen McDade's general question is not on this issue of seemingly great importance to Reform UK, and Max Bannerman's question is about surveillance of students by Police Scotland, which is an interesting notion—maybe it is an insight into where Reform UK wants to take Scotland.

Thomas Kerr (Glasgow) (Reform): Will the minister give way?

Max Bannerman: Will the minister give way?

Jamie Hepburn: I will give way to Mr Bannerman.

Max Bannerman: Could the minister address the matter in hand instead of dancing around the issues?

Jamie Hepburn: Well, that really shows the attention deficit on the Reform UK bench. I have been speaking about the issue throughout my entire contribution.

Parties can use their debate time or, indeed, members' business slots to introduce a debate. Again, we can see how much of a priority the matter is for Reform UK: we have a Reform UK members' business next week, again—indeed, Thomas Kerr has another debate. He had the previous one—no one else seems to be able to introduce a member's business debate on behalf of Reform UK.

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): *[Made a request to intervene.]*

Jamie Hepburn: I will give way to Mr Rennie in a wee minute; I will just finish my point.

Thomas Kerr's debate is not about the challenge that we face with drug harms; instead, he wants to introduce a debate about telling women what they can and cannot wear. Those are Reform UK's real priorities, so for it to lodge this amendment today is an absolute nonsense.

Willie Rennie: For the benefit of the minister, I have just checked, and the word "Europe" has six letters.

The minister must address the central point. We will vote for the business motion if he is able to set out that he will commit, at some point, to a debate in Government time on this very important, incredibly serious issue. Thousands of people have lost their lives in the past decade, and the Parliament must address that. I hope that the minister will commit to that.

Jamie Hepburn: Let me make it clear to Mr Rennie that I understand that the word "Europe" has six letters—I know that he understands that—but my point was that it is a four-letter word for Reform UK, rather than for the rest of us.

I have had correspondence from the Green Party, which is requesting a debate on drug deaths, too. I am very happy about that, because it proves my point about the manner in which people can come forward to make a request and

seek a debate. That has happened in that instance, and I will introduce such a debate in due course. Let us reject this amendment and get on with the business that we have agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S7M-01390.1, in the name of Max Bannerman, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01390, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

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

18:23

Meeting suspended.

18:25

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the vote on amendment S7M-01390.1, in the name of Max Bannerman, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01390, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau. Members should vote now.

The vote is closed.

Malcolm Offord (West Scotland) (Reform): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

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

The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands (Jim Fairlie): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

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

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Neil Gray): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My app is reconnecting to the platform. I want to make sure that my no vote was recorded.

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

Duncan Dunlop (South Scotland) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

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

Any more for any more?

For

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
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)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
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)
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)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
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)
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)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (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)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01390.1, in the name of Max Bannerman, is: For 43, Against 75, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01390, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

Voting is closed.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My device would not connect. I would have voted yes.

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

Malcolm Offord: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

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

Jim Fairlie: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: You vote has been recorded.

The Minister for Equalities and International Development (Simita Kumar): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I have voted yes, but I do not think that it has been recorded. Can I double check, please?

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

Patricia Gibson (Cunninghame South) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes, but it did not record.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

Cara McKee (West Scotland) (Green): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes, but it did not record.

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

We should just have had a roll call, I think.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

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

I think that we will go for a show of hands next time.

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs (Maree Todd): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Apologies—I have not had notice that my vote was recorded. Can I check that it has been?

The Presiding Officer: It has now.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (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)
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)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (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, 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)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
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)
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)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (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, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S7M-01390, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme, is: For 91, Against 27, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 6 October 2026

2.00 pm	Time for Reflection
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by	General Questions
followed by	First Minister's Questions (Backbench Members)
followed by	Ministerial Statement: Improving Outcomes for Neurodivergent People, Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities
followed by	Scottish Government Debate: Scotland's Prosperity and Future in Europe
followed by	Committee Announcements
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Wednesday 7 October 2026

2.00 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.00 pm	Portfolio Questions: Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Finance and Local Government, Parliamentary Business and Veterans; Public Service Reform, Europe, External Affairs and Energy
followed by	Scottish Government Debate: Supporting Scotland's Fishing Industry
followed by	Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Debate: Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Thursday 8 October 2026

1.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
1.30 pm	General Questions
2.00 pm	First Minister's Questions (Party Leaders)
followed by	Ministerial Statement: Planning for Winter and Improving Hospital Flow
followed by	Scottish Government Debate: Strengthening Scotland's Cyber Resilience
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Tuesday 27 October 2026

2.00 pm	Time for Reflection
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by	General Questions
followed by	First Minister's Questions (Backbench Members)
followed by	Scottish Government Business
followed by	Committee Announcements
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Wednesday 28 October 2026

2.00 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.00 pm	Portfolio Questions: Justice; Health and Care
followed by	Scottish Liberal Democrats Business
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Thursday 29 October 2026

1.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
1.30 pm	General Questions
2.00 pm	First Minister's Questions (Party Leaders)
followed by	Committee Business
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 6 October 2026, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

18:29

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Tim Eagle be appointed to replace James Adams as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Rural Affairs Committee; and

James Adams be appointed to replace Tim Eagle as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Social Justice, Housing and Local Government Committee.—[*Jamie Hepburn*]

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

Decision Time

18:29

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): I am delighted to say that there are 12 questions to be put as a result of today's business.

If the amendment in the name of Stephen Gethins is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Daniel Johnson, Kristopher Leask and Sanne Dijkstra-Downie will fall; if the amendment in the name of Kristopher Leask is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Sanne Dijkstra-Downie will fall; and, if the amendment in the name of Jenny Gilruth is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Kim Schmulian and Ross Greer will fall. I am sure that members will have taken that all on board. It will become clearer as we progress.

The first question is, that amendment S7M-01376.5, in the name of Stephen Gethins, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01376, in the name of Liam Kerr, on consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

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

The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands (Jim Fairlie): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

Malcolm Offord (West Scotland) (Reform): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded, Mr Offord. Going, going, gone.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
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)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (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)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
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)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
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)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
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)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01376.5, in the name of Stephen Gethins, is: For 53, Against 66, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01376.2, in the name of Duncan Massey, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01376, in the name of Liam Kerr, on consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Malcolm Offord: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I voted yes.

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

Jim Fairlie: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

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

For

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (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, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (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)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (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, 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)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
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)
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)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01376.2, in the name of Duncan Massey, is: For 27, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01376.3, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01376, in the name of Liam Kerr, on consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Malcolm Offord: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I voted no.

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

Jim Fairlie: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I voted yes.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (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)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (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, 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)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (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)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
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)
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)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (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)
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)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (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)
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, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (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-01376.3, in the name of Daniel Johnson, is: For 77, Against 42, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01376.1, in the name of Kristopher Leask, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01376, in the name of Liam Kerr, on consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank, 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.

Malcolm Offord: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded, Mr Offord.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I could not connect. I would have voted no.

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

For

Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
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)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
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)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
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)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (Reform)
Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
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)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)
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)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01376.1, in the name of Kristopher Leask, is: For 15, Against 101, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01376.4, in the name of Sanne Dijkstra-Downie, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01376, in the name of Liam Kerr, on consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

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

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
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)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
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)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (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)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Abstentions

Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01376.4, in the name of Sanne Dijkstra-Downie, is: For 8, Against 94, Abstentions 16.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01376, in the name of Liam Kerr, on consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank, 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)
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)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (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, 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)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (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)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
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)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)
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)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (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)
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)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (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)
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, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S7M-01376, in the name of Liam Kerr, on consent for Jackdaw and Rosebank, as amended, is: For 78, Against 41, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament believes oil and gas production will remain part of Scotland's energy mix for decades to come and is vital to energy security and the economic security of working families and communities; notes that decisions on whether to grant consent for the Rosebank and Jackdaw developments will be taken at ministerial level by the UK Energy Secretary through a quasi-judicial process, with final consenting decisions resting with the North Sea Transition Authority; recognises the need for a wider programme of reindustrialisation, supporting jobs, domestic supply chains and investment in communities across Scotland, and believes that the transition to a lower carbon economy must be a just transition that protects workers and communities while creating new industrial opportunities in the energy industries of the future.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01377.4, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01377, in the name of Craig Hoy, on protecting Scots from income tax rises, 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)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)

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)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (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)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
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)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

Abstentions

Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on S7M-01377.4, in the name of Jenny Gilruth, is: For 53, Against 51, Abstentions 15.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The amendments in the names of Kim Schmulian and Ross Greer fall, due to pre-emption.

The next question is, that amendment S7M-01377.3, in the name of Joe Fagan, be agreed to. Are we agreed? [*Interruption*.]

We are agreed.

Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): No!

The Presiding Officer: Speak up, folks. Come on. You are such a shy bunch—all those wallflowers up the back of the chamber.

There will be a division.

Voting is closed.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): 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)
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)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
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)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
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)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (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, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
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)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
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)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)
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)

Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

Against

Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (Reform)
Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)

Abstentions

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on S7M-01377.3, in the name of Joe Fagan, is: For 104, Against 5, Abstentions 10.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01377, in the name of Craig Hoy, on protecting Scots from income tax rises, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

Voting is closed.

The Minister for Public Finance (Hannah Mary Goodlad): 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)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
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)
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)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
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)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
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)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Kerr, Thomas (Glasgow) (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)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

Abstentions

Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S7M-01377, in the name of Craig Hoy, on protecting Scots from income tax rises, as amended, is: For 69, Against 34, Abstentions 15.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that Scotland's income tax system is the fairest and the most progressive in the UK; notes that the majority of income taxpayers in Scotland continue to pay less tax than in the rest of the UK; recognises that, in a time of economic volatility, Scotland's income tax policy should be founded, as far as possible, on stability and certainty; understands the Scottish Government has previously stated that it has no plans to increase the number of bands or their rates over the lifetime of this Parliament; believes that addressing the pressures on Scotland's public finances requires reform of the wider devolved tax system, including council tax and nondomestic rates; notes that the Parliament has previously supported the immediate convening of cross-party talks on council tax reform, and calls on the Scottish Government to respect the will of the Parliament and convene those talks without further delay.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S7M-01391, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to. Are we agreed? [*Interruption*.]

Did I hear a no? I will ask the question again. The motion is about committee substitutes.

The question is, that motion S7M-01391, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that—

Tim Eagle be appointed to replace James Adams as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Rural Affairs Committee; and

James Adams be appointed to replace Tim Eagle as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Social Justice, Housing and Local Government Committee.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Wildfires and Other Climate Shocks

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S7M-00976, in the name of Ariane Burgess, on building Scotland's resilience to wildfires and other climate shocks. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes with concern reports regarding the growing frequency and severity of extreme weather events due to climate breakdown, including wildfires, droughts, and flooding across Scotland; shares its concern for communities across Scotland that have already faced wildfires this year, including in the Highlands and Islands; commends emergency services, conservation bodies, including rewilding organisations, community groups, gamekeepers, farmers, volunteers and others for coming together to tackle the devastating wildfire in the Cairngorms; notes the belief that there is an urgent need to shift focus from emergency response alone toward long-term landscape-scale prevention and climate resilience; recognises the role that healthy, restored ecosystems, such as rewetted peatlands, restored wetlands and mosaic habitats created by the action of native animals, have alongside human interventions in building resilient landscapes; notes the calls for the UK Government to create a dedicated Climate Shock Fund to cover the costs of preparing for and preventing climate shocks, and further notes the calls for the Scottish Government to convene a Scottish landscape resilience summit to ensure that a cross-sector, multi-stakeholder approach is taken to share knowledge and best practice across Scotland.

18:48

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Scotland's climate is changing, not in some distant future that we can plan for at our leisure but now, in extreme ways, with devastating and destructive impacts with which our smallest rural villages, our towns and, now, our cities are grappling and struggling.

We can take this summer as an example. I saw the impact of a rapidly changing climate during my visit to Nethy Bridge in the Cairngorms, where I saw exhausted people fighting to protect a proud community and the surrounding precious landscape from the flames of a vicious wildfire.

It is clear that relying on a short-term emergency response is no longer enough. Having seen the impact this summer, I emphasise that this debate is not about the good stuff that we are already doing with nature's help—we all know about the targets to which we have committed on protecting Scotland's nature by 2030. It is about the scale and the urgency with which we must respond to these intensifying events, putting prevention first.

Although land that is parched from weeks of hot weather and wildfire looks very different from high streets under floodwaters, those problems share a root cause. Decades of urbanisation, intensive farming and human-driven climate change have weakened Scotland's natural defences to extreme weather. Nature can, and should, be our first line of defence, from peatlands, native woodlands and wetlands that act as natural sponges, soaking up excess water, to sand dunes that form natural flood barriers along coastlines. Healthy land soaks up rain, stores it and releases it slowly.

Sadly, in many communities, those habitats that act as natural buffers have been long neglected or stripped away. While nature is being seen as part of the solution, we must prioritise scaling up to increase our community's resilience to extreme weather for the long term. A rapid landscape-scale approach is needed, and the Scottish Greens are calling for the Scottish and United Kingdom Governments to deliver a dedicated climate shock fund to cover the costs of preparing for, and preventing, damage from extreme weather. Our existing farming, environmental and flood support schemes fund vital work to tackle the climate and nature crisis, but dedicated funding is needed to ramp up work and remove barriers to implement the nature-based solutions that I mentioned earlier.

Scotland will get that work right only if we bring together groups such as emergency services, conservation and rewilding organisations, gamekeepers, estates, scientists, including ecologists, farmers, community groups and public sector organisations. The profound collective knowledge of those stakeholders is the most powerful tool that we have when it comes to making Scotland more resilient in the face of a changing climate. By sharing knowledge and best practice, we can prevent serious events and ensure that we are up to the challenge of insulating Scotland from climate shocks.

That is why we are also calling on the Scottish Government to demonstrate leadership and convene a landscape resilience summit on to enable a constructive, co-designed approach, such as that which we have seen with the Common Ground Forum on Sustainable Upland Deer Management. That would deliver solutions in the interests of building the most resilient landscape that we can.

Why is that so important? This summer, the Cairngorms were scorched by a wildfire that burned for almost a month; at its peak, Nethy Bridge and nearby campsites were evacuated. Urban areas have also been affected by wildfire, with Arthur's Seat in central Edinburgh experiencing two major fires this summer. More than 230 severe wildfires were recorded by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service last year, and the fire at Dava moor in the Highlands was

Scotland's first recorded megafire—in four days, it burned almost as much land as Scotland loses to fires in a typical year. Analysis by the SFRS has suggested that, although wildfires in Scotland are almost always man made—some accidentally and some not—they almost all occur during dry weather.

Scotland is known around the world for its wet weather, but that, too, is changing. This year, several areas in eastern Scotland have experienced significant water scarcity, and 2025 was the driest year on record. Those conditions have been challenging for many sectors, including Scotland's food producers, as crops have been impacted.

The parched landscape raises the risk of flooding. Today, 400,000 properties in Scotland—roughly one in eight homes and businesses—are at risk of flooding. Responding to flooding costs Scotland around £500 million per year, and that is expected to grow, with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency forecasting

"more frequent, more intense, and more damaging"

flooding in the years ahead. Flooding can have short-term and long-term impacts on people's mental and physical health as they deal with the practical and financial consequences. The UK National Audit Office has estimated that

"for every £1 spent on protecting communities"

from flooding,

"around £9 in property damages and wider impacts"

can be avoided.

Turning to coastal areas, I note that it is predicted that the risk of flooding from the sea will more than double by the end of the century. In low-lying areas of my region, including South Uist, Orkney and Shetland, natural coastal barriers are giving way; homes are becoming uninsurable; land is losing value; and some communities face the prospect of having to move.

Human-made interventions have their place in some places. However, where they are used, they should work hand in hand with nature in order to keep costs down and support our progress towards climate and nature targets, and, most importantly, because there is no one-size-fits-all solution to improving landscape resilience. We know that nature-based solutions work across whole landscapes and they tackle several problems at once.

Scotland's 2045 net zero target is among the most ambitious such targets in the world, and we must now see similar levels of ambition in action to increase our climate resilience. The UK Climate Change Committee tracked 33 climate-resilient outcomes for Scotland, but on 32 of them, we are failing to make sufficient progress. That is why I urge the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to establish a dedicated climate shock fund, and to have ministers convene a Scottish landscape resilience summit. We can no longer stop climate change from impacting Scotland, but by partnering with nature, we can still make sure that we are ready and that no community is left to face it alone. The window to scale up our response is closing fast.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I remind members that there is a four-minute time limit on speeches in the debate, but time will be added for interventions.

18:56

Jamie Langan (South Scotland) (Reform): I know that we all, across the chamber, watched on with horror in the summer as the Cairngorms wildfire took hold. Hundreds were evacuated from nearby communities, and eventually an area 16 miles wide was affected by the emergency. The motion highlights the important work that emergency services and others such as farmers, gamekeepers and voluntary organisations played in bringing that emergency under control, and it is right that we commend their efforts in the chamber today.

All of us who love and represent rural Scotland know that our rural communities are exposed to the very real threat of wildfires. That has been very apparent in my region in recent years. In April 2025, a significant wildfire, fuelled by high winds and dry conditions, spread across the Galloway forest park. It took several days for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to bring it under control; local properties were evacuated, and several groups of campers and walkers required rescuing, including several via HM Coastguard search and rescue helicopter. That is not to compare and contrast the response to different incidents but to show the very real commonality of the issue of wildfires in rural communities across Scotland, from Galloway in the very south to the Cairngorms in the north and everywhere in between.

The motion highlights and members speaking today will cover a broad range of topics. It is important that we can have a broad, holistic discussion when the issue of wildfires comes to the chamber, because it is a complex and multifaceted issue without one single root cause to address, or one individual solution.

In my comments, I will touch on the crucial issue of the proactive land management that our rural communities, which work and interact with the land every day, can undertake to mitigate the impact of future wildfires through the reduction of fuel loads. A focus on prevention will help us to reduce the

need for emergency response in the future, which Ariane Burgess touched on. We all have a shared interest in the prevention of these events.

In recent years, we have seen a reduction in livestock numbers—in particular, in many of our upland and crofting communities, we have seen a decline in sheep numbers. In practice, that means less grazing, with vegetation becoming increasingly unmanaged, and a continued increase in fuel load that drives significant wildfires such as the one that we saw in the Cairngorms national park this summer. If we want to reduce fuel loads and the severity of wildfires, it is crucial that any efforts to reduce livestock numbers are strongly opposed and that any measures that take grazing land out of use are challenged and denied, whenever and wherever possible.

Grazing is, of course, not the only long-standing method of fuel-load reduction and land management that generations of Scots in our rural committees have relied on to reduce the danger of wildfires. The process of muirburn, based on the concept of controlled burns, has been used since time immemorial and is crucial to ensuring that fuel loads are reduced and the impact of large wildfires is mitigated. It is a process that can and should allow and empower local communities to proactively manage their land in an appropriate manner. It is disappointing, therefore, that the Government is pressing ahead with its muirburn licensing scheme from 15 October. That raises significant concerns around whether the practice can continue, with NFU Scotland saying this week that it has concerns—

The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands (Jim Fairlie): Will the member take an intervention?

Jamie Langan: I would be delighted to.

Jim Fairlie: At what point in the muirburn licensing scheme does it say that muirburn cannot take place?

Jamie Langan: I appreciate the minister's intervention—it does not say that muirburn cannot take place, but it makes it harder. There is potential for the scheme to make it much harder for smaller-scale farmers and land managers. That is not just my view. NFU Scotland said this week:

> "the new muirburn licensing regime in Scotland … is substantially altering how muirburn is undertaken, creating uncertainty regarding licensing, peatland definitions … and practical management. Where muirburn is no longer undertaken, fuel loads may increase unless alternative management is introduced.

It was frustrating, therefore, that when I wrote to the minister in the summer, with the backdrop of the ongoing Cairngorms fire, he would not consider my call for a pause to the new licensing scheme.

To conclude, wildfires are an issue that affects rural communities across Scotland, and although there are a wide range of ways in which they can be addressed, the preventative and well-established bottom-up land management methods of animal grazing and muirburn should be at the very heart of the approach.

19:00

Donald MacKinnon (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab): I remind members of my entry in the register of members' interests—I am a member of the Fire Brigades Union and a shareholder in a crofting common grazings that is involved in peatland restoration.

I thank Ariane Burgess for bringing the debate to the chamber. Along with other members and the Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands, I was at the very well-attended wildfire public meeting in Aviemore earlier this month, which was organised by the Cairngorm Crofters & Farmers Community group. Attendees include farmers, crofters, keepers, land managers and concerned members of the local community. It was a good meeting: although tensions were obviously high, and the minister and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service quite rightly faced challenging questions from the audience, it was a forward-looking and constructive discussion.

What stood out to me were the land management skills and the knowledge in that room. Those professionals know the land they work and understand how management has changed over the years and, while opinions will vary on how land should be managed, I have absolutely no doubt that those on the ground have much to contribute.

Changes in grazing practices, as we have heard, and less hands-on management have undoubtedly led to landscapes with a higher fuel load that are more at risk from fire. The climate is changing, too—Ariane Burgess has framed the debate to include that aspect, and rightly so. Increasing prolonged periods of dry weather make the risk of significant fire higher. We need to take the causes of climate change seriously and we need to invest in adaption.

The experience of the wildfires in the Cairngorms this summer highlighted how quickly a situation can get out of hand, and the techniques that were used in tackling the incident point to some of the potential solutions. Physical fire breaks were created using heavy plant, which played a crucial role in protecting communities. There is a strong argument for creating and maintaining strategic physical barriers in the landscape to improve resilience. Controlled burning has a role to play in that, too.

However, I agree that nature-based solutions are part of the picture as well. Peatland restoration and raising the water table can help to create a more resilient landscape. As I have said in the chamber before, that does not have to be to the exclusion of other land uses. We can restore peatland and continue to use that land for grazing. There are many examples from around the country that show that that is possible.

Creating resilient landscapes is vital, but it will take us only so far. Every wildfire in Scotland is started, either intentionally or accidentally, by people. Public education is vital to ensure that people understand the dangers of fire and that we see a decrease in the dangerous patterns of behaviour that lead to the type of scenes that we saw this summer.

However, we can take all those steps, and we will still need to deal with wildfire. That is why we cannot ignore the need for investment in our wildfire response. The FBU has long highlighted the danger to our firefighters of fighting wildfires. I served my community as a firefighter before being elected to represent them here, and I have seen at first hand the need for investment in our front-line services. I have attended wildfires myself in structural firefighting personal protective equipment, where it was not long before the heat led to the temptation to remove tunics and helmets, exposing myself and other firefighters to the dangers of that environment. My old station in Shawbost now has dedicated wildfire PPE and the Government must work with the SFRS to ensure the roll-out of that dedicated wildfire gear to all stations across the country.

We also need to ensure that the right equipment is available in the right places. That means investing in new wildfire units that are strategically placed in the highest-risk areas and, importantly, ensuring that more firefighters are trained in wildfire techniques. The events of the summer must be a warning for us. We need to listen to the voices on the ground, invest in more resilient landscapes and properly resource our fire service.

19:05

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I thank my colleague Ariane Burgess for bringing forward this timely motion. We are in the age of a climate emergency. Last year, we had the worst year in recorded history in the UK for wildfires, so there is a sense of urgency. It is important that everyone in this Parliament gets across this issue. Last week, we had a really positive debate in the chamber, with cross-party agreement on how we can deal with flooding and support small communities to address that threat.

It is important that the committees of this Parliament work on this issue as well. I am convener of the Rural Affairs Committee. This week, we launched an inquiry into the access code. There is a key question about whether the access code is effective in helping to prevent wildfires and change the behaviour of people. I have also had a constructive meeting this week with the conveners of the Criminal Justice Committee and the Climate Action Committee. Together, we are looking at how we might work together to shine a light on this issue in the months ahead.

The Scottish Parliament first held an inquiry into climate change 21 years ago. I will quote from that committee report that was produced at the time. It said:

"The longer adaptation"

to climate change

"is delayed, the more costly and difficult it can get … Adaptation efforts need to move up a gear."

That is the voice from 2005. We are now two decades on from that. I am not saying that no progress has been made, but progress has been too slow, and the climate impacts are now accelerating. We are starting to see extremes: heat waves and wildfires happening in the summer and wet and stormy winters, landscapes that are both wetter and drier at the same time. There are complex problems to resolve.

I think back to that 2005 inquiry. It heard evidence from SEPA, which predicted—20 years ago—that Scotland was going to have a wetter west coast and a drier east coast. That is exactly what has now come to pass. Last year, in the east of Scotland—in Fife, in my region—we saw areas being declared as water scarce. That is becoming the new normal. We need to consider multiple climate impacts and move beyond the emergency response to look at how we put in place long-term prevention, mitigation and preparedness for our communities. As we are seeing, many vulnerable people in our communities can be hit by climate impacts.

The motion talks about a climate shock fund. I am sure that the minister will reflect on some of the speeches that were heard in last week's debate on flooding, and on what the Government said at that time in relation to the money that is now available to communities to support climate impacts around flooding. However, I would say to the minister that, in relation to climate change, we need something that is much more overarching. There are multiple problems to address—drought problems, flooding problems and wildfire problems—and they often occur within the same catchment. We need a fund that is available to support all those communities. The concept of a landscape resilience summit that

can bring people together and draw on the experience of deer management is a brilliant idea.

To Jamie Langan and Donald MacKinnon, I say that we need to move away from the polarised debate. I urge a bit of caution here. If we argue for the removal of fuel load from landscapes, people could read into that that we want to shut down the commercial forestry sector in Scotland, which has the biggest and most flammable fuel load in our landscape. We have to be careful about that. We need to have a sensitive debate about the issue. I know that the forestry sector is talking about fire breaks, and we need to look at how we bring more water into our landscape and retain water in our landscape as well.

The reality is that all forms of land use are threatened by climate change and wildfire, including farming and attempts to rewild our landscapes, so it is a combined problem. One of the positive conclusions from last week's debate on flooding is that we need catchment-wide co-ordination. That is a thorny problem. I do not think that local authorities have the capacity to do that, but it is something that I would ask the Government to consider. On all of these issues, a catchment-wide approach is needed. We are seeing multiple climate impacts, and we need to get communities involved.

Again, I thank Ariane Burgess for bringing this issue to the chamber. We need to keep this conversation going in the chamber and in committees. We cannot look away. Climate change is real. We need to take action.

19:09

Tim Eagle (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank Ariane Burgess for bringing this motion to the chamber. I cannot say that I agree with everything in it, but I actually quite like members' business debates, and I think that it is important to come and speak in them.

I thought that Mark Ruskell gave quite a good speech, until he came to his point about forestry. I cannot speak for Labour or Reform members, but I do not think that anybody who is talking about the new muirburn rules is suggesting that we suddenly shut down the entire forestry industry. We are, of course, not doing that; that is a silly thing to say. What we are talking about is making sure that fuel load is not too high in some areas.

Mark Ruskell: I say to the member that, if he looks logically at where the fuel load is in the landscape, he will see that it is not in upland montane scrub, and that it is in commercial forest blocks of flammable pine. If the logic leads us to reduce fuel load in the landscape, he cannot direct his comments towards one form of land use without ignoring the form of land use that has the most fuel load. That is why I am urging caution, because that is a sector that needs investment. We need investment in forestry, and we need a sensible, measured conversation about fuel load.

Tim Eagle: I agree that we need a measured conversation, and we need more firebreaks on our landscape to make sure that we do not have a situation in which fire can spread rapidly. The point that I wanted to make is that other parties appear to be suggesting that we are saying that we should get rid of forestry in Scotland. We are absolutely not doing that. It is a very important industry for us.

Donald MacKinnon talked about the important meeting that we had in Aviemore a couple of weeks ago, which the minister attended. Hundreds of people came out, and they discussed some of what they had learned from what went on during the recent wildfire in the Cairngorms. One of the critically important points that I thought about for quite a while afterwards was aerial firefighting capability. There is a lot that we could discuss today, and a lot more that I would like to discuss with Ariane Burgess around the issues of droughts, flooding, rewilding, farming, landscape-scale prevention and so on, but I really want to address the issue of aerial firefighting, because I worry that, if we do not, we will not have the aerial firefighting capability that we will need next year.

Neil Gray, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, came to the chamber not long ago and gave an update on aerial firefighting. However, to be honest, despite submitting parliamentary questions following that statement, I still do not fully understand what it is that has changed. My understanding is that, prior to what happened this year in the Cairngorms, the situation was that a fire would be reported, a helicopter would be requested, then we would have to try to find that aircraft and arrange for its deployment and so on. What seems to have changed is that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, in a period of high wildfire risk, will put a helicopter on standby and arrange its deployment if necessary. However, that will still be a commercial helicopter. That does not seem to suggest that we would get any priority access to that helicopter if it was firefighting somewhere else.

Jim Fairlie: Will the member give way?

Tim Eagle: I am happy to let the minister intervene if he can confirm right here, right now, that we can get priority access to that standby helicopter and it will be where it is needed at a moment's notice when the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service calls it in.

Jim Fairlie: I will answer that point on the basis that I am not going to come back to it during my speech.

The difference is that the cabinet secretary has managed to ensure that the SFRS can put a standby call in to commercial helicopter providers who will be aware that there is a likelihood that they will be called out. I understand that that is not a perfect solution, but it is the best solution that we have at the moment. The commercial operators have a very good relationship with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and will respond as quickly as they can.

Tim Eagle: That is important, because that is what happened this year. We have a great relationship with the providers but, when we asked for the helicopters to come, it took 36 hours for them to be provided, by which point the fire was massive.

Jim Fairlie: It is about being properly prepared beforehand. If we know that the wildfire risk is up, the SFRS will put that request in sooner to make sure that the private companies have helicopter capability on standby for us.

Tim Eagle: I still do not think that that answers my point. I am conscious of time, so I will need to move on, but the point is that, although you might have a helicopter on standby with a commercial company, you do not have an agreement that says that, when a wildfire happens, that helicopter, regardless of what it is doing, will be on site immediately. We need to have that in place for next year. It is a critically important point that must be resolved soon.

I understand that European countries are currently working through procurement for next year's wildfire season. Therefore, our procurement of helicopters and aircraft that are around the country—taking a pan-UK approach might be the right thing to do—must happen now. We cannot wait any longer. We need clarity about the issue. Our communities need clarity, and the Government needs to respond to that.

19:15

Sanne Dijkstra-Downie (Edinburgh Northern) (LD): I thank Ariane Burgess for securing this debate.

In the past few years, we have watched in horror as some of our most precious landscapes have been consumed by flames, from Dava moor to the heart of Cairngorms national park and even right here on our doorstep on Arthur's Seat. The emergency services tell us the brutal truth that Scotland's wildfire season is extending. Driven by climate change, our summers are becoming hotter and drier.

These fires are no longer rare incidents; they are a predictable symptom of a warming planet, and they have the potential to escalate beyond our current capacity to deal with them. When a wildfire rips through a landscape, the ecological toll is catastrophic. These blazes affect entire ecosystems. They incinerate native plants, destroy nesting habitats and kill vulnerable wildlife. In a matter of hours, a single wildfire can completely wipe out decades of hard-won nature conservation progress. It is heartbreaking to see years of meticulous restoration go up in smoke.

We are, of course, grateful for the heroic efforts of the firefighters and community volunteers who fought this summer's blazes. At the same time, we must recognise that fighting fires on the ground is only treating the symptom. We are failing to treat the cause, and we are failing to protect ourselves. If we want to protect communities such as Nethy Bridge, we have to start by protecting the land that surrounds them. We need to do more to make Scotland's landscapes resilient to extreme weather. That is where nature-based solutions come in.

Degraded, dried-out landscapes are a tinderbox waiting to spark, but a healthy, restored landscape is a natural shield. Healthy peatlands naturally retain moisture. They serve as literal living firebreaks that block the spread of flames. That is why we need to see an increase in public investment as well as incentivised private investment in large-scale peatland restoration.

We must also look at our forestry practices. I would like to see a higher proportion of forestry grants directed towards the planting of new native woodlands. Native forests are structurally more resilient, healthier and better adapted to withstand climate pressures. Making sure that conditions are right for natural regeneration is another important aspect of what must be done.

Of course, we must protect and fund our emergency services and learn the lessons from the Cairngorms fire, but fundamentally, our climate defence strategy must be rooted in nature. We cannot just rely on fire services when the crisis hits. We must build a landscape that can defend itself. Let us invest in our peatlands, restore our native woods and safeguard Scotland's breathtaking biodiversity.

19:17

David Barratt (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a councillor and a hydrologist.

I also thank Ariane Burgess for securing this members' business debate.

We often think about climate adaptation in terms of individual hazards: we have a flood problem, so we develop a flood intervention; we have a wildfire

problem, so we develop a wildfire intervention. However, what we need to do is to start thinking more about the economics of resilience. Governments across the world have competing financial priorities. If we are going to invest in climate adaptation—I think that we should—we should be looking for interventions that deliver multiple benefits: what we might call resilience dividends.

Take peatland restoration, which I think that everyone else has spoken about. It is an area in which I have some experience. It is often talked about through the lens of carbon and net zero, but, as we know, it also reduces flood risk by slowing the movement of water through the catchment. It retains water during peaks and during periods of drought and water scarcity. It creates wetter conditions that can reduce the risk of wildfire, and it delivers biodiversity benefits, on top of, of course, protecting carbon stores. That is a lot of public benefit for one intervention. In economic terms, it is a lot of bang for our buck.

Another example of that could be as simple as developing a network of ponds and wetlands. They can provide temporary storage during heavy rainfall, retain water during dry periods, create valuable habitats for wildlife and, in the context of this debate, provide an accessible source of water for fighting fires.

Good land management can, therefore, deliver multiple benefits, and that principle should be at the heart of how we approach climate adaptation. There is not necessarily a single intervention that works everywhere. What we need to ask is what combination of interventions makes a given landscape more resilient.

That is where having a climate shock fund could be particularly valuable. Prevention is almost always cheaper than responding to failure and relying on the emergency services alone is not financially sustainable. We need landscape and scale adaptation and that wider economic point should be clear.

Tomorrow—and this is a shameless plug—I am co-sponsoring a screening in Parliament of “The People’s Emergency Briefing”. I have seen that film four times now and one thing that strikes me is the economic case for acting early. The argument is not simply that we must spend more money because climate change is happening; it is that we must spend money more intelligently, earlier and in ways that mitigate multiple risks at the same time.

Climate adaptation should not be about building resilience to individual hazards; it should be about building resilience into the landscape. If we can reduce flood risk, improve water scarcity, reduce the risk of wildfires, restore biodiversity and protect our natural carbon stores all at the same time, we will not simply be responding to climate change; we will get far greater value for every pound that we invest in preparing Scotland for that.

If it is all “net stupid zero” and climate change turns out to be a massive hoax, at least we will have made ourselves a bit more biodiverse and a bit less prone to wildfires, flooding and drought.

19:21

Q Manivannan (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green): In the storytelling sessions that happen at a local bookstore called Lighthouse, we often discuss with our young ones the story of the Cailleach, who raised mountains, unleashed storms and held the fighting seasons, as a story that shows that the power of the land is real and that ignoring it comes at a serious cost.

Arthur’s Seat burned in 2019, 2020, 2022, August 2025, and in May and July this year and Scotland recorded 238 wildfires in 2025, compared to 55 the year before, which is a 330 per cent increase in a single year. The number of wildfire warnings has also risen, from one in 2020 to 14 last year, before we even think of this year. Arthur’s Seat, as many members have noted, sits just a few hundred metres away from where we are now. In July, after a fire broke out on Salisbury Crags, a 24-year-old student, who was asthmatic, told me about how she had watched it from her window and was uncertain about whether it would reach her street. The fire burned holes in a 2,000-year-old hillfort and the ruin of a fifteenth century chapel. That is what loss in our capital city looks like: it is domestic anxiety as our heritage and ecology burn in the same afternoon, visible from a wee tenement window.

East Lothian’s climate shocks are no different. They may be less visible in some ways, but they are no less structural. A recent SEPA water scarcity report shows the Tyne catchment at moderate scarcity and the Firth of Forth at alert level, following what the agency described as

“the driest hydrological year … in eastern Scotland since 1976”

and the National Farmers Union recorded the driest spring in 132 years and the hottest summer on record, with measurable reductions in arable yield and quality and real pressure on farm cash flows. East Lothian proudly markets itself as the garden of Scotland, but that identity is built on a soil and water system that is now under documented strain and on a coastline about which the council is now consulting residents, recognising erosion that it cannot yet fully model.

Today’s motion asks us to think properly about resilience and I am grateful to my colleague Ariane

Burgess for bringing it to the chamber. As many others have said, that requires precision about what is actually being lost. The research tells us that, remarkably, no one in Scotland has yet died in wildfires, but that is simply untrue. There is no measurement in the statistics of the lives lost to respiratory illness, cancer, lead or mercury poisoning, or heat stroke. That is not there. There is a cost of £3.1 million for damage to firefighting equipment owned by land managers and used to fight the Dava wildfire alone. The cost also shows up in the story of a 79-year-old gamekeeper who spent three days fighting that fire and 22 more digging out burning peat by hand, despite having broken his back a few years earlier. It shows up in farmers making planting decisions for next year without knowing whether they will have water, or how much. That is what climate shock really costs the people who are closest to the land.

I am happy to talk about cost every time that it comes up, as long as whoever is offering those conversations can also tell us the cost of the Dava or Cairngorms fires, or what it costs to replace topsoil on Arthur's Seat for a third time in this decade alone. Those costs will not end, which is why the motion's emphasis matters. It talks about shifting from emergency response towards landscape-scale prevention, such as rewetted peatland and restored wetlands—it is about healthy catchments, really.

East Lothian already has the beginnings of that in the new River Esk partnership and its 2025 to 2030 climate change strategy. Edinburgh has the national park authorities' evolving wildfire bylaws. However, neither has, on its own, the resourcing to do this at landscape scale rather than site by site. That is precisely why the motion's calls for a dedicated climate shock fund and for a Scottish landscape resilience summit matter immensely and are urgent.

Resilience will not be built in the next emergency response; it will be built, or not, through how seriously we fund the work before and between fires on soil and water catchments, with the people who truly know the land. I support the motion whole-heartedly.

19:25

Dawn Black (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): When we talk about climate shocks, it is easy to think of individual events in isolation, such as a wildfire in the Cairngorms, flooding in Brechin, coastal erosion in Montrose or water scarcity affecting communities across the north-east.

However those challenges are connected and are becoming more frequent and severe as our climate changes, as has already been illustrated by colleagues. The recent wildfire in the Cairngorms highlighted the scale of the challenge and the strength of the response. Emergency services, conservation organisations, gamekeepers, farmers, land managers and volunteers work together in difficult circumstances, and they deserve our sincere thanks.

Across Angus North and Mearns, we have seen at first hand the impacts of extreme weather. Storm Babet devastated Brechin and, three years on, the community is still living with the consequences. Just last week, difficult decisions were made on the demolition of 154 homes and on how best to protect the town from future flooding. Montrose continues to face the growing threat of coastal erosion, while changing weather patterns are creating new pressures on water resources and land management.

That is why resilience must be about more than responding when emergencies happen; it must be about preparation, adaptation and prevention. We need to recognise that healthy peatlands, wetlands and woodlands are not simply environmental assets. Restored peatlands are less susceptible to fire and, alongside wetlands and woodlands, help to build the resilience of our landscapes by reducing risks of wildfire, drought and flooding. Investing in nature restoration is not only good for biodiversity; it is also a practical way to protect communities from the growing impacts of climate change. Like Mark Ruskell, I support the proposal for a Scottish landscape resilience summit, because there is much to be gained from a more holistic approach that brings together wildfire prevention, nature restoration and long-term climate resilience.

Prevention and restoration are fundamentally linked. As Scottish Land & Estates has highlighted, we need a coherent plan for managing wildfire risk and responding when fires occur. However if the summit is to proceed, it must not become a talking shop. The challenge is too urgent for that. Any summit must lead to practical action and long-term collaboration, and we must continue to focus on wildfire prevention.

In a previous debate, I highlighted the risks that disposable barbecues can present during periods of warm and dry weather. Part of becoming more resilient must involve reducing avoidable ignition risks wherever possible. Although I would like a complete ban on their sale, I acknowledge the Scottish Government's recent commitment to raise with the UK Government the case for further consideration of a more permanent approach to restricting disposable barbecues, at least during periods of heightened wildfire risk. However a complete ban would give more clarity to the public.

Community resilience is equally important. Time and again, whether during floods, wildfires or

severe storms, residents, farmers, land managers and volunteers have stepped forward to support one another. In Brechin, the Crickety served as a vital community hub for people whose lives had been turned upside down by storm Babet, and the communities of Stonehaven and around Aberdeenshire and Angus stepped up in the aftermath of storm Arwen in 2021, during the 10 days of blackouts that we experienced.

We need to work more closely with communities and make better use of their knowledge and expertise because, when climate shocks hit, it is local people who will always be the first on the scene and the first to respond, as they did in Nethy Bridge this summer.

I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to review and deliver the wildfires strategic action plan, but I urge ministers to complete that work and implement any necessary changes before next summer.

The lesson is clear: resilience cannot be built after disaster strikes. Whether through restoring peatlands, empowering communities or reducing wildfire risks, prevention must become as much of a priority as the response. If we are serious about protecting our communities, resilience must be our first line of defence.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Due to the number of members who wish to speak in the debate I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3 of standing orders, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes. I call Ariane Burgess to move such a motion.

Motion moved,

That, under rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Ariane Burgess*]

Motion agreed to.

19:30

Holly Bruce (Glasgow Southside) (Green): I refer to my entry in the register of members' interests, as I am a sitting councillor on Glasgow City Council.

Over the past few years, Scotland has seen one extreme weather event after another, from record storms and severe rainfall to devastating wildfires. Those extreme events reflect the harsh reality of climate change, putting lives directly in danger.

Our emergency service workers bear the brunt of that reality. NHS staff drive to work when red, danger-to-life weather warnings have been issued to keep our health service running. As we have heard, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service attends blaze after blaze to stop wildfires from spreading and keep our communities safe. Homes and businesses have been destroyed and thousands of residents have been evacuated. Scotland's economy is already suffering severe harm. WWF Scotland found that, in just one single year, Scottish agriculture lost more than £161 million in production due to climate driven weather.

It is clear that relying on short-term emergency responses to standalone incidents is no longer good enough. I am proud to support my colleague Ariane Burgess in calling for a climate shock fund to cover the cost of preparing for, and preventing the damage from, extreme weather.

We can see what proactive adaptation looks like in Glasgow. Initiatives such as rain gardens show how we can build resilience and learn to live with excessive rain, much like the practical urban nature interventions championed by local lecturer Andrew Hooligan at the University of Glasgow. A dedicated climate shock fund would scale up those vital green adaptation measures right across Scotland—in urban areas, too.

However, preparation is only half the battle. We must stop making the crisis worse. Earlier today, we heard the Conservatives calling for ever more climate-wrecking fossil fuels. Just hours later, we are debating the real world harm caused by their continued use. That is a jarring shift, to say the least. Burning fossil fuels is the number one driver of climate change. As long as we continue to burn them, extreme weather will become more frequent, severe and dangerous.

I must note that, right now, the UK Government is still considering approving the massive Rosebank oil field. Both the UK and Scottish Governments have signed the Paris accord and must act to limit global temperature rise. The research is clear. Rosebank will take us beyond those commitments.

The First Minister has recently reiterated his commitment to tackling climate change as a political priority. I would like to challenge how tackling climate change can be considered a political priority, when the Scottish Government has not taken a stand against Rosebank and Jackdaw. We hear so often the response that it is a reserved matter and, therefore, that it is not our responsibility to comment. However, that misses the point entirely. Campaigners across Scotland have so clearly asked us, time and again, to stand up on the matter and tell Westminster that we do not want those fossil fuel projects.

Nonetheless, to focus on the matters that are devolved, the Government has also stalled progress on the heat in buildings bill, which can help us to substantially reduce the amount of fossil fuels we use when it comes to heating, as well as cooling, our homes. Public support for bold action is already here. Polls consistently show that people across Scotland and the UK feel deep

climate anxiety. They are also overwhelmingly supportive of strong decisive climate action.

I was recently reminded of what is at stake while watching the play "The Trials" by Dawn King at the Tron theatre in Glasgow. In that production, children and young people sit as a jury holding older generations accountable for their failure to act on climate change. That play reflects our actual reality. Children and young people are our jury.

This Parliament must focus not only on adapting to the harm already caused but on minimising further damage. Anything less is an absolute abdication of our responsibility to future generations.

19:35

David Linden (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP): I commend and thank Ms Burgess for securing the debate. I will confine my remarks solely to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, which I am interested in as the convener of the Criminal Justice Committee, which, as Ms Burgess will know, has oversight of that service. That is not to say that I do not agree with many other aspects of the motion.

Before I go any further, I pay tribute to the firefighters who, when all of us run away from such incidents, run towards them. The importance of that is not lost on me. In that regard, I pay tribute to Mr MacKinnon, who was based in Shawbost, on the west side of Lewis. I appreciate his work. I struggled to disagree with many of his remarks about wildfire units, and I am sure that Scottish Government ministers will take note of what he said.

Recently, I met the Fire Brigades Union to discuss the issue of wildfires. It is important that we understand the context: most wildfires in Scotland are started by human activities, such as unattended barbecues, campfires and discarded glass bottles, which act as a magnifying glass. It is thought that the Dava megafire was set off by a flare from a search and rescue team helicopter during a training exercise. When we have conversations about wildfires, it is important that we are mindful of how they are being started.

Mr Eagle of the Conservative Party made points about aerial firefighting, and I do not find myself a million miles away from his views. It was unacceptable that it took 36 hours for the helicopter to be deployed in the Cairngorms. I think that the cabinet secretary has recognised that, but I accept the point that the minister made about the commercial contract that is in place.

The fundamental point that members must recognise is that we will see more such incidents in the future, and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's current capacity to respond to multiple significant incidents is very limited. That might not win me plaudits from my whips or members of the Government front bench, but the reality is that the service is struggling. There are resource issues, some of which will be teased out. I welcome the meeting that I had with Mr Ruskell and Mr McMillan earlier, because I think that there is a role for our three committees to come together in that regard.

There are capacity and resource issues, some of which were highlighted regarding the Cairngorms fire. When such incidents take place, we must consider setting up hillside facilities so that showers and rest areas are in place, because the overtime bill that will arise as a result of the Cairngorms fire will be significant. I am sure that some of those issues will be teased out as the Government learns the lessons from the fire. The overwhelming point that I want the Government to consider relates to the capacity of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to respond to major incidents.

Ariane Burgess: David Linden has talked about the Fire and Rescue Service needing to tackle wildfires, but does he agree that it is also the first line of support and rescue when it comes to flooding?

David Linden: Absolutely—that is the point that I am making. The FBU put the blunt reality to me: given the number of appliances and officers available on the night of the Union Street fire, if the excrement had hit the fan anywhere else in Scotland that night, we would have been in trouble. Ms Burgess's point about flooding backs up the point that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is being called to work on multiple fronts.

As somebody who believes in climate change—I think that Comrade Langan, on the Bolshevik benches over there, does now believe in climate change, too—I recognise that we will see more and more such events, so our public services must be given the resources to be able to respond to them.

19:39

Laura Moodie (South Scotland) (Green): As my colleagues Mark Ruskell and Ariane Burgess have already pointed out, climate breakdown is no longer a distant future threat. Across Scotland, communities are already experiencing its impacts through flooding, drought, storm damage and pressure on our rural economy. We often think of these as separate challenges, but they share a common cause: landscapes that have become less resilient over time, combined with a rapidly changing climate that is making extreme weather more frequent and severe. Communities have repeatedly faced flooding, while farmers and land

managers are increasingly dealing with both prolonged dry periods and intense rainfall.

The London School of Economics and Political Science states that climate-related damage currently drains about 1.1 per cent of the UK's gross domestic product. If we see the predicted 2°C of warming, that will rise to around 5 per cent of GDP.

We cannot keep paying to clean up after every climate shock. We need to invest in preventing the damage in the first place. That means recognising that nature is part of our infrastructure and every bit as valuable as our railways, energy grid, schools and hospitals. Healthy peatlands store water and continually sequester carbon. Native woodlands slow run-off. Wetlands absorb floodwater and release it gradually during dry periods. These natural systems make communities safer while also supporting biodiversity.

As Parliament's Eurasian beaver champion, I want to highlight the role that beavers can play in climate resilience and restoring those landscapes. At Argaty in Perthshire, beavers have enabled an additional million litres of water to be stored within a wetland system, and that water is held back during heavy rainfall and is available in dry periods. It is a practical example of nature-based climate adaptation working on the ground.

Increasingly, communities are developing their own proposals for landscape-scale nature restoration. Groups such as Beavers on Tweed are asking how their community, working with nature rather than against it, can make an entire river catchment more resilient to flooding, drought and biodiversity loss. The River Tweed faces many of the same pressures that we see across Scotland: increasing flood risk, stressed river systems and the growing impacts of climate change. The groups are bringing together communities, farmers, fisheries interests, conservation organisations and public bodies to consider every tool available to build resilience. That is why I support my colleagues' call for a Scottish landscape resilience summit.

South Scotland already offers inspiring examples of what can be achieved when communities lead. At the community-owned Tarras Valley nature reserve, woodland regeneration and peatland restoration are helping to restore nature while reducing flood risk downstream. The wildwood project at Carrifran has transformed a barren, unproductive valley into a mature woodland and biodiverse habitat that withstood this summer's heat and will slow this autumn's water run-off, reducing downstream flood peaks as climate risks and extreme weather events continue to increase.

Restoring nature and tackling climate change are not just about wildlife and biodiversity, though. They are about protecting people, homes and livelihoods. Pioneering farmers have been working for decades to show, not tell, the impact that regenerative farming can have on climate resilience. The Ethical Dairy, which is located just down the road from me, has decades of open-source data showing that its regenerative, organic dairy has increased the carbon held by the land to 5 tonnes per hectare annually, increased biodiversity by 50 per cent and reduced the dairy's external costs during the price fluctuations that we have seen.

If climate shocks are becoming the new normal, our response cannot be business as usual. We need a dedicated climate shock fund to invest in prevention, not just recovery, and we need the ambition to work with nature at a landscape scale to build the resilience that our communities need, because the best defence against many of the climate challenges that we face is often what nature has provided all along.

19:44

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): Globally, our climate is the most extreme and unpredictable that it has ever been. It is also the most stable and predictable that it will ever be again in our lifetimes. That is why I am so pleased to speak in support of Ariane Burgess's motion this evening, and why this debate on giving our communities the tools that they need to build resilience is so important.

The timing of the debate is interesting. It is Scotland's climate week, after all. However, as Holly Bruce alluded to, we had a debate earlier today about what the Conservatives, Reform, and some in the Scottish National Party say is the absolute necessity of more drilling for oil and gas in the Jackdaw and Rosebank oil fields. MSPs from parties that spoke earlier in favour of drilling have spoken in this evening's debate, with all sincerity and concern for the people whom they represent, about the impact of wildfires and other climate shocks on their constituents' homes and businesses. They have to accept that wildfires, flooding, and other climate shocks, which are happening ever more, are the price that we are paying for continuing to extract fossil fuels.

That price is being paid by communities that have been devastated by flooding, such as in Brechin in Angus, where, it was announced last week, 300 homes that were damaged by storm Babet in 2023 will be demolished.

The price is paid, too, by the wildlife that is lost to fires. As the Scottish Wildlife Trust has told us, wildfires often happen at the same time as animals

are preparing and maintaining nesting sites. Thousands of animals died in the this year's and last year's fires.

Those Tory, Reform and other MSPs have to accept that, the more oil and gas we drill, the greater the risk of climate shocks and the greater the risk to human and animal life.

However, we can both tackle the climate crisis that causes climate shocks and build human and natural resilience to those shocks. The Kirrie rifflers, part of the fantastic Sustainable Kirriemuir in my region, are doing great work to monitor and look after the health of local waterways. The more we understand what is happening in our rivers—such as siltation levels, which the rifflers check regularly—the more we can do to prevent flooding and to prepare local communities if the worst happens.

Robert Gordon University is rewilding 55 acres of land on campus, including restoring long-lost wetlands, which can help to reduce flooding by holding on to water and taking the pressure off flood defences.

Those and other projects to help us fight climate change and climate shocks need to be supported. The nature restoration fund, which was introduced by then Scottish Green minister Lorna Slater, has provided more than £65 million to hundreds of projects that are helping to build climate resilience. The fund is supporting the reviving the Leuchar Burn project, which is renaturalising that burn and associated flood plains—in the process, creating new pools and wetlands, which will help to manage flooding risk.

The fund has been a game changer, but more support is needed. Scottish Greens stood on a manifesto to increase the fund to £200 million, which will take us closer—albeit not all the way—to what is needed to restore 30 per cent of habitats on land and sea, which we aim to achieve as part of United Nations nature restoration targets. That is what makes Ariane Burgess's call for a climate shock fund so important, so that we can help communities genuinely build resilience.

Nature is, so often, the first line of defence against the effects of climate change, but we must give nature a helping hand by taking the climate emergency seriously and making a full and rapid response at landscape scale. If we do not, every supporter of fossil fuel extraction who is in the chamber today will need to explain to their constituents who are affected by wildfires, floods, droughts and many other extreme weather events why we have failed to take the climate action that is needed to keep them safe. We can and must act.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Jim Fairlie to respond to the debate.

19:48

The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands (Jim Fairlie): I very much welcome today's debate on wildfires. It is not the first that we have had, and I am absolutely sure that it will not be the last, because the issue is not going to go away.

I will try to address much that has been raised by members across parties, because everyone in the chamber recognises the increasing risk that is posed by wildfires, as a result of our changing climate and changing landscapes but also because of human activity. As Donald MacKinnon and David Linden have both stated, a lot of the fires have been started deliberately or accidentally by people who are in the countryside. We have to message much better to the public that they have to be responsible when accessing the countryside. There is no such thing as the right to roam. There is the right of responsible access. We need to continue to make that point.

The events of the summer have absolutely reminded us that, as Ariane Burgess said, climate change is not a future threat but a present reality, and its effects are felt across our natural environment, our rural economy and our public services—and, most importantly, by the people in the communities that we serve. That is why the Government is looking at all the causes and effects, so that we can better plan for current events and future resilience.

I will take a moment to reflect on the fire in the Cairngorms this year. First, I put on record yet again my personal respect and admiration for those who helped to extinguish, support and co-ordinate as events rapidly unfolded. I also convey the Government's thanks for the community spirit that was so demonstrable during the period of the fire. Firefighters, keepers, land managers, volunteers, farmers, shepherds, environmental organisations and others did a remarkable job in really difficult circumstances. It got fraught at times, which is understandable, but that collective effort was fabulous to hear about. As I said, from a governmental and a personal perspective, I want to be clear about how thankful we are to every individual.

The fire demonstrated the vulnerabilities in our landscapes and the lessons that we must continue to learn. My colleague Siobhian Brown, with whom I worked in the Dava fire last year and who was brought up in Australia, pointed out that, there, they know about wildfire. Everyone from a young age is aware of the risks and knows how to avoid them. It is part of their culture and their societal

understanding. Unfortunately, it is now going to be part of ours as well, because wildfire can be viewed no longer as a one-off event but as something that we will have to be prepared for every year.

With that in mind, there are lessons to be learned, and we are committed to ensuring that there is a full and comprehensive debrief, which will inform our future response and preparedness and add to the learnings that we have had from previous events.

We all know that the most effective way to manage the threat of wildfires is to prevent them from happening in the first place. We have created the ability for local authorities to take local action, but we will still review what might be needed for a national approach. The strategic action plan on wildfires, which we published in March, sets out 18 priority actions to improve the prevention of, preparedness for and response to fires. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice has commissioned a review of the previous action plan, which is under way. We will carefully consider its outcomes as we continue to work on what we already know.

Maggie Chapman: I do not disagree with the minister's focus on wildfires, but will he recognise that the motion and the debate are much broader? We are in danger of looking at just one issue, which is at the top of our minds because of what happened in the summer. However, for genuine community resilience, we have to look not just at wildfires but at our responses in agriculture and across all other portfolios. We cannot just rest on our response and strategic approach to wildfires.

Jim Fairlie: I will continue to focus on the motion that was lodged. That does not at all diminish the member's points about what we are doing on nature and climate, but those are longer debates. For the purpose of this evening, I will continue to focus on the areas that were brought forward by Ariane Burgess.

Our current plan recognises that healthy ecosystems have an important role to play in resilience. How we manage land is important to being able to reduce the fuel load for future fires. The work that we are doing will contribute to landscapes that are better able to cope with climate change, while delivering benefits for nature and biodiversity.

As has been mentioned by a number of members, the restoring and rewetting of degraded peatlands will help us to store carbon and improve water management. Just as important, it will create landscapes that are more resilient to drought and wildfire risk. By investing now in resilient landscapes and in resilient communities, and using the tools that are available to us just now, which include muirburn, we can reduce future risks to those communities and landscapes while creating wider benefits for nature, climate and rural Scotland as a whole.

Ariane Burgess: I appreciate that the minister is choosing to focus on wildfires, but what I was trying to get at with my motion is not just wildfires but flooding, droughts, coastal erosion and soil erosion. As I said earlier, we have to acknowledge that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will also face flooding. The whole point of the debate is much broader than wildfires. That is the starting point, but we have to address all those issues. That is why I am calling for a climate shock fund and for the minister to bring forward a resilient landscape summit.

Jim Fairlie: I will address that point, to try to help Ariane Burgess get out of the debate something that she is looking for. She is looking for a landscape resilience summit. The Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs has already set up a new land, agriculture and nature delivery—LAND—group to specifically look at all the actions that are being taken across the landscapes in Scotland. That will include farming, nature and our resilience to all the issues that Ariane Burgess has talked about. In response to her, I say that we are focused on wildfire because that was the debate that she brought; however, we have already done a huge amount of work across all those areas, and will continue to do so.

To go back to the wildfire issue, the planning and preparedness activity—because of the risk that we have talked about, which was in the motion—are guided by national and local risk assessments, to ensure that the efforts are proportionate to the risks that Scotland faces, including the emerging likelihood of far more intense and frequent wildfires. What is clear and has been demonstrated time and again, particularly over the past few years, is that we will achieve those outcomes better through bringing together different expertise and experience, rather than viewing the issues through a single lens. We recognise that the challenges that are posed by climate change and land use are complex and evolving, and that they require co-operation across not just Scotland but the four nations.

We must stop polarising the debate on cause and prevention; I would really like to take that out of the discussion, because we cannot keep saying that one thing does one thing and another thing will be the silver bullet, because there is no silver bullet to any of this.

With that in mind, I thank all members for taking part in the debate, and I give an assurance that the Government and all the agencies on which we rely to work with us in partnership and co-operation are taking the issue very seriously. We will continue to

find the best solutions through the collaborative and co-operative way that we have already started out on, because we want to ensure that we become a nation that is ready and prepared for the possibility of having to respond to such significant events, now and in the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): That concludes the debate.

Meeting closed at 19:57.

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