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Wednesday 7 October 2026

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 7 October 2026

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

Portfolio Question Time

Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Finance and Local Government, Parliamentary Business and Veterans

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Good afternoon. The first portfolio is Deputy First Minister responsibilities, finance and local government, parliamentary business and veterans. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question.

United Kingdom Budget (Discussions with UK Government)

1. **Laura Mitchell (Moray) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government in advance of the UK budget. (S7O-00347)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government (Jenny Gilruth): I met the Chief Secretary to the Treasury last month at the finance interministerial meeting in Cardiff. Following that, I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, setting out our priorities for Scotland in the United Kingdom budget.

I can confirm that the UK Government has not given any undertaking to address the points that I raised. It has not made us aware of any plans to take action on the cost of living; reverse its planned real-terms reduction in Scotland's block grant; or give a commitment to provide greater powers for this Parliament.

Laura Mitchell: Last week, alongside Mike Duncan from the Federation of Small Businesses Scotland, I visited the fantastic Harbour Lights cafe in Lossiemouth. We discussed with Evelyn, the owner, the challenges that the hospitality sector faces and the need for support from the UK Government in the upcoming budget.

Now that the Scottish Government has publicly backed the campaign calling for a 10 per cent VAT rate for hospitality, what further representations can the cabinet secretary make to ensure that the UK Government takes that support on board?

Jenny Gilruth: I thank Laura Mitchell for her question and for highlighting the Harbour Lights cafe in Lossiemouth, in her constituency—I will have to visit it one day. The Scottish Government very much supports those calls for the hospitality industry, and I have urged the chancellor, in my letter, to listen carefully to the many businesses that continue to call for a reduction in VAT for the sector ahead of the UK budget.

The Scottish Government has repeatedly supported those calls since the temporary reduced rate ended, back in 2022, in order to secure some much-needed support for businesses facing ongoing cost pressures. Some of those challenges have been compounded by the increases in employer national insurance contributions and in energy bills. The Scottish Government is calling for direct action from the UK Government on VAT, particularly in support of our hospitality businesses this winter.

Craig Hoy (Dumfriesshire) (Con): The Scottish Government has announced plans to provide financial support for the last pub or shop in a rural town or village. Can the minister say how much money will be put into that fund and when hospitality businesses in my constituency can expect to benefit from it?

Jenny Gilruth: Mr Hoy will be aware of the wider work that the Government has undertaken in relation to non-domestic rates. Ahead of the budget, I expect to bring forward plans in relation to the member's question. I will be happy to engage with the member on the substantive detail around support for businesses in his constituency.

Local Governance Reform (Discussions with COSLA)

2. **Gary Bouse (Falkirk West) (SNP):** I refer members to my declaration of interest as a sitting councillor at Falkirk Council.

To ask the Scottish Government, in light of its proposed local governance reforms, what discussions it has had with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other relevant bodies regarding the future of local government. (S7O-00348)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government (Jenny Gilruth): Over recent months, the Scottish Government has engaged with local government stakeholders through a range of different meetings and discussions on public service reform and local governance. On 11 September, the First Minister and I, and the Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform, joined a special leaders' meeting of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which followed a series of meetings that I had with COSLA leadership over the summer. The recently published proposals are intended to be a starting point for discussion, and a programme of wider

engagement with local authorities and other stakeholders is now under way.

Gary Bouse: I welcome the commitment to ongoing discussions, and I am encouraged that discussions are taking place. Local government has a strong record of innovation in public service delivery, and communities rightly expect high-quality local services on which they can rely.

Given that meaningful transformation should focus on outcomes rather than outputs, can the Deputy First Minister assure Parliament that that process remains at an early stage and that engagement with local government, COSLA, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers and other partners will continue throughout the process? How will the Scottish Government ensure that any proposals are genuinely collaborative and deliver shared priorities for both national and local government?

Jenny Gilruth: Gary Bouse is quite right to say that local government has a track record of innovation, and we very much want to build on that expertise. The proposals that were shared with committees and COSLA on 21 September are a starting point for discussion, and no decisions have yet been made on future structures. That is an important point.

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform and I plan to meet local authorities over the coming weeks. Indeed, only on Monday we met Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council. Of course, further engagement will be planned with a variety of partners and, importantly, the public. Through those discussions, we will develop a shared vision for reform, including in relation to how governance and service delivery can best support the needs of our communities all over Scotland.

Joe Fagan (South Scotland) (Lab): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a member of South Lanarkshire Council.

In the light of cross-party support for the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the Government's commitment to intensive engagement, can ministers assure Parliament that they will not proceed with any large-scale restructuring of local government if COSLA objects?

Jenny Gilruth: I cannot foresee a scenario wherein COSLA would object to local government reform. It is only through that partnership working that we will be able to take forward the proposals. We will continue that dialogue with COSLA and directly with local government as we take forward the necessary reforms, which are all about improving public services for the people we all represent.

Andrew Baxter (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a sitting member of Highland Council.

Freedom to challenge those exercising public power is fundamental to our democracy. Councillors must be able to scrutinise officials and robustly challenge political opponents without the threat of a standards complaint becoming a means of silencing them. As part of local governance reform, will the Government review the councillors' code of conduct and the operation of the standards regime to ensure that protections for legitimate scrutiny and political expression are effective and practised while maintaining public ethics?

Jenny Gilruth: I think that that issue was raised with the First Minister during First Minister's question time yesterday. As the First Minister set out to Parliament, the Standards Commission would be a matter for Parliament to address.

On the substantive point regarding the councillors' code of conduct, I am happy to take the matter to COSLA in relation to the cross-party discussions that we are having. I am not ruling anything out at this stage. However, in the round, we should be mindful that this is not a one-way conversation between ourselves and local government, and we should also be engaging with the public.

I hear the points that the member makes, and I will take them back to COSLA in our engagement with it throughout this period.

Local Governance Reform (Council Elections)

3. **Duncan Massey (North East Scotland) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports that the council elections scheduled for May 2027 could be postponed to align with its local governance consolidation. (S7O-00349)

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a member of Aberdeen City Council.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Jamie Hepburn): Any such report is inaccurate. We have already made it clear that the 2027 local government elections will go ahead as planned.

Duncan Massey: I think that such uncertainties are evidence that there has simply not been enough engagement with local authorities. I note that many local authorities are now writing to ministers to request meaningful engagement and time to digest any proposals, because they are extremely fearful of policy by diktat. How can the

Scottish Government assure councils that they will get that meaningful engagement?

Jamie Hepburn: I fail to see where the confusion is. I could not have given a clearer answer to Mr Massey if I had tried. However, let me reiterate the point: the 2027 local government elections will go ahead as planned. I hope that that is clear enough for Mr Massey, everyone in the chamber and anyone else who is watching.

In terms of the process of engagement, we have just heard the Deputy First Minister set out the clear commitment that, of course, there will be engagement with local government. We are at the start of the process, and it is vital that we engage with local government as we consider the reforms.

Lloyd Melville (Angus South) (SNP): I refer to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a sitting member of Angus Council.

Given that the Scottish Government has already been very explicit, including today, that the local elections will not be postponed, does the minister share my concern that misinformation about the elections may lead to a reduced turnout?

Jamie Hepburn: Whether we are talking about confusion or misinformation, let me be abundantly clear that the 2027 elections will go ahead. I hope that that reassures Mr Melville, and I am sure that he, Mr Massey and everyone in the chamber will be able to make it clear that the 2027 local government elections will go ahead.

Joe Fagan (South Scotland) (Lab): I remind the chamber of my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a member of South Lanarkshire Council.

Following that abundant clarity from the Government, why is the date of the next council election an impediment to creating end-of-office payments in line with the independent recommendations of the Scottish local authorities remuneration committee, even though it has been two and a half years since its report was published?

Jamie Hepburn: The Government has given careful consideration to that issue, and that has already been communicated to the Parliament. The election, in and of itself, is not necessarily the impediment. We must carefully consider the astute management of public finances. That is one of the considerations.

Local Authority and Ward Boundaries

4. **Julie MacDougall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform):** I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am a sitting councillor at Fife Council.

To ask the Scottish Government whether it has conducted any reviews since 2007 regarding the functionality of local authority area and ward boundaries. (S7O-00350)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Jamie Hepburn): I feel that I should declare that I am not a councillor. [*Laughter*.]

The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 sets out the requirements for Boundaries Scotland to conduct a review of the boundaries of all local authority areas every eight to 12 years. Boundaries Scotland is also obliged to consider requests from local authorities or interested persons for it to conduct reviews of boundaries between local authority areas.

Since before 2007, Boundaries Scotland has been under a ministerial direction not to conduct regular reviews of the external boundaries of local authority areas. However, some reviews of council boundaries, when fewer than 500 electors are affected, such as the Cardowan review in 2019, have been carried out.

Boundaries Scotland is the public body that is responsible for reviewing local government boundaries and ward boundaries. It most recently concluded a review of local authority wards and the numbers of councillors in all Scottish councils in 2016, and the next review is required by 30 October 2030.

Julie MacDougall: When it comes to local government reform, a key slogan of the Government is that some councils are too big to be local and some are too small to be effective. Given that there is a lot of confusion about the Scottish Government's plans to address that, will the minister begin by at least telling us which of our present councils are too big or too small, in his view, and whether some local authorities will be spared from mergers?

Jamie Hepburn: As Ms MacDougall knows, I will not comment on her final point, because we are at the outset of a conversation about that.

In relation to councils that I consider to be either too large to be truly local or too small to be strategic, I refer to my local authority area. I frequently find that that is the case in North Lanarkshire—my constituents certainly report that to me.

It is perfectly sensible for us to consider such matters. I am sorry that Ms MacDougall is often confused by the process, but I think that most people are not.

Steven Bonnar (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): The Fraser of Allander Institute has rightly noted that current local authority boundaries do not always align with the geographical scale of

economic activity or the reality of how public services are best delivered. How will the Scottish Government's proposed restructuring of local government seek to address that?

Jamie Hepburn: The Fraser of Allander Institute's point is well observed. That is a key reason why we are undertaking the exercise. We are considering economic activity that takes place across wider regions, but we want to ensure that there is local involvement. That is exactly why we have begun the exercise, and we look forward to all MSPs contributing positively to the discussion.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Lab): In the previous parliamentary session, there were proposals to change ward boundaries, particularly in the Highland Council area, but they did not command the support of the Parliament, so the Government did not take them forward. That seems to have led to a campaign of automaticity whereby boundaries are automatically approved. Will the Government give the assurance that that will not go ahead, given the fact that a cross-party committee in the previous parliamentary session—the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee—unanimously opposed that?

Jamie Hepburn: I will not give that commitment. I understand Mr Griffin's question, but automaticity is part of the approval process in many other jurisdictions for the very reason that it removes those involved in the process of standing in elections from determining the boundaries themselves. Therefore, there is a strong case for automaticity.

We asked Andrew Kerr to undertake work in that regard, and he has provided a report. We are preparing a response to his review, which will set out in more detail our position on his specific recommendations. Of course, any changes would require the involvement of the Parliament, so Mr Griffin can be reassured that his role as a legislator will be respected and included as part of that process.

Veterans Strategy (Kirkcaldy)

5. **David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made in implementing the commitments set out in its veterans strategy across the Kirkcaldy constituency. (S7O-00351)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Jamie Hepburn): Mr Torrance takes a keen interest in such matters, which is understandable, given that the Fife area has one of the highest percentages of veterans in its population compared with other areas of the country.

The Scottish Veterans Commissioner published her annual progress report in September, which highlights the progress that we have made in supporting veterans during the past year, as well as the areas that require further focus. I also intend to publish a new Scottish veterans action plan, which will outline how we will deliver the new strategy's priority outcomes for our veterans and how we will track and measure those outcomes.

David Torrance: I welcome the work that has been delivered through the veterans strategy, particularly the Scottish veterans fund, which has provided vital support to projects that make a real difference to veterans and their families all across Scotland.

In 2025, the Scottish Government committed to a review of the Scottish veterans action plan. Can the minister provide an update on the review and confirm whether the plan will be refreshed to ensure that it continues to reflect the needs that veterans have today?

Jamie Hepburn: I give Mr Torrance that confirmation. We are developing a new approach for an action plan for Scotland that will seek to bring together more clearly all the different threads of work on how we best support veterans in Scotland—in particular, the work of our veterans commissioner and the outcomes set by the new United Kingdom veterans strategy.

We are approaching the plan slightly differently than we have in the past, but it will give a clearer direction of travel to all those who support or celebrate veterans, which includes all of us in the chamber. It also includes the active and close-knit veterans and armed forces charity sector, which we are very fortunate to have in Scotland.

Veterans and People Granted Asylum (Support)

6. **Senga Beresford (South Scotland) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of differences in the support available to military veterans and people granted asylum in Scotland. (S7O-00352)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Jamie Hepburn): The Government seeks to support all people residing in Scotland and tailors that to the specific needs of specific groups where required. Our veterans community makes a valuable contribution to our society.

Most veterans make a successful transition to civilian life, but we are committed to ensuring that all our veterans get the support that their service deserves. That is why, where a specific need is identified, tailored provision will be put in place. For example, our £600,000 Scottish veterans fund supports hundreds of organisations to provide

veterans and their families with services and other assistance.

Senga Beresford: Veterans in Scotland receive a dedicated Scottish Government spend of around £4.6 million per year. Migrants in this country receive a dedicated £6.7 million per year from the Scottish Government. That has a real-world consequence. While speaking to a local veterans charity, I heard of a man who had been left to sleep behind local shops and use food banks for two years. He spoke of loving his country, but said that he felt that his country did not love him back after all that he had sacrificed to protect it.

How does the minister justify prioritising people who have invaded the country over people who have fought to protect it?

Jamie Hepburn: That is a ridiculous question. Of course we focus on supporting our veterans community. I greatly value our veterans community, and any incident of the nature that Senga Beresford mentioned is one that I deeply regret. I would not seek to weaponise it in the fashion in which she did, however; I would not use the bad experience of a veteran to come into Parliament and stir up the type of nonsense that she stirs up.

However, I recognise that we need to do everything that we can for veterans. We are working on how we can support veterans who experience homelessness. In line with the points that I made, which show that we have broadly positive outcomes for veterans, I make clear that veterans are no more likely to be homeless than the general population.

Local Government Finance (Early Learning and Childcare)

7. **Pauline Stafford (Bathgate) (SNP):** I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, as I am a councillor for West Lothian Council. To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact on local government finances of decisions by certain local authorities to restrict cross-boundary funded early learning and childcare placements. (S7O-00353)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government (Jenny Gilruth): The Scottish Government invests about £1 billion a year to fully fund the 1,140 offer, and local authorities should be working together to provide cross-boundary places wherever possible. The number of ELC places is one factor that informs each local authority's general revenue grant alongside a range of indicators such as population, rurality and deprivation.

The distribution methodology is agreed between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and is kept under review. We will continue to explore cross-boundary provision with COSLA in the context of wider reform and our ambition to transform childcare during this session of Parliament.

Pauline Stafford: Does the Deputy First Minister agree that, where local decisions significantly reduce parental choice or alter access to funded early learning and childcare, families and providers should be able to understand the evidence base for those decisions and see a transparent assessment of their financial and educational impacts?

Jenny Gilruth: I agree with the substantive point that Pauline Stafford has rightly made. Flexibility and choice are fundamental to our funded ELC offer.

Local councils have a duty to consult families in their local area about how they should make the ELC available. We expect our councils to work with families to ensure that they have access to high-quality funded early learning and childcare that meets their needs.

Although it is ultimately for locally elected members to make decisions on how best to deliver services in their area, I entirely agree that meaningful and transparent engagement with the public is essential and will improve outcomes for families and our children.

Jenny Young (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Lab): This morning, I met staff at First Adventures Nurseries in Linlithgow, who told me of the impact of the loss of cross-boundary placements on the nursery and families in the community. Ministers have repeatedly referred to the guidance on cross-boundary placements, but so far the Scottish Government seems unwilling to make that guidance mandatory or provide support for councils to implement it. What will the Deputy First Minister do to ensure that cross-boundary placements are available across the country?

Jenny Gilruth: I will take away the specific issue that Jenny Young has raised about engagement with local authorities. It is clear that members from all parties are disappointed when local decisions reduce flexibility and the cross-boundary opportunities that placements provide in other parts of the country.

I want all families in Scotland to benefit from that funding, which we have protected through successive budget agreements. The funding follows the child arrangements go back many years—they were rolled out when we rolled out the 1,140 hours of funded ELC, and they allow for that flexibility.

I will take away the member's substantive point about engagement with local government,

because it is a key principle that sits at the heart of the guidance previously agreed with COSLA.

Road Verge Management

8. **Amanda Bland (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of local government action to improve road verge management, including by increasing native plant and pollinator habitat, improving ecological connectivity, increasing soil infiltration, reducing surface-water run-off and pressure on drainage infrastructure, and what were its findings. (S7O-00354)

The Minister for Public Finance (Hannah Mary Goodlad): Local authorities are responsible for the management and maintenance of local roads, including roadside verges, within their areas. The Scottish Government does not routinely monitor the activities of local government in carrying out its normal functions, such as roadside verge maintenance and management.

Amanda Bland: Given the increasing pressure on local drainage infrastructure from surface water flooding, will the Scottish Government work with local authorities to explore the use of road verges as part of a wider flood prevention measure and assess the potential for that to reduce surface water run-off and flooding in communities?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I ask Hannah Mary Goodlad, when responding, to stick to her portfolio area.

Hannah Mary Goodlad: The delineation is clear: the Scottish Government and Scottish ministers are responsible for the trunk road system and local authorities are responsible for local roads and verges. What the member suggests would represent quite a departure from the current division of responsibilities.

Local Authorities (Use of Vacant Assets)

9. **Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what support is available to communities seeking to take ownership of vacant or underused assets, including how it is working with local authorities to facilitate such projects. (S7O-00355)

The Minister for Public Finance (Hannah Mary Goodlad): I recognise that vacant and underused assets can blight communities, harm wellbeing and limit opportunities. That is why we are continually working closely with local authorities and other partners to support community-led regeneration across the country, with investment of up to £52 million in the previous financial year. That includes funding for the community ownership support service, which provides advice and support to communities seeking to acquire assets. That is complemented by the Scottish land fund, which offers grants of up to £1 million.

Fulton MacGregor: In my constituency, the Gartcosh Development Trust is pursuing the community asset transfer of Gartcosh public hall and Gartcosh primary school, but it is facing roadblocks.

What support can the Scottish Government provide to help resolve historical title and registration issues that affect community asset transfers? What discussions has it had with North Lanarkshire Council and Registers of Scotland to ensure that such issues do not unnecessarily prevent communities from taking ownership of assets that have long been in public use?

Hannah Mary Goodlad: Mr MacGregor is a local champion for community asset transfer, and I thank him for raising that specific issue. The Scottish Government is not directly involved with specific community asset transfers unless an appeal is made, so I encourage those who are involved to work closely together to address those issues, including by engaging with Registers of Scotland.

The Scottish Government funds the community ownership support service, which gives community groups and relevant public bodies advice and guidance on all aspects of the community ownership and asset transfer process.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): The minister might be aware of a similar issue in Finnieston in Glasgow, where the local community has very creative plans for the use of the currently derelict Corunna bowling club. However, as a result of the Scottish Government's decision not to call in the planning application, the land is now massively overvalued compared with what it was previously valued at. The community has a right of first refusal, but exercising that right is unfeasible in the face of such a massive increase in the price tag, to more than 10 times the previous value, purely as a result of the planning permission.

Does the minister accept that that aspect of how the planning system works serves as a massive barrier to communities that look to take disused land into community ownership and only serves to benefit very wealthy land speculators and developers? What more can the Government do to ensure that that barrier is removed so that communities are able to exercise their rights?

Hannah Mary Goodlad: I thank Mr Harvie for bringing that specific project to my attention. I was not aware of it and would be happy to write to him and engage on it further.

Planning is being reviewed at the moment, with a view to implementing changes in 2027. Additionally, purchase orders and selling orders on community purchase will be looked at in the round. I am happy to engage on the specific project that Mr Harvie has raised.

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

The minister will be aware that many communities want to take an active role in bringing vacant properties back into use but are prevented from doing so by owners who have no intention of developing, selling or investing in those assets. Will the Scottish Government therefore consider giving local authorities stronger powers, such as introducing a compulsory sales order, to ensure that persistently vacant and underused properties can be brought back into productive ownership and use in cases in which the owners have failed to act?

Hannah Mary Goodlad: That segues from Mr Harvie's question. Local authorities have wide-ranging compulsory purchase powers to help bring vacant and derelict properties back into use. However, we are determined to modernise Scotland's compulsory purchase system, including planning, and we will legislate to reform the system in this parliamentary session.

Following last year's consultation, questions were raised about whether compulsory sale powers would offer any additional benefits beyond a reformed compulsory purchase order system. We will continue to engage on that issue with stakeholders across the board.

Dawn Black (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a councillor in Aberdeenshire Council and chair of Kincardine and Mearns Youth Clubs charity.

Having participated in a community asset transfer for the charity, as well as having made decisions on other CATs as a councillor, I can attest that, in some instances, local authorities are not embracing the spirit of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Rather than helping to facilitate genuinely good projects, there is a tendency to condescend and to place barriers in the way. Can the minister intervene to ensure that councils follow the act's principle of presumption in order to help CATs move forward?

Hannah Mary Goodlad: I stress that the presumption to grant must be upheld, and that is something that the Government encourages. As I mentioned in a previous answer, the Scottish Government is not directly involved with specific community asset transfers, unless appeals are made. However, I strongly encourage all relevant authorities that are involved in community asset transfers to allow the letter and, indeed, the spirit of the 2015 act to be followed.

Local Governance Reform (Timescale)

10. **David Kirkwood (South Scotland) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government what timescale it anticipates for the implementation of its recently announced local governance reform proposals. (S7O-00356)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government (Jenny Gilruth): An implementation timetable for any reform proposals will be set out in due course following the end of the three-month period of dialogue and a decision about the direction of travel that emanates from that. However, urgency is required for public service reform across our public services, and that is why we are committed to coming to a shared agreement on the direction of travel to ensure that we move at pace.

David Kirkwood: The previous two major reorganisations largely involved the centralisation of powers and took up to eight years to design and implement. The current proposals suggest a large-scale devolution of powers, which is welcome but is likely to be much more complicated. How confident is the cabinet secretary that the proposed timescale will be less than the eight years that it took to design and implement the Wheatley commission proposals?

Jenny Gilruth: The member raises an important point. I do not want to prejudge the outcome of the consultation work that we are undertaking with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, but the agenda is about pushing power out of our current structures and into our communities, which is exactly why we have proposed moving towards a regional structure, with perhaps six, going right the way up to 10, regional authorities, and then from 120 up to 160 smaller community authorities. That would be pushing power down into communities.

It would be wrong of me to put a timescale on that final plan now, given that we are in the consultation period. However, I hope that it gives the member some assurance that the consultation is for a tightly focused period of three months, because we need to move at pace and with urgency on these matters.

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

It is 30 years since we did local government reform, and one of the most exciting elements of the proposed reform is the creation of the community authorities that the cabinet secretary

has referred to. Will the cabinet secretary share her views on how those new structures can move power towards communities and how she hopes that they will help communities to shape and develop services in their areas?

Jenny Gilruth: Heather Anderson is absolutely correct that this is about community empowerment, and that will remain central to our position in driving forward local government reform. It is not about moving decisions further away from people; it is about ensuring that decisions are taken as closely to people as possible and in the most appropriate way, which is in accordance with the wishes of the people who we all represent.

Planning is under way for further engagement with local authorities and communities on the proposals, as has been mentioned during portfolio questions today. That dialogue will help us to reach the shared vision that I spoke about previously for the next steps on local government reform.

Public Service Reform, Europe, External Affairs and Energy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The next portfolio is public service reform, Europe, external affairs and energy. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question, they should press their request-to-speak button during the relevant question.

Onshore Wind (Community Benefits)

1. **Duncan Dunlop (South Scotland) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that communities hosting multiple onshore wind developments, including Tweedsmuir, receive a fair and lasting share of the benefits arising from those developments. (S7O-00357)

The Minister for Public Finance (Hannah Mary Goodlad): The Scottish Government is clear that communities hosting renewable energy infrastructure should see a fair share of the benefits that come from those developments. Where multiple developments are in the same area, we encourage a co-ordinated approach. Last year, around £40 million was offered in community benefits under our good practice principles. We are refreshing the guidance to reflect changes in the sector since 2019. That includes increasing the recommended fund level for onshore wind; introducing levels for solar and battery storage; strengthening expectations around co-located and multiple developments; and enhancing support for communities and developers alike.

Duncan Dunlop: I am an ardent supporter of renewable energy, but communities must have a real say in what happens around them. People in Tweedsmuir, a community in my region, are, to put it frankly, fed up. In their locality, they now have four wind farms built or under development, with more potentially on the way. When large infrastructure projects enter the planning system, the legal process and paperwork involved in engaging with and challenging developers can be prohibitively complex for a group of volunteers. What support can be made available to communities to access professional and legal expertise so that they can make their case and be involved on a level playing field?

Hannah Mary Goodlad: I welcome the fact that Mr Dunlop supports renewable energy across Scotland, as do members across the Parliament. I acknowledge that there is fatigue in communities across Scotland in relation to the cumulative impact of that work and the planning applications that are coming forward at multiple levels across energy generation, transmission and storage. That is exactly why we are looking into the planning system in order to make reforms that will give communities and developers confidence about the pipeline of projects, and to step away from a piecemeal approach.

This Government has successively called on the United Kingdom Government to make community ownership or benefit mandatory. I hope that Mr Dunlop and his party will join us in those calls to the UK Government to ensure that community benefit is not voluntary but mandatory.

Andrew Baxter (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD): I assure the minister that my party has led the way in asking for a statutory community benefit. Will the minister explain what work the Scottish Government is currently doing with the UK Government to ensure that there is a statutory, index-linked community benefit framework that covers major renewable generation and the associated transmission infrastructure, with payments that reflect the impact on host communities?

Hannah Mary Goodlad: The rate of onshore generation in Mr Baxter's neck of the woods is as prolific as it is in mine. The Scottish Government continues to press for a mandatory approach to mature onshore renewable technology alongside a consistent Great Britain-wide approach for emerging technologies and offshore wind. The UK Government is consulting on that at the moment, and we have continued to press it in a cross-party fashion, which I welcome. The outcome of the UK process will be a key consideration in our considerations on the development of our good practice principles, which will emerge in the future.

Proposed Regional and Local Authorities

2. **Graham Simpson (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform):** To ask the Scottish Government when it expects its proposed new regional and local authorities to be established. (S7O-00358)

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform (Ivan McKee): The proposals that were shared with committees and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 21 September are a starting point for a dialogue on local governance reform. Through those discussions, we will develop a vision for reform, including a timetable for implementation, and better understand the implications of change. The changes that are taken forward will be subject to the normal legislative process.

Graham Simpson: I take from that answer that there is no timetable. In fact, there is no consultation. It does not exist on the Scottish Government website—it is a ghost consultation. When will the consultation formally start? Will the cabinet secretary tell us—he will be the third minister to have attempted to answer this question today—what happens if COSLA and the Scottish Government disagree on what should happen?

Ivan McKee: We are engaging with a wide range of partners. That includes the process that is under way with COSLA as well as individual local authorities and a wide range of interested parties that are keen to input their thoughts into the process. There will be a process for wider engagement as part of that, which will be implemented shortly. We are keen that this will not just be an engagement between the Scottish Government and COSLA but that it will be much wider than that. As I said, we are seeking to develop a shared vision, which we can then take forward with partners.

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): The Scottish Government's initial proposals on local government reform include a suggestion of separate arrangements for island communities, and I welcome the recognition of their unique needs. Will the cabinet secretary speak further on how such reforms will strengthen the representation of island communities, and will he commit to ensuring engagement with those communities, including in islands in Argyll and Bute, throughout the process?

Ivan McKee: The reform process is about moving decisions closer to people and ensuring that they are taken at the most appropriate level, in accordance with the wishes of communities. We are clear that, due to their unique geography, island authorities will require bespoke solutions, and we will engage with our partners in those areas that want to build on the existing dialogue to explore such solutions, including the single-authority model, to better understand how governance and service delivery can best support their needs.

Exports (Relationship with International Partners)

3. **Zen Ghani (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP):** I refer to my entry in the register of members' interests, which states that I am an elected councillor on Glasgow City Council.

To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to strengthen Scotland's relationships with international partners and multilateral organisations, including to support its target of increasing exports to 25 per cent of gross domestic product by 2029 as set out in its plan for growing Scotland's exports. (S7O-00359)

The Minister for Business and Fair Work (Tom Arthur): The Scottish Government continues to work constructively with a range of international partners to enhance our international relationships and to support Scotland's economic growth through increased exports, and we continue to press for Scotland's interests to be fully represented on multilateral institutions.

"A Trading Nation" remains the Government's export growth strategy, but, as is the case in many advanced economies around the world, growth in exports is a significant challenge due to continuing uncertainty in the global economy. We remain committed to growing Scotland's exports and, in our programme for government, we confirmed that we will aim to secure more than £12 billion of planned export sales across the course of this session of Parliament. Building on the principles of "A Trading Nation", we recently set out our approach to growing Scottish exports in the USA and India. Those critical steps in priority markets will help to support delivery of our planned export sales.

Zen Ghani: Given the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises across Cathcart and Pollok to the local economy, what opportunities does the Scottish Government believe exist for businesses in my constituency to benefit from its international trade and export strategy? How will it ensure that support reaches businesses at a local level?

Tom Arthur: The member is absolutely correct to highlight the importance of SMEs. As they are a critical element of Scotland's business space, our export support and promotion efforts give them considerable attention. For example, through Scottish Enterprise, businesses throughout Scotland can access tailored support to identify international opportunities, enter new markets and grow exports. The fact that, in 2025-26, Scottish

Enterprise supported companies in forecasting £2.15 billion of planned export sales demonstrates the positive impact of our support on businesses of all sizes in localities across Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Question 4 has been withdrawn and an explanation has been given.

Acorn Carbon Capture and Storage Project (Support)

5. **Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding financial support for Acorn carbon capture and storage. (S7O-00361)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Jamie Hepburn): We engage regularly with the UK Government and continue to press it to ensure that the Acorn project receives, without delay, the £200 million development funding that was committed to in June last year. Scotland has waited too long and, after years of UK Government prevarication, the commitment needs to be turned into delivery.

While carbon capture projects in the rest of the UK have benefited from significant UK Government investment and are seeing that benefit, the Acorn project needs funding and certainty. The UK Government's inaction is risking Scotland losing out on jobs and investment while slowing the decarbonisation of our industries.

Alan Brown: The minister said that Scotland has waited too long. It is now 10 years since the Tory UK Government originally pulled the plug on funding for the Acorn carbon capture and storage project. The three clusters in England—two of which were amalgamated to form the East Coast Cluster—that were given the go-ahead ahead of Acorn are now able to access £22 billion of funding. Can the minister confirm that the Scottish Government will chase the UK Government on its pledge on reindustrialisation so that jobs can be secured on the Acorn project? Those jobs are vital, especially given the current position of the oil and gas sector and the decline in the number of jobs in the area.

Jamie Hepburn: I referred to the 2025 commitment, but Mr Brown is quite right to say that commitments were made to the Acorn project even longer ago, which were pulled by the then Conservative Government. We want to stand by the project and the Scottish industry. I assure Mr Brown and the rest of the Parliament that, in all our engagement with the UK Government, we will press it to meet the commitment that it made in June 2025 to provide £200 million of development funding.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): In January 2022, the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport committed the Scottish Government to give £80 million to Acorn, without preconditions, to help it to progress and commit to jobs. That was recommitted to by the Government many times. Can the minister tell the Parliament, to the nearest £1 million, how much has actually been provided up to May 2026 and when the full £80 million will be paid over?

Jamie Hepburn: Our commitment to the £80 million still stands, but Mr Kerr will know that it was always contingent on UK Government funding, and the UK Government has not delivered. He asks what we have delivered, and the answer is all of the funding requests that Acorn has made of us. I am sure that Mr Kerr will welcome the fact that the Scottish Government has met all the funding requests made by the Acorn project. In the past financial year, we provided £3.1 million directly to the project to support development of its business case, alongside what we have previously provided for the infrastructure that is required by the wider Scottish cluster.

Public Service Reform (Engagement with Workforce and Trade Unions)

6. **Joe Fagan (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it plans to engage with the public sector workforce and trade unions regarding its public service reform proposals. (S7O-00362)

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform (Ivan McKee): Engagement with trade unions and the workforce is central to delivering public service reform. The public service reform strategy sets out our commitment to empowering those who work in public services to shape change, identify opportunities and develop better solutions, recognising that the most effective ideas often come from those closest to delivering our vital services.

As part of our ongoing strategic dialogue, the Deputy First Minister and I will meet representatives of trade unions this afternoon for a round-table discussion to ensure that the workforce that they represent have meaningful voices in shaping our approach to reform.

Joe Fagan: I hope that, when they meet this afternoon, they will discuss the subject of compulsory redundancies. Shona Robison, the then Deputy First Minister, could not have been clearer:

> "we have a clear position of no compulsory redundancies in the public sector".—[*Official Report*, 19 December 2023; c 23.]

No ifs, no buts.

Her predecessor as Deputy First Minister, one John Swinney, said that the Scottish Government remained committed to a no compulsory redundancy position that had been in place since 2007.

When did that change, and was that agreed with trade unions?

Ivan McKee: The Government's no compulsory redundancy policy has not changed; it is exactly the same as it always has been. I have laid that out clearly, and I, the First Minister and other ministers have been very clear on that. The policy has not changed, and there is no intention of changing the policy.

Craig Hoy (Dumfriesshire) (Con): *The Sunday Times* has reported on the £2.4 million annual bill for 32 civil servants who are presently on a so-called priority movers list. Is it not high time that those wasteful practices ended? Should the Government not make ghost civil servants redundant if their roles are no longer required? Is it not time for the cabinet secretary, when he meets the trade unions this afternoon, to stand up to them, as they appear to be running rings round him?

Ivan McKee: The Scottish Government civil service has reduced by around 12 per cent over the past four years, through a variety of measures, with the primary one being not replacing those who leave. The permanent secretary is tasked with the management of the civil service on a day-to-day basis. The permanent secretary is engaged on the specific issue raised and will take it forward.

As I have already indicated, at committee and elsewhere, there is scope within the policy to address the specific issues that have been raised by the member.

Public Service Reform (Subsidiarity)

7. **Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it plans to embed the principle of subsidiarity into its proposed public sector reform. (S7O-00363)

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform (Ivan McKee): The programme for government set out our commitment to a three-month period of intensive dialogue with partners, and we have subsequently published a set of proposals as a starting point for discussion. The proposals aim to get the balance right between those services that are best delivered at national and regional levels and those that are best delivered closest to communities. That recognises the principle of subsidiarity: that decisions should be taken at the level closest to those they affect, except where they can be taken more effectively at a different level.

Our focus over the coming months is to build a shared understanding of how governance and service delivery can best support the needs of diverse communities across Scotland. No decisions have yet been taken on future structures.

Paul Sweeney: In April this year, the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2026 became law, following a long-standing campaign by the former member of the Scottish Parliament, Andy Wightman. Article 4 of the charter states:

> "Local authorities shall be consulted, insofar as possible, in due time and in an appropriate way in the planning and decision-making processes for all matters which concern them directly."

However, despite being openly discussed by the Government, the large-scale proposals could rapidly reshape all aspects of local government. There is no open consultation for councils or parliamentarians to actively debate and discuss the wide-ranging proposals. How does the Scottish Government plan to fully consult with local authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities so that they are active partners, not merely the subject of public sector reform?

Ivan McKee: The member may not be aware, but there is extensive ongoing dialogue with COSLA. There have been a number of meetings with the organisation and we have had extensive conversations directly with local authorities. We are well aware of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which Mr Sweeney referenced, and which calls for engagement with local authorities. That will continue to happen intensively over the coming period.

We are receiving proposals, concepts, ideas and comments from a wide range of partners in the third sector and elsewhere that are interested in having input to the process. If Mr Sweeney and his colleagues have other ideas that they would like to bring forward, I would be delighted to hear from them. As I have already indicated, an open online consultation for all members of the public will be launched shortly. Further engagement with members of the public is planned as part of the process.

Pauline Stafford (Bathgate) (SNP): One of the advantages that is often cited for a country of Scotland's size is that we have the potential to combine strong national leadership with genuinely empowered local government. Does the minister think that the public service reform review provides a pivotal opportunity to move Scotland closer to the models that other successful European nations use, where local authorities have greater influence over services, economic development and local priorities?

Ivan McKee: Reforming Scotland's public sector is about delivering the best services for people across the country. As a starting point for discussions, the Government has published a set of proposals that aim to get the balance right between the priorities that are best delivered nationally, those that are best delivered regionally and those that are best delivered closest to communities. We will continue to work intensively with local government, communities, the Parliament and others to design reforms that improve outcomes while strengthening local democracy.

Local leadership is already emerging across Scotland. The collaboration between councils in Forth Valley or Ayrshire shows a real willingness to explore new ways of delivering services to make the best use of public resources.

Public Service Reform (Volunteering)

8. **Steven Bonnar (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what role it expects volunteering organisations to play in the delivery of its proposed public service reform agenda, particularly in relation to prevention, health and wellbeing. (S7O-00364)

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform (Ivan McKee): The public service reform strategy sets out an ambition to transform public services. As the member knows, the third sector already delivers the local, in-depth and relationship-based support that we aspire to. The public service reform strategy sets out our commitment to strengthening and building on the dedication, skills and expertise within the third sector. The vital contribution of volunteers should not, and will not, replace staffed services, but they are a key part of what makes our communities so special.

Steven Bonnar: Following a recent meeting with Volunteer Scotland, I was struck by the excellent work that volunteers are already doing in our communities in Uddingston and Bellshill and across Scotland to support health and wellbeing. What practical support will the Scottish Government provide to build on that work? How will it ensure that volunteer organisations have a meaningful say in shaping and delivering the Government's ambitions for prevention and public service reform?

Ivan McKee: I recognise the great work that volunteers do in Uddingston and Bellshill and, indeed, across the country. Through a variety of mechanisms, the Government supports the third sector and volunteers in their activities. As we have committed to in the strategy, we will work with those partners to make the mechanisms for support as streamlined, effective and focused on impact as possible.

I will be delighted to hear from any organisation that wants to submit its thoughts on its priorities and how we take the work forward. We have already heard from a number of third sector organisations, and I would encourage other organisations, volunteers, and others to contribute to the process.

Public Service Reform (Third Sector Funding)

9. **Jenny Young (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the impact of its public service reform agenda on funding for third sector organisations. (S7O-00365)

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform (Ivan McKee): The public service reform strategy aims to transform public services through prevention, early intervention and cross-sector collaboration. The third sector will be a key delivery partner, as those organisations are often best placed to provide person-centred, joined-up support that is rooted in communities and focused on preventing issues from escalating.

We recognise the financial pressures that the sector faces and are committed to improving its sustainability. The strategy includes an action to help develop a register of Scottish Government funded third sector grants to identify opportunities to align and simplify funding, making it more accessible for organisations to access.

Jenny Young: Across my Central Scotland and Lothians West region, many charities are doing vital work. For example, Home-Start Falkirk provides essential support for families in the Falkirk area, and Dial-a-Journey provides door-to-door transport for people with mobility issues across the Forth Valley area.

I had the privilege of meeting both those organisations over the recess period. However, every organisation that I met warned of the existential funding pressures that they are currently facing. I am concerned that the proposed reforms to local government will place decision making yet further from communities, and that charities providing those vital services may lose out.

Can the cabinet secretary guarantee today that the Government's plan to reorganise local government will not make it more difficult for third sector organisations to access essential funding?

Ivan McKee: Yes, I can. It is important to recognise the extensive engagement that we are having with third sector organisations to make sure that the reforms do precisely what the member hopes they will achieve. There is an absolute commitment that the third sector will be central to the process. We recognise that funding streams

need to be made more accessible, more streamlined and easier to apply for, and also that their monitoring needs to be easier, in order to support third sector organisations that often have limited resource with which to engage.

The whole point of putting the community authority layer in the structure is to ensure that decisions on how local third sector organisations are supported happen closer to communities, not further away from them.

Gary Bouse (Falkirk West) (SNP): I again refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

I hope that we can all agree on the need to reform public services. However, it is important to acknowledge that any changes do not exist in isolation. Over the past nine years, and especially over the past six months, I have made contact with multiple third sector organisations, so it is important for me to ask about what role third sector organisations play in the shift towards preventative and collaborative spending.

Ivan McKee: The Scottish Government recognises the vital role that third sector organisations play in the shift towards prevention and collaboration. It is in the DNA of third sector organisations to join the dots locally and to make sure that the services that they provide are joined up and integrated in a way that, frankly, the rest of us can learn from. Through their strong connections with communities, they help to identify needs early and to tackle the root causes of inequality and disadvantage, and they provide support that can reduce future demand on statutory services. They also bring valuable expertise, innovation and lived experience to partnership working, helping to design and deliver services that improve outcomes for people and communities.

Public Service Reform (Assessment of Outcomes)

10. **Colin Beattie (Midlothian North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will assess whether its public sector reforms achieve their intended outcome. (S7O-00366)

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform (Ivan McKee): We are committed to ensuring that there is transparent information on progress in relation to the public service reform work.

This year, we will publish the monitoring and evaluation framework. It will track progress against the outcomes set out in the public service reform strategy in order to ensure a more efficient, joined-up and preventative system and help us assess the impact of reform. Alongside that, I have committed to providing regular updates to the Public Service Reform Committee—the first of which was provided on 7 September—to ensure that Parliament can scrutinise our progress across all the actions that we are taking forward.

Colin Beattie: The Scottish Government is correct to focus on delivering greater efficiency across the public sector. How will it ensure that efficiencies do not result in transferred costs from one part of the public sector to another?

Ivan McKee: Colin Beattie raises an important point. The whole point of joined-up, integrated services, of budgets that support that and get the money to where it is most needed, and of the focus on prevention is all about making sure that we do precisely the opposite of that. It is about investing in parts of the system so that we are able to reduce cost and demand more extensively across the wider system.

That is a big focus of the Christie commission work, and it is a big focus of the work that we are taking forward as part of the public service reform strategy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): That is the end of portfolio questions. I will allow a moment for members on the front benches to change over.

Improving Outcomes for Neurodivergent People, Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): Our next item of business is a statement by Maree Todd, on improving outcomes for neurodivergent people, autistic people and people with learning disabilities. Questions will be taken at the end of the statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:00

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs (Maree Todd): I welcome the opportunity to update members on support for people with learning disabilities, autistic people and neurodivergent people. I take the matter very seriously and will use today's statement to reassure people and organisations who I know are feeling frustrated.

I will outline why the Scottish Government took the difficult decision not to pursue the learning disabilities, autism and neurodivergence bill at this time. That decision was not taken lightly; indeed, we carefully considered all the views that were shared. I appreciate that some people feel that only legislation will bring the change that is required. However, the overarching theme drawn from our engagement with people and the organisations that represent them is this: we need change, right here and right now. I would argue that waiting several years while a bill passes through Parliament would use precious time that could be spent on immediate action, therefore we need to reassess our approach.

Our decision to stop work on the LDAN bill does not reflect any change in commitment or ambition—far from it. This is not about lowering our ambition; it is about taking the best and quickest route to improving people's lives. Change will now happen through policy reform, service improvement and targeted investment. However, let me be clear that we do not rule out introducing legislation if, in time, the evidence supports that.

As my predecessor Mr Arthur did, I have met many stakeholders, including people with lived experience. I remain committed to continuing that engagement and, from it, I know that rights and accountability are key asks. How will we address these issues and improve lives? Let me be clear that this is not about ticking off and replacing old bill proposals like for like; it is about taking a new approach.

On neurodevelopment, we know that we need to make improvements. People are waiting far too long for the support that they need, regardless of whether that support includes a diagnosis, so tackling that situation first is crucial. We met our commitment to engaging stakeholders in the first 100 days of this parliamentary session, including through a round-table event that I hosted. That has shaped our draft route map for adult neurodevelopmental support, which we will publish in the autumn. The route map, which is based on recommendations from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, sets out a four-level approach that comprises public health and universal, targeted and intensive support based on individual need.

Successful implementation will require a whole-system, cross-sector approach, involving health boards, health and social care partnerships, the third sector and people with lived and living experience. Throughout implementation, we will continue to engage so that we can consider a broad range of perspectives. Our aim is for people to be able to access support as soon as needs are identified, regardless of their diagnostic status, and to ensure that diagnostic assessments are available where clinically appropriate or required.

In recent years, specialist secondary services have been overwhelmed with increased demand for assessments and support. However, we have a diverse and skilled wider workforce, including allied health professionals and general practitioners. Through the route map, we will expand our workforce capacity to support neurodivergent people, including for assessment, which will help them to get tailored support and ensure that they are not waiting to see psychiatrists in specialist secondary mental health services unless that is what they require.

In parallel, we will continue work to take forward actions that were identified through the review of implementation of the children and young people's neurodevelopmental specification. Supported by the cross-sector children and young people's ND task force, this will help to progress implementation and support local areas to provide timely, needs-based support to children and young people and their families.

We are backing that work with significant new investment. This year, we provided £7.6 million to local authorities to improve availability of, and access to, support for children and young people with neurodevelopmental needs and their families. We are also providing more than £600,000 of new funding to improve support for autistic adults. That will help more people to access advice, support and assessment where needed, including support while awaiting assessment. Together with wider investment, that will help to ensure that more

people can access help at the right time, based on individual need.

Although detailed reporting arrangements for our work on neurodevelopment are still being developed, I am committed to ensuring that there will be clear oversight and governance on progress and that that will be reported transparently. I will return to the Parliament with further detail once those arrangements have been finalised.

It goes without saying that this also requires action across education. We are providing a further £29 million of additional support needs funding to local authorities in 2026-27 to support the ASN workforce. The autism toolbox resource and the digital solutions that we are funding are giving practical help to teachers now.

The publication on 31 August of the route map to a national staged intervention model met the 100 days commitment on ASN. It is the first major milestone in delivering the six recommendations of the McManus review. Those recommendations are interdependent, and the national staged intervention model provides a framework through which the wider McManus recommendations can be explored and implemented in stages over the parliamentary session. In the longer term, that work on national staged intervention and data improvement will support greater consistency in the identification and recording of and the response to children and young people's support needs, including those of neurodivergent learners. The national staged intervention model will help to ensure that needs are met consistently, regardless of where a child or young person lives in Scotland.

I will now outline actions to ensure that people with learning disabilities can enjoy choice and control to lead independent and fulfilling lives. We continue to fund a range of third sector organisations to improve outcomes. That includes both direct grants to key national bodies and funding via our learning disability support fund. In its first six months, the fund supported more than 2,800 people with learning disabilities, more than 330 families and 605 professionals.

We are also helping to ensure that the health and social care workforce has the knowledge and confidence to deliver high-quality services to people with learning disabilities. Public Services Delivery Scotland delivers our national learning resources and workforce training. Also on training, there has been widespread uptake of the essentials of learning disability programme.

We know that people with learning disabilities experience significant health inequalities, which is why we mandated that national health service boards implement learning disability annual health checks, supported by £2 million of Government funding annually. Delivery expands year on year: last year, health checks resulted in 3,287 onward referrals, providing vital opportunities for prevention, early intervention, treatment and support. However, that needs to increase further.

We are also implementing our "Coming Home Action Plan" to ensure that people with learning disabilities and complex support needs can live independently in their communities, closer to family and friends. The latest data shows that, compared with last year, fewer people are delayed in hospital or placed far from home against their wishes.

We have also developed housing options guidance and training guidance and we are providing a further £20 million this year to support implementation. In addition, that work will deliver key national projects to drive progress and improve accountability, including detailed options for a national support panel, a complex support needs pathway and information and support for families. That all sits alongside wider programmes across Government, including our reform of adults with incapacity legislation, Scotland's "Disability Equality Plan", education and ASN reform, and the national transitions to adulthood strategy for young disabled people.

Public service reform offers opportunities to consider training needs for NHS staff, better data, more consistent approaches and better accountability.

We will engage with representative bodies within the LDAN communities to raise awareness of opportunities to contribute to our thinking.

Furthermore, last month's programme for government committed to a landmark human rights bill that will incorporate further international rights in our domestic legal framework. Everyone in Scotland, including neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities, stands to benefit from that bill's incorporation of economic, social and cultural rights. We know that it is often those who are most marginalised and discriminated against in our communities who are furthest away from having their rights realised. Incorporating international rights can bring transformational improvements in the culture in which our public services are delivered, including those such as health and housing that most impact on the experiences of neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities.

In summary, we have changed approach, not reduced our commitment. Our ambition remains the same, and I am determined to see that ambition succeed. I want to build a Scotland where neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities are understood, supported and empowered to live their best lives. That should be a goal that the chamber supports.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I intend to allow 20 minutes for questions. As always, succinct questions and answers will allow more people to have the opportunity to question the minister.

Joe Long (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

Neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities know a lot about waiting: waiting years for assessment and diagnosis; waiting for truly inclusive education; and waiting for adult support when they turn 18. Legislation should not be necessary, but the promised bill was sought to provide accountability for people who had been let down for decades, and what did they get? More waiting. They are waiting for breaks for family carers, but there is still no plan; waiting for neurodevelopmental assessment support pathways, which were promised years ago; waiting for the coming home agenda, which was identified in 2018; and waiting five years for a promised bill that never arrived.

Is it not ironic that, for a bill that sought accountability, there has been precious little accountability for its abandonment? The First Minister, when asked, did not answer candidly that it had been dropped. The Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs has come to the chamber now only because we demanded it—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): Can you please get to a question?

Joe Long: —and what do we get? Where are the cross-sectoral strategies? Where is the independent advocacy? Where is the mandatory training across public services? Where is the accountability, and where is the apology? Does the minister accept that the accountability gap for those marginalised communities is now a gaping chasm?

Maree Todd: What I do accept is that accountability is absolutely key, and it is an area where we are already working at pace without legislation. All policies delivered by the Scottish Government are subject to overarching ministerial oversight.

In addition—as I mentioned in my statement—the new coming home strategic oversight group will meet for the first time in a few weeks. The national implementation group and data steering board to support the delivery of the learning disabilities annual health checks is assembled. For our work on health and neurodevelopment, I made a commitment to ensure that there is clear oversight and governance on progress and that that is reported transparently. I am very happy to return to Parliament with further detail once we have it. I am also very happy to hear from the member any ideas that he would like to be incorporated in that.

In education, there is a new governance structure for additional support for learning that has been agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and we are in the process of inviting members to a first meeting in the coming weeks.

Although I agree with the member that accountability is crucial, and it is one of the key things that people with lived experience were demanding through the bill process, I would not agree that there is a gap there. We are working hard to improve accountability, and I will be happy to continue working with the member and with people with lived experience to ensure that we deliver.

Helen McDade (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform): I thank the minister for her statement. The statement gives no estimate of the number of people who require the help that has been detailed in it, but there is agreement that the numbers are on the increase.

I suggest that the cohort of people with severe autism should not be considered together with those within the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder spectrum; instead, we should consider them separately. One reason for that is that there are medical treatments for ADHD, whereas there are not for autism, although the conditions can overlap.

I highlight with regard to those who are severely affected with autism, who would be unable to live an independent life, that it is not medically possible to have an epidemic of a genetic condition, and yet we see an increase in those in the severe category. That leads to a general understanding that there are several factors involved. A previous meeting of the cross-party group—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): The member must come to a question.

Helen McDade: I thought I had a minute.

At a previous meeting of the cross-party group on autism, a grandfather of an affected boy asked, "At what point do 1,000 video records of children displaying severe autistic traits become evidence?"

What research is the Government supporting to contribute to an understanding of acute, aggressive autism, and when might we know when that is coming to fruition?

Maree Todd: The member has asked me that before, and I have explained about the funding that

is available for research. Were a research proposal to come forward on that particular issue, it would undoubtedly have an opportunity to be funded within the systems that are available in Scotland and, indeed, across the United Kingdom and Europe, where lots of collaboration on research goes on.

It has to be said, though, that I think that people listening will feel concerned at some of the things that the member has hypothesised today. People with autism and ADHD need support, regardless of whether they have a diagnosis or whether they have severe or mild ADHD. When a support need is identified, what we in the Scottish Government want is for that need to be met within our community or, if needed, in our hospitals—that is the purpose of the change in direction that I have set out.

It is unhelpful to focus—as the member does regularly—on research and questions around incidence. There is a great deal of evidence that the incidence of diagnosis is increasing because awareness is increasing and stigma is decreasing. We should all remember that in these discussions.

Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Families tell us that children are being left without the support that they need, while waiting sometimes years for a diagnosis. Not having a diagnosis should not be a barrier to people accessing support throughout that time. What help can the Government give to local organisations to ensure that they are publicising the support that is available and to increase the provision of local community services for people with a learning disability, autism or neurodivergence who may require that support?

Maree Todd: People should be able to access local support based on need, not on diagnosis, unless that is required for the prescribing of medication. I absolutely recognise the valuable role that local organisations play in that. We continue to invest in independent information, advice and advocacy through the support in the right direction programme, through which more than 18,000 people and families access advice and support. We support local organisations to raise awareness of available support for people with learning disabilities through a targeted third sector investment. The £1.6 million learning disability support fund will provide advice and support in communities. We continue to invest in neurodevelopmental support through our £2.5 million multiyear autistic adult support fund, and we are providing £7.6 million in 2026-27 for a similar support fund for children and young people. We also fund Enquire, the national advice and information service on ASL, to help families to access the most appropriate support.

Kayleigh Kinross-O'Neill (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green): I thank the minister for her statement and her strong words of support for the LDAN community.

We welcome the expansion of workforce capacity that was mentioned in the statement. However, the Royal College of Nursing has confirmed that the learning disability nursing workforce is in decline, and the number of nursing support workers has reduced by 18 per cent since the previous review. How will the Scottish Government address and strengthen the education pipeline and progression pathways for the workforce?

Maree Todd: Learning disability nurses play an absolutely vital role in empowering people with learning disabilities to live fuller, healthier and more independent lives. As well as providing advocacy for individual patients, they boost understanding and awareness more generally within our health and social care services.

There are a number of different routes into that important and fulfilling role. One thing to be aware of is that it is often attractive to groups other than school leavers, so a focus on an "earn as you learn" approach is important when we are thinking about opportunities that work with family life.

The issues are being discussed by the nursing and midwifery task force, and officials from the learning disability policy team and the chief nursing officer directorate are currently developing work to address the particular issue that the member raises.

Miles Briggs (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con): It is clear from what we have heard that the Government has got this wrong. There continues to be no real understanding that, without a diagnostic pathway, many young people and adults simply will not be able to unlock support. We have not heard anything on that. We need to see progress during this session of the Parliament; members from across the parties will need to work on the proposed human rights bill.

What review has been undertaken of third sector provision, such as that provided by Scottish Autism's excellent Fife one-stop shop, which I have visited? Will the minister commit to publishing or commissioning a review into local third sector services?

Maree Todd: I would be more than happy to work with Miles Briggs on those issues. I agree that the third sector organisations that work in this area are vital. Over the past few weeks, I have met a number of them to explain the decision that we have made. I have met organisations that advocate for that population and amazing organisations that are led by autistic people and

people with neurodivergence who are leading the way and leading the charge. As I said, I would be happy to work with Miles Briggs to ensure that we deliver better for them.

I do not think that it is a question of choosing between support and diagnosis, but I agree with Miles Briggs that there is unmet need in relation to diagnosis. There is a bottleneck, because all our support is delivered once someone has a diagnosis, but people should be able to access support without one. I am not saying that a diagnosis is unimportant, but I point out that the proposed LDAN legislation did not focus on diagnosis.

I agree with Miles Briggs that we need to improve our capacity to respond to support needs in the community. That will include building a diagnostic infrastructure, as I mentioned in my statement, and using the multidisciplinary workforce that is out there. That will take time, but I agree that that needs to be the focus of our attention.

Adam Harley (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD): The minister says that we cannot afford to wait years for a bill to pass through the Parliament, but it has been five years since the Government first committed to an LDAN bill in its programme for government. In 2024, the bill was delayed, and the Government has now scrapped it right after an election. The Government did the same thing in relation to Monklands hospital. That is exactly the sort of thing that leaves people feeling scunnered with politics.

The minister says that people need change now. They should have had it by now. The commitment to mandatory training for public sector workers on learning disabilities and neurodivergence has now disappeared in the public service reform agenda. Will the minister commit to ensuring that mandatory training remains part of the Government's new approach and that it will not take yet more years for such training to come into effect?

Maree Todd: On mandatory training, which I recognise is an important issue, we reckon that there is an opportunity to progress more quickly in different ways—for example, through employment contracts in the NHS. Public service reform offers us an opportunity to do that in a much more standardised way across Scotland. Far from being a barrier, public service reform is an enabler. We also have the opportunity to increase awareness through other legislation.

Adam Harley must acknowledge that the situation has changed since the proposed bill was first conceived. The level of awareness of neurodivergence has increased to the point at which our systems are overwhelmed with demand for support, because people recognise that they have needs associated with neurodivergence. In the past, there was unmet need and a lot of stigma.

Adam Harley must also understand that, within the Parliament, there has been a change in thinking about commissioners, which has made it much harder to build the accountability in the way that was originally conceived by the people who advocated for the bill. That is not to say that it cannot be done, but the Parliament has made it clear to the Government and the public that commissioners should not be the default setting for accountability.

Steven Bonnar (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): The minister recognises, as I do, that the needs of neurodivergent children are becoming increasingly complex and that the current system has not always kept pace with that level of need.

The Government has said that its proposed national staged intervention model will help to ensure that children's needs are met consistently, regardless of where they live in Scotland. How will the Government ensure that that consistency is delivered in practice, particularly for children with the most complex needs? If a school is unable to meet a neurodivergent child's needs, who will be ultimately responsible for ensuring that that child receives the support that they need?

Maree Todd: The member raises an important point. On 31 August, as part of the Government's 100-day commitment, we published a route map that sets out the actions that are needed to deliver a national staged intervention model for ASN. That is a clear framework for making support in schools more consistent and predictable for children and young people and their parents and carers, regardless of where they live. The model, which is being developed in partnership with local authorities, parents and carers, will also reduce complexity in the system.

We are clear that children and young people should learn in the environment that best suits their needs. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 places statutory responsibility on individual local authorities. In discharging those duties, authorities are responsible for the setting of the school admissions policy, which includes procedures for dealing with placing requests and the associated appeals process, which, I think, is what the question alluded to.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I remind members of my attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis.

On 1 April 2025, Maree Todd said to the Parliament:

"I reaffirm my commitment to the proposed learning disability, autism and neurodivergence bill."—[*Official*

Report, 1 April 2025; c 98.]

That seems like a pretty bad April fools' day joke, now. What makes it worse is that, throughout the previous parliamentary session, when such issues were raised, we were told to look towards the LDAN bill as the vehicle for change, but now we are being told that we do not need to wait for the bill because the Government has a plan.

I have three questions. When will the number of ASN-qualified teachers rise above 3,000, which is where it was a decade ago? When will waiting times for assessment for ADHD and autism be measured in weeks or months and not years? When will the waiting times be routinely published? If the minister cannot answer those questions, there is no plan at all.

Maree Todd: The member asked me to set out timescales for when change will occur. I have been very clear today and I am very collaborative in my efforts to ensure that the Parliament understands some of the challenges that we face. I am not denying the difficulties that we face in Scotland; I am saying that I agree that capacity is not meeting demand.

On the diagnostic assessment, I do not want to give any false hope that I am going to be able to build a system that can meet those needs overnight. We are going to have to train individuals to meet the diagnostic need. In the meantime, we are focused on support. Many people need and cannot access support while they are waiting for a diagnosis. Many people who are referred for a diagnosis will not meet a diagnostic threshold, but they will still require support.

On ASN-trained teachers, I am happy write to the member and let him know what the progress report is on that aspiration for my education colleagues.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): If we are to be able to get to all questions, questions and answers will have to be succinct.

Katie Hagmann (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): I thank the minister for the statement. I, too, have met a range of organisations that have reached out to seek support. Those organisations include Dyslexia Scotland, which was disappointed that there was little reference to that condition in the initial bill. However, it is my understanding that the previous 10-year strategy did not deliver what was required, as mandatory training across a range of sectors—including the justice system—and clear accountability were missing. It is also my understanding that the intention of the proposed bill was to meet those specific unmet needs and the lack of accountability that has already been referred to today.

If mandatory training and accountability were not delivered by the previous 10-year strategy, and if legislation is not going to be introduced, how will those two direct asks be delivered? If a new strategy is developed, what lessons have been learned from the previous strategy?

Maree Todd: On the member's question about the 10-year strategy on neurodivergence and autism, I think that I answered that in previous responses.

On the question of dyslexia, the strategy does not cover it. I have met Dyslexia Scotland a number of times, and I commend the organisation for its powerful advocacy. I know that my colleagues in education are working with it on a number of areas. For example, I was absolutely delighted that the programme for government confirmed that we will progress a new dyslexia passport that school leavers can use to access support in their post-school destinations. From 2025-26, we are providing Dyslexia Scotland with an additional £85,000 to double the number of places for teachers on the professional recognition programme in dyslexia and inclusive practice from 50 to 100.

We are also working with local government partners to continue improving the consistency of early identification through the adoption of the Scottish working definition of dyslexia and the use of the addressing dyslexia toolkit and the dyslexia identification pathway.

David Smith (West Scotland) (Reform): I thank the minister for advance sight of her statement. She has been clear in stating that she will not rule out legislation in time if evidence supports it, but was not the original learning disabilities, autism and neurodivergence bill supported by evidence? That position seems a bit strange.

The bill would also have made training mandatory for all public sector workers, and now the minister is simply stating that public sector reform will provide opportunities. The statement provides no real assurance for those affected, does it, minister?

Maree Todd: On the point about mandatory training, this is a really hopeful opportunity to standardise practice. One of the challenges that people with neurodivergence face is unwarranted variation in access. I hear loudly and clearly from people whom I meet that the services that they can access is dictated by the local authority area in which they live.

The opportunity to provide a once-for-Scotland training programme for all public sector workers is

a real opportunity as part of public service reform, and I am eager to get on with delivering it.

David Linden (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP): In her statement, the minister made reference to the route map for adult neurodevelopmental support. Does she agree that, for it to be effective, it needs to be placed on a statutory footing?

I emphasise to the minister that neurodivergent folk are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, and the answers to my written parliamentary questions suggest that there is insufficient recognition of those conditions. I argue that a failure to recognise leads to a failure to rehabilitate. What more can the minister do to ensure that there is adequate training and support in the criminal justice sphere for those who are neurodivergent?

Maree Todd: As I outlined earlier, the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland's four-level approach provides a framework through which support can be made available at different levels according to need. It would not be usual to place such a framework on a statutory footing.

The framework moves us away from a situation in which specialist diagnostic services become the only route to help, which is crucial for people with neurodivergence.

I agree with the member that training is vital across the public sector, including in the criminal justice system, and I absolutely agree that these communities are overrepresented in that system.

Voluntary training has been successfully introduced in some areas. We need to replicate the really good work that is happening in some parts of the system and ensure that it happens in every part of the system.

Cara McKee (West Scotland) (Green): What is the Scottish Government's plan for improving national data collection on the experiences and outcomes of autistic people, neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities as those changes are put in place, including in relation to intersectionality? How will that data be used to drive improvement and accountability?

Maree Todd: The member is absolutely correct: data is key. We recognise that there are data gaps in some areas—for example, in the number of people who are diagnosed with autism or ADHD. There is a commitment in the road map for children and young people to improve data collection in our schools, which will help us to develop educational services appropriately.

For people with learning disabilities, the exercise that has taken place over the past number of years through the coming home work has really shown the power of good data collection.

What it has achieved is to ensure visibility for those individuals who were placed in institutions that were often very far from family and home. They are visible now in the system locally and nationally, so we are finally turning the corner. These people are coming home and that is one of the most phenomenal improvements in human rights that we will see in this parliamentary session.

Dawn Black (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I appreciate the answers that have already been given, but one of the most common issues that I see in my casework is a lack of support in receiving a diagnosis. I appreciate that there has been an increase in the recognition of neurodivergence and of conditions such as autism and ADHD, including late recognition for adults, and I welcome the minister's statement of intent. However, can she expand further on what is being done to increase the capacity for diagnosis in the NHS considering that private diagnosis is often not recognised in education or the NHS for accessing the support that is needed, and on what the adoption of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' four-tiered approach will mean for my constituents, be they children or adults?

Maree Todd: I absolutely recognise that long waits for diagnosis can be frustrating and worrying and that rising demands place pressure on services. My point is that support needs do not disappear while people wait for assessments, which is why our focus is very firmly on ensuring that people can access support as soon as those needs are identified.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' four-tiered approach provides a framework through which support can be made available at different levels according to need, which moves us away from a situation in which specialist diagnostic services, often focused through consultant psychiatrists who are based in hospital services, have become the only route for help. Diagnosis will continue to play an important role for many, but our aim is for people to receive the right support at the right time regardless of whether they have received, are seeking or require a diagnosis.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): That concludes the ministerial statement on improving outcomes for neurodivergent people, autistic people and people with learning disabilities.

I will pause for a few moments to allow the front-bench members to change over.

Fishing Industry

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S7M-01460, in the name of Jim Fairlie, on supporting Scotland's fishing industry. Members who wish to speak should press their request-to-speak button now.

15:38

The Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands (Jim Fairlie): The fishing community has always had a place in my heart, and I have respect and admiration for what they do, so I am extremely pleased to open today's debate on Scotland's fishing industry and to update the Parliament on our approach to this year's fisheries negotiations. I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to highlight the economic, social and cultural importance of the industry to Scotland as well as this Scottish National Party Government's commitment to supporting it.

Let me start with the figures, because they matter. Provisional estimates indicate that, in 2025, Scottish vessels landed a record 509,000 tonnes of sea fish and shellfish, worth £960 million. However, behind those figures are people, businesses and communities that depend on the sea.

Two common themes will run through everything that I say this afternoon. First, we need good, secure jobs in our coastal and island communities because the loss of a single business can change the whole character of a place, which we will try to avoid. The second point is about reputation. Scottish seafood is rightly considered to be among the finest foods that this country produces, and the name "Scotland" on the label is invaluable in every market around the world.

Since I was given the privilege of becoming the minister with the fisheries remit, I have started as I mean to go on by spending as much time as I possibly can on the quaysides of Scotland. I have met skippers and crews, processors, port operators, environmental organisations, scientists and communities, from Peterhead to Lerwick to Stornoway. I thank every one of them for their time and honesty—and sometimes that honesty is pretty brutal. As most folk know, my background is in farming, and I understand what it feels like when decisions that are taken far away can affect livelihoods in communities, so I have listened carefully to what people have had to say.

Fishers talk about increasing competition for marine space and have expressed concern that decisions that affect their livelihoods are not always made with sufficient engagement. I have heard concerns about our compliance activity. In that regard, we need to continue to demonstrate that our approach is fair, transparent and evidence based. I have also heard concerns about uncertainty arising from scientific advice on key stocks, as well as the issues of rising costs, labour shortages and attracting the next generation into the sector.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I understand that the marine directorate has proposed changing the one-net rule in a way that could have serious negative consequences for the fishing fleet. What is the minister's view of that proposal? Will he take this opportunity to reject it?

Jim Fairlie: I will not take the opportunity to reject anything at the moment, but I will take away the issue that the member has brought to the chamber and look into it.

I have also heard from environmental organisations that want continued progress on stock recovery and habitat protection. However, I think that there is much more common ground here than people sometimes recognise, because sustainable stocks and thriving fishing communities are both essential. The disagreements are about how we achieve that, but it is important to remind ourselves that our seas are a shared resource, which means that we have to talk and work with everybody.

Protecting our seas properly means looking after fish stocks, habitats and the long-term future of the industries that rely on healthy marine environments. I want a fishing industry and a wider seafood sector that is profitable, modern and sustainable, and I do not accept the argument that those things pull against one another. Healthy seas and stocks are the foundation of a profitable fleet, and I want the value of fishing to stay in our communities, because every tonne that is landed and processed here supports jobs far beyond the harbour wall.

I will spend a moment talking about provenance and the value of Scotland's name. My experience in agriculture has taught me the value of provenance, and Scotland's fishing industry already demonstrates that to great effect. In 2024, Scottish seafood exports were worth more than £1.2 billion. The reputation that Scottish seafood holds on tables and shelves around the world was earned by the people who catch, land and process our fish. However, provenance is not just a label; the brand is only as strong as the sustainability behind it, which is why how we manage our fisheries matters as much as it does, not just for the health of our seas and marine life but for the value of every product that carries Scotland's name.

We have recently launched our consultation on fisheries management measures for the inshore

marine protected areas, which follows extensive evidence gathering and engagement. I encourage everyone with an interest to engage with that process. I am determined that we will find a balanced way through that protects the marine environment while supporting productive seas and thriving coastal communities. On that point, the Government will use every lever that is available to us to support the sector and those communities.

The marine fund Scotland is one of the most direct means that is available to us. Since 2021, we have awarded more than £86 million in grants to 499 projects, enabling more than £185 million of additional public and private sector investment and aiming to create 480 jobs. That is 480 jobs in a sector that is small in numbers but has a huge effect in communities. As I said, supporting new entrants is essential. Since 2021, we have awarded £3.6 million to 58 young fishers to help them buy their first vessel or get a share in one. I was delighted to announce today the awards for this year's marine fund, which will support projects that improve safety, strengthen seafood processing and develop more sustainable fishing technologies, among other things.

We continue to deliver our fisheries management strategy, which supports the fishing fleet to be innovative and more sustainable in the future through work such as our future catching policy. Remote electronic monitoring is being rolled out across the scallop, dredge and pelagic fleets, which is giving us better data and giving buyers even more confidence about how Scottish fish are caught. The fisheries management plans are helping to secure the long-term sustainability of key stocks and, closer to shore, we are building a more flexible way of managing inshore fisheries that can reflect the real differences between one part of our coast and another.

At the same time, we continue to support opportunities for diversification and to strengthen inshore fisheries management where that is practical, deliverable and supported by the available evidence. That support is making a difference. In 2025 alone, fishing opportunities worth more than £66 million were realised by more than 1,100 inshore vessels. Working closely with the industry, we have also maintained stability in domestic quota management and vessel licensing. Decisions should be grounded in good evidence with fishers engaged early in order to keep Scotland world leading in how we manage our seas.

The annual negotiations are almost upon us. I will not set out a detailed negotiating position from the floor, but I want to be clear about the principles that will guide us. We will be guided by science while recognising the impacts that decisions have on fishing businesses, families and communities. Many of our most important stocks are shared with our neighbours, making co-operation between coastal states essential.

Scientific advice for many of our key stocks has now been published, which shows a mixed picture for 2027 with some significant challenges, especially with white-fish stocks. We will therefore continue to work closely with stakeholders, whose knowledge is invaluable, to shape our positions for the upcoming talks. My officials will once again work as part of the United Kingdom delegation to ensure that Scotland's interests are heard.

Many of the decisions that affect our fishing industry, from international agreements to funding and matters that impact access to labour, are taken in Westminster. That includes the deal that was struck by the UK Government with the European Union that extended fisheries access to 2038 with no discussion with the Scottish Government, which will have consequences for our industry.

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Will the minister take an intervention?

Jim Fairlie: Will I get the time back, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): Yes.

Jim Fairlie: I will take the intervention.

Ariane Burgess: I am interested in what the minister is saying about the negotiations. Would he consider a further consultation on the quota system to potentially bring in community quota initiatives?

Jim Fairlie: That is a new one on me, but I would be more than prepared to have a conversation with Ariane Burgess after the debate, and we can then take that discussion out of the chamber.

We will always work constructively with the UK Government where we can. However, that must be a two-way street. Scotland's industry makes up the majority of the UK's fishing activity, so Scotland's voice must be properly heard when decisions are made that affect our fishing sector. That is why I will continue to press the UK Government on its insulting and downright damaging Scottish allocation of the fishing and coastal growth fund. Considering that Scotland's fishing sector accounts for more than 60 per cent of the UK's fishing capacity, the current allocation of £28 million, or 7.78 per cent, from a total of £360 million is, at best, unacceptable, and it must be urgently revisited. At worst, it confirms that the UK Government does not care about the Scottish fishing industry.

I have spent much of this summer listening to the people who make Scottish fishing what it is. I heard pride, realism and a determination to build a future for the next generation. I will continue to listen, to make the case for Scottish fishing and to seek the right balance between jobs and the environment. The real test of what we do will not only be the decisions that we make here; it will be whether, in 20 or 30 years, a young person in one of our coastal communities can still make a good living from the sea and say with pride that they are a fisher, that we can still bank on global brand recognition and that Scotland can be a global leader. That is the future that I am working for, and it is one we can build only together.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the vital importance of Scotland's fishing industry in sustaining jobs and livelihoods in island and coastal communities and across the wider economy; acknowledges the international reputation of Scottish seafood and the value that Scottish provenance brings to the sector in markets both at home and abroad; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to supporting a profitable, innovative and sustainable fishing industry; believes that this requires ongoing engagement across the sector, including with its associated supply chain, environmental organisations and fishing communities; notes the continued support provided to the sector through the Marine Fund Scotland, and that effective quota management and licensing arrangements can provide stability and support investment; recognises the range of challenges facing the sector, including the UK Government's damaging decision to unfairly allocate only £28 million, or 7.78 per cent of the £360 million Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund to Scotland, despite Scotland's fishing sector accounting for more than 60 per cent of the UK's fishing capacity; agrees with industry stakeholders that the UK Government must reverse this decision, and supports the Scottish Government's approach to the forthcoming international negotiations on fishing opportunities for 2027, where it will seek to balance the sustainable management of fish stocks with the long-term prosperity of Scotland's fishing communities.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I call Donald MacKinnon to speak to and move amendment S7M-01460.2. The member has up to 7 minutes.

15:48

Donald MacKinnon (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab): Last October, I attended the Western Isles Fishermen's Association's annual general meeting in South Uist. The well-attended meeting included members from the length of the Western Isles, from Barra to Lewis. I was encouraged by the number of enthusiastic young new entrants to the industry who had a genuine optimism for the future. They included Emma Scott, who went on to win young fisherman of the year in May at the age of 20. I take this opportunity to congratulate her.

Despite the enthusiasm at that meeting, the long shadow of the 2023 consultation on highly protected marine areas was still fresh in members' minds, as was the battle that they had been through to make this Parliament understand how damaging those proposals would have been—ahead of them being dropped.

The uncertainty of further consultation on inshore marine protection also loomed over the meeting. Not long after, the Scottish Government took the decision not to proceed with that consultation and to do more work on the options, with a consultation eventually launching last month. A great deal of work has obviously gone into the consultation documents, and we have come a very long way from the disastrous HPMA consultation of 2023.

Jim Fairlie: The member keeps referring back to the HPMA consultation. The decision with regard to HPMAs was a policy decision. What we are doing with the MPAs is meeting a legal requirement to deal with the stuff that we started to deal with 10 years ago. It is important to get that distinction on the record.

Donald MacKinnon: I absolutely take that point. I accept the distinction between the two. The point that I am making is that the discussion that took place as part of the HPMA consultation forms part of the context for how the fishing industry—especially in my constituency—views the matter.

Ariane Burgess: I want to follow up on the point about the difference between HPMAs and the MPAs. The MPAs were carefully discussed in negotiations with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, which gave its full backing to what was proposed. I hope that the fishers that the member represents understand that the MPA proposals were negotiated in a very careful and thoughtful way over a long period of time, and that we need to move forward with them.

Donald MacKinnon: The fishermen I speak to in my constituency do not feel that all the proposals that are on the table are ones that they would sign up to. I will come on to that.

Fishermen and processors in my constituency are concerned. The consultation largely focuses on mobile gear, and, on the west coast, that is largely used for scallop dredging and prawn trawling, both of which are hugely important sectors of our fishing industry. Importantly, both provide significant onshore processing jobs.

Protection of the seabed and of priority marine features is undoubtedly important. As the minister has just pointed out, the Government has legal obligations to meet, and that is the context in which we must have this debate. However, although progress on marine protection needs to be made, it must not come at the expense of maintaining an active fishing fleet in some of our most fragile

communities. That is why pragmatism is key. It is essential that, in the process of determining proposals, the fishing industry is listened to. I encourage all fishing businesses to engage in the consultation.

Paul McLennan (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP): Jim Fairlie mentioned the fact that a mere £28 million, or 7.78 per cent, of the fishing and coastal growth fund has been allocated to Scotland. Will Donald MacKinnon take that up with the UK Government? He mentioned the need to listen to the sector. If he is listening to the sector, he must raise that issue with the UK Government. We deserve more than the 7.78 per cent of the funding that we are getting.

Donald MacKinnon: I regret the fact that the Scottish Government called for the devolution of that fund without first securing a guarantee that it would not be Barnettised. That said, I recognise the concerns that have been raised. I have written to Angela Eagle, and I will be taking up those concerns with her.

Where was I? Progress on marine protection needs to be made, but not at the expense of maintaining an active fishing fleet in some of our most fragile communities. That is why pragmatism is key. It is essential that, in the process of determining proposals, the fishing industry is listened to. I encourage all fishing businesses to engage in the consultation.

Knowledge and understanding of the sector will be crucial to finding a balance between protecting sufficient areas of the seabed and priority marine features while allowing for adequate areas to sustain a fishing industry. Any restrictions need to recognise how sophisticated modern fishing methods are and the ability of fishing boats to ensure that gear avoids specific features. Allowing for fishing as tight to features as possible makes the most sense and will help to ensure that restrictions are practical.

Although excluding access to a particular fishing ground may seem insignificant, when that area provides the only sheltered ground that a particular boat can access and provides a key part of the catch that keeps the business viable, it could mean that that boat will not be able to continue to operate. The inability of that boat to continue fishing will mean that the skipper and crew no longer have employment in the local area and that their families will no longer be part of that community. In our fragile coastal communities, that is indeed significant.

The impact of the closure of a fishing ground does not stop at the impact on a single boat. Onshore processing is reliant on a fine balance of inputs. If landings fall below a critical mass, that puts entire processing facilities at risk, which could have devastating consequences, including the loss of employment in the wider supply chain and the loss of an outlet for the remaining fleet. I sincerely hope that that will not happen, but I fear that, in some areas of the west coast, the cards are so delicately stacked that some of the options on the table at the moment could result in them coming crashing down. I know that the minister understands that, and he must do everything in his power to avoid it happening.

That all points to a need for a better approach to spatial planning in the marine environment. There are increasing demands on our seas, including from aquaculture, offshore renewables, conservation objectives and, of course, fishing. The current problem is the piecemeal approach to decision making. All of those competing uses are leading to spatial squeeze for the fishing industry right around our coast. Without a strategic approach, it is no wonder that our fishing industry sees any individual loss of fishing grounds as an existential threat to the future sustainability of the industry.

The marine plan is now a decade old. Not only has it not been implemented in large parts, but the marine environment has moved on significantly in that time—yet we seem to be stuck in a loop of delay and promise of an updated strategy that is badly needed. The Labour amendment therefore highlights the need for further work on spatial marine planning. There needs to be a co-ordinated approach to how the competing interests are delivered while maintaining a sustainable and thriving fishing industry.

Of course, those issues are not the only ones that the fishing industry faces. High fuel costs, access to labour and barriers to export are all significant challenges. On the last of those, the UK Labour Government's sanitary and phytosanitary—SPS—agreement has been an important step, not least for the export of live shellfish to Europe, removing significant red tape.

As international negotiations on the fishing quotas for 2027 take place, it is important that the Scottish fishing industry's interests are well represented and that a suitable allocation is achieved. I welcome the minister's outline of his future strategy. How that quota system is managed within Scotland is also important. I am keen to see support for schemes such as the one that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar operates to secure and lease quota to fishing vessels, allowing them the opportunity to target different species and to diversify their landings.

The minister does not have an easy task in front of him. The management of our seas requires the balancing of many competing interests. If the Scottish Government gets this consultation on

MPAs and priority marine features right, we will go some way to striking that balance. The only way to do that is to listen to the fishing industry, engage meaningfully and find common ground.

I move amendment S7M-01460.2, to leave out from "welcomes" and insert:

"considers that the voices of fishers, processors and coastal communities must be central to decisions affecting the sector; believes that the future of fishing depends on thriving places, with the infrastructure, skills, housing and opportunities needed to retain young people and support industry growth; recognises the growing concern among fishing, aquaculture, ports, renewable energy and conservation interests regarding the cumulative pressures on Scotland's marine space; calls on the Scottish Government to provide certainty for all users of the sea on how competing demands for marine space will be managed and how any spatial squeeze will be addressed, and further calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward, as a matter of urgency, its long-delayed Marine Plan 2 to provide a clear, integrated and strategic framework for the sustainable management of Scotland's seas."

15:57

Jamie Langan (South Scotland) (Reform): I welcome this debate on supporting Scotland's fishing industry. Right across my region, from the ports of Eyemouth and Burnmouth on the Berwickshire coast to the fishermen of Troon and Girvan in Ayrshire, and to Kirkcudbright and the Isle of Whithorn on the Solway Firth, fishing is central to so many communities across South Scotland. I am sure that members right across the chamber will recognise the historic and current importance of fishing for the social, cultural and, crucially, economic fabric of their own regions and constituencies.

Given the vital importance of supporting our fishing industry, I welcome the positive tone of the Government's motion. There is a lot in it that I agree with and support. The motion notes the balance between the sustainable management of our fish stocks and the long-term health of the industry. It is paramount that we recognise that no single group has a more vested and valued interest in the long-term sustainability of fish stocks than the industry itself. As they are the stakeholders who interact with our marine environment on a day-to-day basis, it is crucial that marine policy is led by and developed for the interests of those in the fishing industry.

Although there is broad agreement between all groups with an interest in marine policy around the need for the long-term sustainability of fishing stocks, it is crucial that we also recognise the acute, short-term and medium-term economic pressures that the industry faces, noting that people need to be supported to ensure that there is a productive and thriving industry to benefit from our long-term fish stock ambitions.

Although I largely agree with the Scottish Government's motion, further clarity from the Government on areas of marine and fishing policy would be welcome. Marine protected areas have been on the agenda since the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, but there still seems to have been significant confusion and delay around their impact on fishing. For offshore MPAs, the update of fisheries management measures came into force only in October last year; for inshore MPAs, a Government consultation that will be running until January next year was launched only recently. That consultation process is in its infancy, but it is crucial that, when we see the output of any process and proposals, the plans put forward by the Government are not restrictive in nature to the industry, given the significant area of prime fishing waters that would potentially be affected by the proposals.

As we have heard already, we saw the welcome scrapping of the proposals to designate 10 per cent of Scottish seas as highly protected marine areas—a move that would have been hugely detrimental to the industry had the Scottish Government proceeded with its initial plans. I hope that that will not be resurrected in this or future sessions of the Parliament.

There needs to be a broader conversation about the spatial management of our seas and fishing grounds, particularly in relation to the disproportionate impact of offshore wind developments on the Scottish fishing industry. In recognising the socioeconomic importance of fishing in Scotland, I ask that the Scottish Government look at the 2008 Norwegian marine resources act. The act's central aim is to promote the long-term economic profitability of the country's fishing industry and support associated employment. That gives the socioeconomic case for fishing equal legal footing alongside conservation ambitions. A similar move would give Scotland's industry substantial legislative protection.

Andrew Baxter (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD): The member referenced the Norwegian marine resources act. What stands out for me is that the act notes:

"Wild living marine resources belong to Norwegian society as a whole."

If a phrase such as that were to be included in a Scottish act, does the member think the approach would sit at odds with Scotland trying to work towards a closer relationship with the European Union?

Jamie Langan: No, I do not think that it would. Scottish fishing communities are central to Scotland's society, so I do not see how wording

such as that would be at odds with any future relationship with Europe, which members across the chamber expressed a range of views on during the debate yesterday.

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

Jamie Langan: Why not?

David Barratt: Does the member agree that Brexit has failed Scotland's fishers and coastal communities?

Jamie Langan: No. Is that the Europe that you want to join? I am just coming to our relationship with Europe.

As I mentioned, having a clause similar to that in the Norwegian act in Scotland would legally protect the socioeconomic value of fishing alongside conservation ambitions, which we need to meet legal requirements on, as has already been mentioned. We need to have a balance, so that the industry is not legislatively on the back foot.

I do not think that the UK Labour Government's policy positions in recent years have been positive for the fishing industry in Scotland. The fishing and coastal growth fund, which was introduced by the Labour Government in 2025, has been detrimental to the industry. Awarding Scotland just shy of 8 per cent of the total funding allocation did not match the significantly outsized importance of Scotland's fishing industry to the United Kingdom's broader industry. Of course, that is not the only instance of a Labour Government undermining the industry in recent years.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): It is important that we debate how we allocate funding to Scotland. Is the member in favour of Barnett consequentials across the board, or does he have suggestions for another method?

Jamie Langan: We could have a broader discussion about Barnett consequentials. We could perhaps ring fence funding for fishing, given that the majority of the United Kingdom's fish catch is in Scotland. We may have to have a discussion about how funding is allocated for the unique area of fishing.

With the UK-EU reset in 2025, the Labour Government was happy to sign away access for European fleets to British waters until June 2038, which has undermined the efforts of the Scottish fishing industry to sustainably manage its fish stocks and increase the industry's take-home. Potentially, it has created an unfair playing field, given the expectations of European fleets. There are real and immediate challenges and concerns for the Scottish fishing industry, such as the North Sea cod report, which is due to be released this week, and the aforementioned upcoming international negotiations. With that in mind, the Parliament sending a broad and unambiguous message of support to the industry today is welcome.

The Government's positive words are welcome, but I would like to see those being matched with concrete legislative support. Members on our benches will always engage constructively with initiatives and policies that could support our vital fishing industry. We will never waver from showing the industry the support and recognition that it deserves.

I move amendment S7M-01460.1, to insert at end:

"and calls on the Scottish Government to provide clarity around its plans for Marine Protected Areas and broader management of marine areas, and encourages the Scottish Government to look at the Norwegian Marine Resources Act as a model for recognising in law the socio-economic value of the fishing industry."

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Ariane Burgess to speak to and move amendment S7M-01460.5. You have up to nine minutes.

16:04

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I may speak for a little bit less than nine minutes, given that the minister accepted my intervention.

I thank the minister for securing the motion for debate. I hope that he will commit to making a fisheries debate an annual fixture in the parliamentary session instead of timing it around annual quota negotiations, as happened in the past. We need to be able to have a full and frank discussion about the range of issues that the sector faces and the challenges faced by our coastal communities, which rely on healthy seas to thrive.

Our coastal communities are at a crossroads. Decades of shortcomings in fisheries management and failures to adequately protect our marine environment, as well as a system that has not delivered for the people who rely on our seas, have contributed to the loss of jobs, concentrated wealth in fewer hands and accelerated depopulation. However, I welcome the minister's awareness of the need to manage fish stocks more carefully. It is also heartening to see that community wealth building is high on the Government's agenda.

Turning to the Government's motion, I would hope that we all want a sustainable fishing industry that delivers for the economy and the environment, so that fishers and coastal communities of the

future can continue to make a living and enjoy healthy lives by the sea. I share the Scottish Government's ongoing frustration with the UK Government about the pitiful allocation that Scotland received from the fishing and coastal growth fund, which has already been debated somewhat this afternoon. That fund should support a more sustainable fishing industry and our coastal communities. However, it will not deliver nearly enough of that for Scotland because the share of the pot that we are receiving falls well below the relative size of Scotland's contribution to the UK fishing sector.

Keith Brown (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP): I will try to help the member to get to her nine-minute target.

Does Ariane Burgess agree that the shafting of Scottish fishermen last year by the Labour Government was entirely predictable, one, because that is usually the case and, two, because whether we are in the EU or under Brexit, when the interests of Scotland and of Scotland's fishermen are represented by the UK Government, it will not work out to their advantage? Almost every year, the interests of the fishing industry in Scotland have been subordinated to other priorities by the UK Government, because it is seen as the one area that it can give up in order to get other things.

Ariane Burgess: Although I would not use Keith Brown's turn of phrase, I find it frustrating that Scotland is not sitting directly at the negotiating table when it comes to many of the issues to do with fishing.

The negotiations that are taking place this autumn will set catch limits for 2027, and mackerel shows what is at stake. For years, catches agreed by coastal states have exceeded scientific advice, putting the stock under considerable pressure. There are now encouraging signs, with scientific advice for 2027 suggesting that the stock is increasing, although it remains below the precautionary level. I am keen to hear whether the minister will press for catches to remain within the scientific advice and for all coastal states to agree a sharing arrangement that protects that recovery.

Where the Government's motion falls short is in its lack of acknowledgement of some of the key issues affecting coastal communities. How we share out whatever is agreed matters just as much as the totals. The motion implies that the way in which quota is currently managed by the Government is good enough to deliver long-term prosperity to fishing communities. In fact, we have seen consolidation of a quota into fewer and fewer hands. Findings from Greenpeace show that 45 per cent of all Scottish fishing quotas are wholly or partly owned by just five wealthy families, yet the Fisheries Act 2020 requires fishing opportunities to be distributed using transparent and objective criteria, including environmental, social and economic factors. The act also requires ministers to seek to incentivise more selective fishing gear and techniques with a lower environmental impact.

I welcome, following my intervention, the minister's consideration of a further consultation on the quota system and the potential for community quota initiatives. That would help us to move more rapidly towards the kind of quota system that the Fisheries Act 2020 requires of ministers. Quota is such an important tool in managing the health of our seas and the people who rely on them. A system that puts greater weight on social, economic and environmental benefit, and that incentivises fishing methods that are more in harmony with our marine environment, would do much to get us closer to that place.

That brings me to my amendment, because the Government's motion also does not acknowledge the serious findings of the Environmental Standards Scotland report "Protecting Scotland's seafloor: an assessment of Scottish Ministers' implementation of the Marine Strategy Regulations 2010", which came out in June. Scotland's seafloor matters, because it underpins the marine ecosystem that our fish stocks rely on. Unlike most commercial fish, herring lay their eggs on the seabed. In Wester Ross, in my region, herring spawn has been found on maerl beds near Gairloch in 2018, 2019 and 2024. It is a powerful reminder that the health of fish populations begins with very local habitats. Maerl beds are also nurseries for young scallops and juvenile cod, and maerl grows so slowly that, once it is damaged by dredging or trawling, it is effectively lost. Our seabeds also store significant amounts of carbon, so we need the Government to maintain and protect that vital public resource. Environmental Standards Scotland has asked the Government to agree a remedial action plan within six months, and I would be interested to hear from the minister about when Parliament can expect to see that plan.

I could raise many more issues—spatial squeeze, landings, processing, the treatment of our international crews and the long-awaited consultation on inshore marine protected areas, for example—but I will use my closing minutes to look at what sits behind all of that, which is the question of how we plan and govern our seas. I remember being involved in the national conversation about the second national marine plan in June 2023, more than three years ago. The problems with marine planning go back much further than NMP2. Shetland and Orkney, which are both in my region, finally have regional marine plans in place, but, 16 years after the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, they are still the only two of

Scotland's 11 marine regions to have such a plan. Does the Government intend all 11 marine regions to have regional marine plans? If so, when will the other nine regions follow, and how will those plans relate to NMP2?

Our regional inshore fisheries groups are advisory. By contrast, England has 10 statutory inshore fisheries and conservation authorities, which bring together local authorities, fishing interests, conservation expertise and local stakeholders with duties to manage inshore fisheries sustainably and powers to make and enforce local byelaws. Crucially, they manage fisheries and conservation together, which is exactly the connection that I have been making. I do not suggest that Scotland should simply copy that model, but we should ask whether our current system gives coastal communities and regional bodies enough responsibility, authority and resources to have a real say in how their marine environment is managed.

NMP2 gives us the opportunity not only to update national policy but to clarify the relationship between national and regional planning and to consider how stronger regional co-management could sit alongside that framework, with clear responsibilities, proper resources and genuine accountability for our seas. That is why my amendment calls for the national marine plan to be fully implemented.

I said at the start that our coastal communities are at a crossroads: one road carries on as we are, with a quota in fewer hands, a damaged seafloor and decisions that are made far from the people who live with them; the other road shares the benefits of our seas more fairly, protects the places where fish spawn and grow and gives coastal communities a real say over their waters. The Fisheries Act 2020 and the national marine plan give us the framework, and Environmental Standards Scotland has shown us where the Government is falling short. What is needed now is the will to follow through.

I move amendment S7M-01460.5, to insert at end:

"welcomes the findings of Environment Standards Scotland's *Protecting Scotland's seafloor* report, which calls on Scottish Ministers to take actions to meet their legal obligations to the marine environment, and believes that fully implementing the National Marine Plan is crucial to sustaining Scotland's fishers and coastal communities for the long-term."

16:13

James Adams (North East Scotland) (Con): I stand here as a proud Brocher, with family and friends who are currently out at sea in order to put food on our plates.

The Scottish fishing industry faces a growing number of challenges. Although it remains a major producer of high-quality food and an important part of Scotland's coastal economy and culture, it can sometimes feel as though it is not given full legitimacy or recognition. The Scottish White Fish Producers Association has described the reality of all the difficulties that the industry faces at this time: fuel, gear, repairs, insurance and harbour charges are rising together, recruitment is becoming harder, quota uncertainty is threatening earnings and established fishing grounds are becoming increasingly crowded.

Our amendment addresses the straightforward principle that fishermen should be protected from financial losses that are caused by offshore wind expanding into long-established fishing grounds, or compensated if and when such losses occur. Fishing grounds are workplaces, and losing access can mean longer journeys, higher fuel bills, greater safety risks and pressure on the grounds that remain. A promise to consult does not pay those bills. Taken separately, each of the pressures would be difficult to manage; together, they are creating an increasingly demanding environment for vessel owners, skippers, crews and processors.

The immediate financial pressure is particularly severe when it comes to fuel, as it remains one of the largest costs for many vessels. High prices can quickly make a fishing trip uneconomic, especially when catch opportunities are limited or weather conditions cause delay or reduce the number of workable days. One skipper told me that the fuel price is crippling fishermen, with 20 per cent of their gross going to fuel—that is up to 30 to 40 per cent for the bigger trawlers. Those increases cannot always be passed on through the prices that are paid for the catch, which leaves their businesses with narrower margins and less capacity for investment.

As the end of the year approaches, quota negotiations will add another layer of uncertainty. Decisions that affect key stocks, particularly of North Sea cod and saithe, can significantly reduce the fishing opportunities that are available to our vessels. Our lower quotas do not only affect the volume of fish that can be landed; they also influence trip planning, viability, crew earnings and the supply of the raw materials to our processors. When catch limits fall sharply, the effect travels through the wider supply chain, affecting markets, transport businesses and harbour and coastal communities, whose local economies continue to depend on fishing activity.

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation warns of serious difficulties for the white-fish fleet, including from gaps in our understanding of northern shelf cod. I hope that ministers will invest properly in

fisheries science and secure international collaboration on those gaps. Shared stocks demand shared scientific effort, with consistent and mutually agreed outcomes. We also need a catching policy that works aboard a vessel, under real conditions, and supports sustainable fishing.

Recruitment is another serious concern.

Liam Kerr: On the point that the member was just making, I intervened on the minister to ask about the one-net rule. I have to say that, from the minister's answer, I am not convinced that he knew what I was talking about. Will the member elaborate on what he thinks of the one-net rule and what should happen?

James Adams: Over the past few days, I have heard from skippers—I was speaking to them on the phone while they were at sea—that they are particularly concerned about the implementation of the one-net rule at the end of the year. For the prawn fleet in particular, the rule will mean that, instead of being able to go out with the gear that enables them to catch fish and prawns, boats will have to come back into harbour to change the gear out and pick up new gear if they are unable to catch prawns and want to catch fish. That might seem sensible and sustainable but, with the rising cost of fuel, it means that they will have to—

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

James Adams: Yes.

Mark Simpson: Talking of sensible policy, what is the member's opinion of the trade and co-operation agreement that the previous Conservative Government negotiated? Does he regret the impact that it has had on north-east fishing communities?

James Adams: I will admit that, when we left the EU under the previous Conservative Government, many in the north-east fishing industry, including me, were unhappy that not every promise was fulfilled. I accept that. As I said, I am part of a fishing community, and I am told regularly by family and friends their opinions on that, and I share them.

I will get back to the one-net rule. It is seriously concerning for the prawn fleet. One of the skippers who I spoke to the other day said that he feels blackmailed by the potential policy that will require them to install cameras on their boats should they want to carry two sets of gear. If they want to change their nets, they should be able to carry both sets on board. The idea that they have to steam back into harbour, expending more fuel and producing more carbon, to change their nets and then go back out to catch the fish is wholly unacceptable.

One of the skippers said to me that he fears that the prawn fishing fleet in Fraserburgh might have to tie up. I ask the minister to meet the skippers and the fishermen in order to look at the rule and discuss whether it is the right way to go ahead. I know that the fishermen in my region and in my hometown are not happy.

Jim Fairlie: I reiterate my point that no decisions will be made in the chamber today, but I will agree to have a meeting with the member, because we are looking to find practical solutions to the issues that the fisher community faces.

James Adams: I thank the minister for that—I look forward to meeting him with local skippers, as the issue is important to the region.

To go back to my main point, recruitment is another serious concern for the industry, both offshore and in the onshore processing sector. Fishing businesses already struggle to attract and retain enough suitably experienced crew, and processors face similar difficulties in filling essential roles.

The expected loss of access to the skilled worker visa route at the end of the year may make the situation more acute. Greater scrutiny of the transit visa arrangements—sometimes referred to as code 7—also creates uncertainty for vessels that rely on non-domestic crew to work outside the 12-mile limit. Employers need immigration agreements that are lawful, clear and practical, but they also need enough stability to plan ahead and to operate their vessels safely.

More broadly, the working life of Scotland's fishermen is becoming harder because of spatial squeeze at sea. Oil and gas installations, pipelines, offshore wind arrays, subsea cables and offshore and inshore marine protected areas all change established fishing patterns or increase the distance that vessels must travel. The impact of any single development may appear manageable when considered in isolation, but the cumulative effect can be substantial for the commercial fleet. Vessel owners and skippers are being asked to operate in an increasingly crowded marine environment, while maintaining safety, protecting livelihoods and remaining economically viable.

There is therefore a strong concern that decision makers do not always understand the combined effect of those pressures, and that the practical knowledge and experience—

Paul McLennan: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I am not going to allow James Adams to take an intervention; he is well into his additional time. He has been generous in taking interventions, and he

has tried to respond comprehensively to them, so I ask him to start winding up.

James Adams: I will start winding up—that is not a problem. I will skip the next bit, but I will say something on funding, which the minister mentioned in his motion. I find myself in agreement with his motion; it is decent and, I would say, safe.

On funding, we agree that allocating Scotland £28 million from a £360 million UK fund fails to reflect the importance of our industry, and we agree that Labour should reconsider. Given that the fund was meant as a sweetener for Starmer giving away 12 more years of free access to our waters, will the Scottish Government commit to ensuring that all those funds are available to Scotland only and that they will go to the fishing businesses and communities that have been directly impacted by the previous Prime Minister's capitulation to the EU?

We left the EU under the previous Conservative Government. As I said, I accept that many in the north-east fishing industry and outwith it felt that not every promise was fulfilled, but we did leave the common fisheries policy and we did take back control of our fisheries management and regulation, not just at a UK level but at a Scottish level, too.

Industry representatives have repeatedly confirmed that in annual negotiations—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I am going to ask the member to wind up. I appreciate that he was generous in taking interventions.

James Adams: This is my last paragraph. Industry representatives have repeated that Scottish ministers and their officials have never had such a strong voice in negotiations as they have had since we left the CFP.

I move amendment S7M-01460.3, to insert at end:

"and backs the principle that fishermen should be protected from, or compensated for, any financial loss caused by the expansion of offshore wind farms into their long-established fishing grounds."

16:22

Andrew Baxter (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD): I welcome the fact that, so early in the current session of Parliament, the Government has brought forward a debate on Scotland's fishing industry. There is also something else that is worth welcoming today. Across the chamber, and across the amendments before us, there is widespread recognition of the enormous importance of fishing to Scotland: to our economy, to our food security and, above all, to the coastal and island communities where fishing supports jobs, families and local services.

Mark Simpson: Will the member take an intervention?

Andrew Baxter: I will make a little more progress before I give way to the member, if he wants to try again shortly.

Scottish Liberal Democrats share that commitment to Scotland's fishing industry. The question is whether Government policy demonstrates the same ambition for fishing as it demonstrates for the other industries competing for Scotland's seas. I want to concentrate on the areas where I believe that there is still a considerable gap between the Government's ambition and the industry's experience. Before I do so, however, I will give way to Mr Simpson, if he wants to make his intervention now.

Mark Simpson: Yes—thank you. It was nice to hear about the cross-chamber collaboration that the member spoke about. Does that mean that the Liberal Democrats will be voting for the Reform amendment?

Andrew Baxter: The member tempts me down a dangerous path. On the face of it, the amendment seems sensible, but I am still unconvinced as to the real detail and the aim of the Reform party in seeking to introduce an act similar to the Norwegian model. I am prepared to be convinced later in the debate, however, and I may change my mind before we come to the final vote.

The first issue that I would like to concentrate on is the growing spatial squeeze on our fishing fleet. I know that the Government has sometimes appeared reluctant even to use that phrase, but whether ministers like the terminology or not, I do not think that they would deny that there is a potential problem. Offshore wind, transmission cables, conservation measures and other pieces of infrastructure are placing ever-greater demands on a finite marine space.

Although Liberal Democrats support renewable energy, we do not think that Scotland's seas can simply become a profit sheet for overseas developers. We need renewable energy from our seas, but we also need renewable food from our seas. If energy infrastructure is regarded as critical national infrastructure, I ask ministers whether Scotland's ability to produce its own food should also be regarded as critical national infrastructure.

When fishing businesses suffer genuine financial loss because access to long-established fishing grounds is taken away, there must be fair compensation. If we accept that communities on land should benefit from the impact of major energy infrastructure, that principle cannot simply stop at the shoreline. That is why we are calling for

a comprehensive compensation framework alongside a new settlement for marine spatial planning that puts fishing at the table from the beginning, uses local knowledge and makes the Government and Crown Estate Scotland properly accountable for the cumulative consequences of their decisions.

My second concern is about the capacity of the marine directorate. Issues around that came through strongly at last week's meeting of the Rural Affairs Committee. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation told us that resources are increasingly thinly spread and that the effort that is devoted to actual fisheries science has significantly reduced, and we know that environmental organisations express concerns about Government capacity, monitoring and data collection. This is not simply the fishing industry making a special plea; there is a much broader problem.

The Scottish Government's strategy says that Scotland should be

"a world class fishing nation".

I agree, but a world-class fishing nation requires world-class fisheries science. Good policy requires good science. However, the MRV Scotia, our principal fisheries research vessel, is ageing and increasingly prone to breakdown. The Government has developed plans for its replacement. What we need now is a funded timetable for actually delivering that.

That is why Liberal Democrats believe that public sector reform should include a fundamental review of the marine directorate, its resources and its capacity and of whether decisions should instead be taken through a much more decentralised system that ensures that our waters are managed as locally as possible.

That brings me, finally, to the current MPA and priority marine consultation. Those most affected by decisions must have a meaningful part in making them. The minister says that no decisions have yet been taken, and I accept that assurance in good faith. However, I hope that he understands why some fishing communities remain suspicious. The Government has a responsibility not simply to consult but to demonstrate that consultation can genuinely change the outcome. Where the evidence shows that targeted or zoned protection can achieve the necessary conservation objective while allowing sustainable fishing to continue elsewhere, ministers must be prepared to choose that proportionate approach. The objective cannot simply be to draw lines on maps; it must be to deliver healthy seas, sustainable fisheries and thriving coastal communities. If we genuinely put local knowledge, robust science and those three objectives at the heart of marine policy, there is no reason why Scotland cannot achieve all three.

I move amendment S7M-01460.4, to insert at end:

"; believes that there is a spatial squeeze, due to an increasing demand in marine space and that steps must be taken to address the impacts the fishing sector is facing due to this demand, including striking a new settlement on space-based planning for Scotland's seas, which respects local knowledge and ensures the right activity happens in the right place as well as a comprehensive scheme of compensation for fisherman who are displaced; notes long held concerns about the level of Scottish Government investment into its Marine Directorate and whether it is fit for purpose; calls therefore on the Scottish Government to conduct a review of the Directorate and to examine whether it should be replaced with a decentralised system, which manages waters as locally as possible, and further calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward a scheme on creel limits."

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): We move to the open debate. We have one minute in hand.

16:29

Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): My constituency of Banffshire and Buchan Coast is one of the most important fishing constituencies in Scotland, and I will not hear anything else about that.

Peterhead is the UK's leading fishing port, with landings worth more than £341 million last year. Fraserburgh is Scotland's largest shellfish port and one of the biggest in Europe. Along the coast, through Macduff and Buckie, we have harbours, processors, engineers, hauliers and businesses whose livelihoods are tied to what comes out of our seas.

We are an island nation that is surrounded by an extraordinary natural food resource. Fish is nutritious and high in protein, and many of the species that we catch compare very favourably with other forms of high-protein food in relation to being low on carbon emissions. In an increasingly uncertain world, food security must be part of our thinking about how fishing is protected and our ability to produce food for the longer term.

Before I go any further, I want to acknowledge the people who go out to sea to bring that food home. It is hard, skilled and dangerous work. In communities such as mine, there are families who know the terrible cost when somebody does not come home. We should never forget that. When we make decisions about the industry's future, we should always remember it.

Over the past few years, I have listened to catchers, processors, harbour boards and businesses right along my coastal community. They do not always agree, and I do not always

agree with them, but the need for stability and confidence about where the industry is going comes through consistently in all our conversations.

Jamie Langan: Does Ms Adam regret refusing to sign the Scottish Fishermen's Federation's call for a moratorium on offshore wind developments, which are affecting the fishing industry in her area?

Karen Adam: I do not regret that, because I do not think that the answer to improving food security is to create an energy security problem, or vice versa. Scotland needs to address both issues.

Liam Kerr: I am listening intently to what Karen Adam is saying. Stephen Gethins, the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy, has said that if people are impacted by onshore energy infrastructure, they should get compensation. Does she agree with that principle and that it should be extended to cover offshore infrastructure, or does she think that that principle should stop at the shoreline?

Karen Adam: I will answer the question about offshore infrastructure. I absolutely agree that fishermen should not be expected to carry financial loss resulting from decisions made around them. My preference is always to avoid displacement in the first place. However, when genuine loss cannot be avoided, there must be a fair way of addressing that, so those discussions need to cover the whole of Scotland.

We need healthy stocks, good science and respect for fishermen's knowledge of grounds that they have worked for decades. The pressure on marine space is growing. One of the reasons why I set up the cross-party group on fisheries and coastal communities was to allow us to properly discuss spatial squeeze.

Mark Simpson: On the point about parties coming together, I hope that Ms Adam will accept that Reform UK's pro-union and pro-fishing platform resulted in our going from zero votes to within 364 votes of winning her constituency. How does she square the concerns of her constituents, many of whom are involved heavily in the fishing industry, with what the First Minister said about refusing to work with Reform in the Parliament?

Karen Adam: I thank Mark Simpson for that intervention, but I will not take lectures from a party whose London-based leader was the architect of Brexit, which was an unmitigated disaster for the fishing industry. The fact that Reform members were sitting giggling about that earlier is an absolute disgrace. They do not take into account the number of businesses that were lost after Brexit, so they should reflect on that. Also, I do not think—

Mark Simpson: So, no answer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Mr Simpson, you should allow Karen Adam to respond to your intervention.

Karen Adam: Thank you, Deputy Presiding Officer.

I will not take advice on fisheries from a party whose top priority is stopping boats.

The offshore renewables industry supports thousands of jobs and is part of Scotland's energy future, but fishing cannot simply be expected to fit around everything else. Fishermen must be involved early enough in marine planning to genuinely influence what happens. What happens after the fish comes ashore determines how much of that value stays in our communities.

I supported the 70 per cent Scottish landing requirement for mackerel and herring, but I know that catchers have concerns about price, delays and capacity. Businesses in my constituency have told me that longer-term certainty would allow them to invest, expand and employ more people locally, and I find that hard to ignore. If we want more of our catch landed here, Scotland has to be competitive. Our harbours need the capacity, processors need the infrastructure and businesses need practical help to take Scottish seafood into international markets so that more of its value can support local jobs. Young people also need proper training, safe working conditions and realistic routes to progress. That future needs investment.

As has been said, Scotland has more than 60 per cent of the UK's fishing capacity, but it received under 8 per cent of the £360 million fishing and coastal growth fund. I want it on the record that if that fund were devolved, it would not have to be Barnettised. Agricultural funding has previously been devolved without being Barnettised. It is a political choice that could be rectified with the stroke of a pen, and I implore members to tell their leaders at Westminster to do that.

We cannot talk about fishing now without talking about Brexit. I understand why many fishermen voted for it. They were promised control and told that fishing would finally be prioritised. Instead, they faced more paperwork and barriers, and businesses lost easier access to labour. I do not blame fishermen for believing what they were promised. The politicians who made those promises should answer for what they delivered.

Underneath all of that is that our fishing interests go through the UK now, as they did then—Scotland had the same problem before Brexit. Scotland has never had a negotiating voice in its own right, and an industry that is of enormous importance to us has always had to sit within wider UK priorities. I want Scotland to represent those interests for itself. Independence would not make

every negotiation easy, but the Government making Scotland's case would be our Government, which is answerable here for the deal that it secures and the choices that it makes. I believe that long-term security for an industry that feeds people, supports communities and gives Scotland so much economic potential lies in the power of an independent Scottish fisheries industry.

16:37

Lloyd Melville (Angus South) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, which shows that I am an Angus councillor.

I acknowledge the sad loss of Mr Ben Dowie in December 2025. He is deeply missed by the community of Arbroath and Angus.

Arbroath, in my Angus South constituency, has been a fishing town for centuries—giving its name to the famous smokie. Although today the haddock for that smokie is now landed at Peterhead, Arbroath's fleet is still made up of smaller boats, which now land mainly crabs and lobsters.

Before the debate, I spoke to one of the fishermen there. Boats like his can burn through £200 to £300-worth of diesel a day, yet the UK Government's red diesel duty relief is worth only 3.7p per litre. The cost of red diesel has gone up by more than 50p since last year, so that relief is woefully inadequate and does not touch the sides when compared with the support that some EU boats receive—they get up to 20p a litre. The UK Government's paltry fuel duty relief scheme must be expanded. It cannot be allowed to expire at the end of this year.

Arbroath boats are landing a decent catch, but often they barely cover their costs, and many of them are losing money. We cannot accept that. When a boat ties up for good, it is not only one business that is lost. For the fabricator, it is a customer gone. For the engineer, it is work that will not come back. For the harbour, it is one more empty berth in a town that was built around full ones.

Infrastructure matters, too. Mackay Boat Builders Arbroath operates the slipway at Arbroath harbour. It is vital for boats on Scotland's east coast and beyond, but it has been out of action for months. In August, Angus Council rejected calls to release funding for repairs. Instead, it kicked the can down the road and it has only just brought back proposals for investment. However, affected fishers and Mackay's tell me that they are no further forward. Mackay Boat Builders has told me directly that unless the slipway is reopened as a matter of priority, the business will simply not survive. The significant impact that would have on local fishers—not only in Angus but much further afield—cannot be measured. A solution that arrives after a business has failed is no solution at all. That is a clear example of why investment in infrastructure is also an investment in the future of our fishing sector.

As the minister said, fishing policy must be judged by whether it leaves a viable and sustainable industry for the next generation. One point that has often been raised concerns new entrants to the sector. Local fishers have told me that that is one of their key shared concerns, which is why I welcome the £75,000 announced today to help a young fisher in Angus buy their first vessel. We must see more of that kind of investment.

Let me take on the point about congested waters, because that has been raised with me through my engagement activities. The issue has been exacerbated by temporary restrictions related to wind farm development, and some developers are now calling for a limit on creel numbers. I would welcome the minister's engagement on that issue—perhaps he will reflect on it when he closes the debate—particularly in relation to compensation for fishermen who are affected by wind farm development.

Let me now reflect on Brexit, because our fishers were promised a "sea of opportunity", but they were sold down the river. Brexit brought barriers to trade, reduced access to labour and resulted in lost fishing opportunities. Although we account for more than 60 per cent of the UK's fishing capacity, Labour has allocated our fishers just £28 million, which is a paltry 7.78 per cent of the fishing and coastal growth fund. Over 12 years, our fishing communities will lose out on more than £100 million. Of course, we have no meaningful seat at the table when those decisions are being made. That is a disgrace.

Liam Kerr: Whatever the member's position on Brexit, we are in a fishing debate, and he will acknowledge that Brexit ended the UK's participation in the common fisheries policy. Like me, did he welcome our departure from the CFP? If he did, why are he and his party so keen to take us back into it?

Lloyd Melville: I want Scotland to be independent so that we negotiate our fisheries deals, rather than have them negotiated by a UK Government that has sold us down the river multiple times.

Jamie Langan: Will the member take an intervention?

Lloyd Melville: No thanks.

This summer, I welcomed Elspeth Macdonald from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to Arbroath. She was absolutely clear that that funding model simply does not work for Scotland.

Not only is it “grossly unfair”, but the fund has gone from a consolation prize to what she described as a “booby prize”. She also went on to say that the Scotland Office

“did not stand up for the Scottish fishing industry”—

a tale as old as time.

Betrayed by Brexit and now by Labour, Scotland’s fishermen deserve better. Every Labour MSP should join us in demanding that the UK Government reverses its funding betrayal. The situation shows that, under Westminster control, Scotland will always be an afterthought.

The only way to rid ourselves of the harms of Brexit, give Scotland a seat at the table in Europe and allow our fishing industry to reach its full potential is to have the powers of independence.

16:42

Mark Simpson (North East Scotland) (Reform): I am glad to follow Lloyd Melville because I will, in part, talk about the benefits that could have come from Brexit and the opportunities that could have come to our north-east fishing communities.

For our fishermen, leaving the European Union should have meant taking back control of our waters. Nowhere had more to gain than the north-east. Fishing is the lifeblood of towns such as Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Macduff. Families there have gone out to the North Sea for generation after generation.

Last year, well over £700 million-worth of fish was landed. More than 3,700 fishermen work on Scottish boats, with many more jobs on shore in processing, haulage and engineering.

Peterhead is the busiest fishing port in the United Kingdom. Earlier this week, I had the pleasure of visiting ports including Peterhead. That reinforced to me how vital it is that we get fishing policy right for those communities.

When we left the EU, the Conservatives shamefully treated our fishing industry with contempt. They gave it away in the EU-UK trade and co-operation agreement and left workers, the industry and entire communities to pay the price.

Let me outline how Brexit could have been a real benefit to our fishing industry. Iceland, a nation of a few hundred thousand people, pushed its fishing limits out to 200 miles and bravely took on the Royal Navy in the cod wars. It won that, and all that it took was political will.

A proper Brexit would have meant introducing a 200-mile zone that is reserved for our own fishing fleet, with access to foreign ships agreed on our terms, not those of Brussels.

Yi-pei Chou Turvey (North East Scotland) (LD): Does the member accept that, when he was in the UK Independence Party, Nigel Farage pushed for that Brexit deal, and that his leader, Mr Offord, was a member of the Government that passed it?

Mark Simpson: I am not here to speak on behalf of anyone else. I am here to speak on behalf of Reform UK. I have no intention of speaking for anyone else.

Andrew Baxter: Given that Mark Simpson wants to speak on behalf of Reform, can he tell me what discussions he has had with his party leader about how he, as a former member of that Government, failed our fishermen on Brexit?

Mark Simpson: We are indeed in deep discussions and we will release their full details in due course.

For every British boat that does not catch, a job is lost: a deckhand, a haulier or an engineer. Those are real jobs in communities, which have been squandered because of our inability to do Brexit properly. The Scottish Government’s motion rightly condemns the UK Government’s handling of the fishing and coastal growth fund, and it is not right that Scotland gets only 8 per cent of it. However, the Government cannot just point south and cry foul. Enforcement in Scotland’s waters is its own responsibility. Fishing Forward UK recently met marine directors in Shetland, and what they reported should alarm every member here. They said that foreign-owned vessels flying the Scottish flag were taking most of their catch straight to the EU market, and when they asked the very legitimate question of where those catches had landed overseas, nobody could tell them. If that is not the marine directorate’s responsibility, whose is it?

The truth is that our fishing industry has been shafted, first by Westminster and then by Holyrood, and the simple fact is that our fishermen deserve better. Three parties share one broken record: the Conservatives betrayed our fishermen, Labour has locked in that betrayal and the SNP has stood by and watched. Reform UK will back Scottish fishing—our waters, our quota and our fishing families. Support our amendment.

16:47

Dawn Black (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I am pleased to support the motion, which recognises the enormous contribution that Scotland’s fishing industry makes to our economy and to the coastal and island communities that depend on it. I also take this opportunity to congratulate Mairi Gougeon, my predecessor in Angus North and Mearns, on her new position as

the chief executive-designate of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation.

Before I turn to policy, we should remember the people behind the industry and the risks that they take whenever they go to sea. As Mr Melville said, communities across the north-east were deeply saddened by the loss of Mr Dowie, of the creel boat Sea Eagle, who left Arbroath harbour and never returned home. In December, his unmanned boat came ashore in Inverbervie in my constituency. His death is a tragic reminder of the dangers that fishermen face every day. Our thoughts remain with his family, friends and colleagues. Those fishermen, and the communities that they sustain, must remain at the heart of this debate.

As MSP for Angus North and Mearns, which hosts multiple small creeling businesses, I know that the value of Scottish seafood extends far beyond the quayside. Fishing supports processors, hauliers, exporters, hospitality businesses and—may I claim—some of the best fish and chip shops in Scotland. Those local businesses provide skilled employment, sustain local supply chains and keep wealth in our communities.

I welcome the Scottish Government's commitments in the programme for government, including investments through marine fund Scotland, the £16 million that was announced today to protect 122 jobs in coastal and island communities, and measures to provide greater stability through quota management and licensing. The detail will matter and the industry must be closely involved in shaping how those commitments are delivered.

I, too, support the Scottish Government's call for a fairer allocation from the UK Government's fishing and coastal growth fund—that has been said many times this afternoon, but it is absolutely worth repeating. Scotland accounts for more than 60 per cent of the UK fishing capacity and lands most UK quota species but is set to receive less than 8 per cent of the £360 million, with no consultation or forewarning by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when we previously received around 47 per cent of that fund. That settlement does not reflect the scale of Scotland's industry or the needs of our coastal communities. It cannot be justified and should be revisited.

The sector needs more than short-term financial support, however. Its future depends on productive seas, resilient fish stocks and marine habitats that are capable of sustaining them. Ten years after scallop dredging was banned in the Wester Ross marine protected area, the evidence shows that environmental protection and economic prosperity can go hand in hand. Fishermen and scientists have reported recovering scallop populations, more marine wildlife and the return of herring spawning grounds in the Summer Isles.

That recovery provides a practical example of what patient and evidence-based management can achieve, and a recent Blue Hope Alliance report reinforces that point. Maerl beds provide vital nursery and spawning grounds for herring, scallops and shellfish. The report identifies signs of herring recovery in parts of Wester Ross while warning about illegal dredging, invasive algal growth and nutrient pollution. Those threats require effective monitoring and enforcement, not simply good intentions.

I therefore welcome the Scottish Government's consultation on strengthening protection for inshore marine protected areas and priority marine features, both within and beyond the existing network. The proposals aim to protect important habitats and species while supporting sustainable fisheries. Fishermen, environmental organisations, scientists and local communities should engage constructively so that the final measures are workable and credible and are based on best available evidence.

This is not a choice between fishing and the marine environment. Lower-impact methods, including creeling and hand diving, can deliver greater benefits for coastal communities while retaining more value locally. Healthy fisheries depend on healthy seas, and sustainability and prosperity are mutually dependent. We must also address the other immediate pressures that fishermen face, from labour shortages, rising fuel costs and Brexit-related challenges to growing competition for marine space, including from offshore wind development and aquaculture. I therefore call on the Scottish Government to accelerate national marine plan 2 so that competing demands are managed fairly, transparently and coherently.

In conclusion, the future of Scotland's fishing industry depends on fair funding, evidence-based management and healthy marine ecosystems. The UK Government must reconsider its funding decision and give the world-class Scottish sector the support that it deserves.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member must bring her remarks to a close.

Dawn Black: I am just finishing, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member has not taken any interventions, so she must bring her remarks to a close.

Dawn Black: By working with fishermen, processors, scientists, environmental organisations and coastal communities, we can secure a sustainable and prosperous future for this vital Scottish industry.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): We are short of time so, when members do not take interventions, they have to stick to the time that has been agreed with their business managers. If we had more time, that might be different, but we have to stick to the agreed time limits.

16:53

Paul McLennan (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP): I grew up and still stay in the town of Dunbar, which is in my constituency. Many families have fished in the area for more than 200 years. Dunbar harbour runs through the psyche of Dunbar people. We heard today about the loss of Arbroath fishermen and, like many other coastal towns, many Dunbar fishermen have been lost over many years. My constituency of East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs also includes the coastal towns of North Berwick and Port Seton and their fishing communities.

The fleets have reduced in size over the years, but Scotland's fishing industry is not a peripheral interest. It is a cornerstone of our coastal and island communities. It is a source of high-quality jobs and, of course, it is a proud expression of what Scotland does best. What is landed in East Lothian is eaten all over the world. We have white-fish vessels, inshore creelers and processing plants in East Lothian that turn our catch into products that are sought after across the world. The sector, of course, sustains livelihoods and underpins local economies, and it deserves the consistent, fair and ambitious support that we are all talking about today.

Fishing has shaped identities and opportunities for generations, and healthy stocks, secure access to markets and a fair share of the resources that flow from the waters around Scotland deliver real benefits on the ground. Scottish seafood carries a reputation for quality and provenance, and the minister also talked about the premium that such provenance commands at home and abroad. That reputation has been hard won and must be protected.

I welcome the Scottish Government's clear commitment to a profitable, innovative, and sustainable fishing industry. That means more than warm words. It means that the practical tools are already in place through the marine fund Scotland, which continues to support investment, innovation and resilience across the fleet and the wider supply chain—there have been two announcements today of funding for East Lothian fishers. There is also quota management and licensing arrangements that give operators the stability that they need to plan and invest with confidence.

That commitment also means taking a genuine partnership approach, which is a point that we have heard in this debate from a few members. That includes ongoing engagement with the industry, processors and the rest of the supply chain, environmental organisations and, above all, the fishing communities whose futures are more directly affected. Just prior to the election in May, I met local fishermen in Dunbar with the then Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon—I was delighted to hear the news about Mairi's new role. Moving forward, the voice of fishers will be incredibly important; Ariane Burgess made an important point in her speech about how we should involve fishermen and local communities.

Sustainability and prosperity are not opposing forces; they are interdependent. Responsible management of our stocks is the only foundation for long-term success. The Scottish Government understands the need for that balance and is determined to strike it, yet we cannot ignore the serious challenges that remain, and those are not challenges of our own making. We heard about the UK Government's decision to allocate less than 8 per cent of the £360 million fishing and coastal growth fund to Scotland, which is damaging and unfair. As we have heard, Scotland accounts for more than 60 per cent of the UK's fishing capacity. To receive less than one twelfth of a fund that is specifically designed to support fishing and coastal growth is an affront to fairness and the principle that resources should follow activity and need.

Industry stakeholders are clear that that decision must be reversed, and I hope that all members will support them. I agree with them completely: Scotland's fishing communities should not be penalised for the success of their industry or for the simple geography of where the fish are. We should all urge the UK Government to look at that again and to listen to the sector.

Looking ahead, the forthcoming negotiations on fishing opportunities for 2027 will be critical. Many of my colleagues have mentioned that an independent Scotland will be able to negotiate on our own priorities and in the best of interests of Scotland, which is an approach that we should all support. I fully support the Scottish Government's approach to the negotiations. We must secure outcomes that balance the sustainable management of fish stocks with the long-term prosperity of Scotland's fishing communities. That means defending our interests robustly, working constructively with partners and ensuring that the

voices of those who fish our waters are heard and respected. Sustainability without prosperity is hollow, and prosperity without sustainability is short lived.

Scotland's fishing industry has proven repeatedly that it can adapt, innovate and compete on the world stage. I am proud to represent a coastal constituency that shares in that story, and I urge members to support the Scottish Government's motion.

16:58

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I will start with a Gaelic proverb: "Is corrach gob an dubhain". That literally translates to: "The point of the hook is precarious". In other words, fishing is a risky, uncertain or precarious way to make a living. That point was echoed by James Adams, Karen Adam, Lloyd Melville and Dawn Black.

I was brought up in the east neuk of Fife, and fishing was a constant in my childhood. My father's accounting business supported fishers, my higher geography project was on the sustainability of the industry, and a fish supper at Anstruther harbour, often after a visit to the Scottish Fisheries Museum, was a top treat.

I now live in Islay, and I will give members a quick foodie tour of places featuring its natural bounty from the sea. At the southerly tip of the Rhinns of Islay sits the Orsay food shack, a young woman's business that is adding value to the area. On Loch Gruinart is the Oyster Shed, which combines fishing and farming and is a great place that the minister has visited. In Port Charlotte, the seafood kitchen and Port Charlotte hotel serve fantastic seafood, sustain jobs and livelihoods, provide must-visit experiences for tourists and provide islanders with places to gather and celebrate.

I saw a great example of that at the Tarbert seafood festival in July. Even as the rain fell constantly, the turnout of locals and visitors was truly amazing. It was clear from that festival, which was a celebration of the fantastic seafood that is landed in Tarbert, that fishing is at the heart of the community, as it is on the length and breadth of Argyll and Bute's coastline. It keeps those communities alive and illustrates how the involvement of the whole community is integral to sustainability.

As other members have said, the UK Government's allocation of less than 8 per cent of the fishing and coastal growth fund to Scotland does not reflect the 60 per cent of the UK's fishing capacity that Scotland has—

Mark Simpson: Will the member give way?

Jenni Minto: I will do, if the member lets me finish making this point.

The UK Government's allocation perhaps reflects its lack of knowledge or understanding of Scotland. Although I agree with most of what Donald MacKinnon said, the UK Government's decision was definitely not pragmatic.

Mark Simpson: I want to ask about an EU fishing regulation, given that an independent Scotland would seek to join the EU. Article 16 of EU regulation 1380/2013 would allow EU fishing boats to fish in Scottish waters without a quota. What impact would that have on Scottish fishing?

Jenni Minto: I thank the member for his short intervention. I point out that seafood lorries were evident in the demonstrations that took place at Westminster in protest against Brexit red tape in 2021. I know that people from my constituency were there, and I am sure that people from his region were there, too. As Karen Adam and Lloyd Melville made clear, once Scotland regains its independence we will make those arguments at the table in Europe.

A connected issue that fishers in my constituency raise with me is the impact of the UK Government's immigration policy. That is another reason why the Scottish Government is calling for the devolution of immigration powers to our Parliament.

In preparing for this debate, I was in contact with the Clyde Fishermen's Association, which had three areas that it wanted me to raise. First, it is concerned that there is a push to merge fisheries management into marine planning. It believes that the current fisheries management arrangements, which involve links with regional and national marine planning, should remain. I believe that that is the point that Ariane Burgess was making.

The second issue is the fact that successful employability work is being done in Argyll and Bute and other areas to bring new starts into the fishing industry. Therefore, I was very pleased to hear the minister's announcements, and I am sure that he will continue to engage with the fishers in Argyll and Bute.

The third issue that the CFA asked me to highlight is the fact that the new MPAs and PMFs have the potential to cause significant damage to an already depleted inshore fleet. Although the association is supportive of the protection of priority marine features, particularly through the use of technologies such as Anchor Lab's depth-sensing technology, the significant closures and buffer zones that are being discussed would result in more overtly restrictive measures in the waters around Argyll and Bute. To quote one fisher:

"The three vessels will no doubt become defunct with

nowhere to fish. All have local crews with young families who attend Tarbert Academy, as well as having taken out large mortgages to purchase houses, which they have had to pay over the odds for."

So, I extend an invitation to the minister to come and visit some of the fishers in Tarbert.

I agree that the Scottish Government is committed to supporting a profitable, innovative and sustainable fishing industry, and that that requires ongoing engagement across the sector, including with its associated supply chain, environmental organisations and fishing communities. I had exactly such a discussion on Friday.

I note what the minister has said about the need for a thriving marine environment and thriving coastal communities. It is not an either/or. It is imperative that the discussions bring the right people around the table so that we avoid "Is corrach gob an dubhain".

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

17:04

Andrew Baxter: Whatever our differences on individual policies, there is broad support across the Parliament for Scotland's fishing industry and for the communities whose livelihoods depend on it. I had thought that we had complete consensus this afternoon, until that illusion was shattered by Mr Simpson's "It's everyone else's fault, not the architects of Brexit" speech. I far preferred his colleague Jamie Langan's emollient balm at the beginning of the debate to the brashness of his speech.

The challenge now is to turn the consensus that we have into action. Rather than rehearse all the arguments, I will leave the minister with three straightforward questions, which I hope he can answer when he closes the debate.

First, will the minister commit today to developing a compensation framework for fishing businesses that are suffering demonstrable financial loss as a result of offshore wind and associated infrastructure?

Secondly, will the minister commit to a world-class fisheries science capability, reversing the decline in capacity, making proper use of fisherman-generated data and, crucially, giving Parliament a timetable for funding, procuring and delivering the replacement for the ageing research vessel the MRV Scotia?

Thirdly, on the MPA consultation, the minister has told fishing communities that nothing has been decided, so will he provide me with an assurance today that, where the evidence demonstrates that targeted or zoned restrictions can deliver the required conservation objectives, without the additional socioeconomic damage of closing an entire site, the Government will choose the proportionate option, rather than imposing restrictions that the evidence does not require?

Those would be three practical commitments. They would demonstrate that fishing communities are not simply being listened to, but are being heard.

17:06

James Adams: First, I thank the minister for his offer of a meeting. Someone must be listening, as I have already had a few messages from skippers who are welcoming that meeting.

My amendment offers Parliament a practical commitment to protect fishermen from financial loss caused by overexpansion of offshore wind development or to compensate them when those losses cannot be avoided. Avoiding damage must come first. Compensation must not become a licence for poor planning.

We need to have fishermen involved, with a credible assessment of cumulative impacts and a fair process for establishing losses and resolving disputes. Ministers need to set out who pays, how claims are assessed and when their framework will be delivered.

The Labour and Liberal Democrat amendments also recognise the pressure on the marine space, and I am glad to see that there is common ground on that. I welcome Karen Adam's commitment to discussion. Despite that, the SNP is pushing ahead with offshore wind, while leaving fishermen feeling without proper safeguards. The updated sectoral marine plan for offshore wind was due for adoption in the summer of 2026. However, it had still not been approved by 22 September, and ministers gave no revised date. When asked when a compensation framework for fishermen affected by offshore wind would be completed, the Government said that the work was ongoing, and yet again gave no completion date.

Elspeth Macdonald of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation stated:

"That principle cannot stop at the shoreline. The Scottish Government's own analysis confirms what we have been telling them for years—that fishing businesses will lose access to productive grounds and see areas they have depended on for generations squeezed by offshore development."

I and my party will continue to work alongside organisations such as the SFF to raise such concerns, here and down at Westminster, for the protection of the fishing industry.

Speaking of the SFF, I wish to welcome the former Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for

Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon, to her new role as the chief executive-designate of the SFF. I look forward to working with her for the betterment of the north-east fishing industry.

I wish to touch on the pelagic fishing sector, which Karen Adam mentioned. It is one of the most economically productive parts of Scotland's fishing industry. Scotland's pelagic vessels represent just 1 per cent of our fleet, but they account for 52 per cent of the value of all landings in Scotland. SNP ministers introduced a requirement for Scottish pelagic vessels to land a certain percentage of their catch into Scottish factories. In the first year it was 30 per cent. It went up to 40 per cent in year 2. Many fishermen think that an increase from 55 per cent to 70 per cent in 2026 is too high. The minister recently met members of the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association, as did I, and we both heard their views on that matter. There are certain parts of the industry that welcome the proposal. It is a matter of finding the right balance that is supported across the pelagic sector, if possible.

I am not necessarily against the Government's motion. As I said before, it is a good one. However, I hope that its actions will match its rhetoric.

I hoped that one of the Government's own MSPs, Hannah Mary Goodlad, would be here today. Oh—she is there. My apologies. I was just about to welcome her passion for the industry up in the Shetland isles. I know that she supports her industry there, as I do mine.

Hannah Mary Goodlad signed the SFF's pledge for compensation during the election campaign. Do the Scottish Government and the Parliament agree with the minister, and will members back my amendment to ensure that fishermen receive fair compensation for the loss of their fishing grounds?

17:09

Ariane Burgess: It has been great to have a fisheries debate, especially with the many new voices in the chamber. Let us maintain the debate as an annual fixture in the parliamentary calendar.

I will touch on a few of the amendments to the motion. I agree with Donald MacKinnon's call for there to be thriving places, infrastructure, skills, and housing alongside the fishing industry. I share a growing concern about the cumulative impact on our marine area. We should be concerned that the amendment does not acknowledge the disparity in Scotland's share of the fishing and coastal growth fund, but I am glad to hear that the member has taken up that concern with UK Government ministers.

It was good to hear James Adams speaking about compensation concerns, but I ask him where the backed-up sums are, so that we can see what that would cost.

I am supportive of Andrew Baxter's concerns about the cumulative impact on our marine environment and I certainly share his calls for a review of the marine directorate's capacity. Again, I note my concerns about the costs that would be involved with a compensatory framework, which I would like to understand.

In closing, I say that a healthy and resilient marine environment matters for so many reasons. Not only does it support our work towards achieving our 2045 carbon emissions reduction target; it safeguards a crucial public resource that can support jobs and prosperity in our coastal communities for generations to come. For too long, we have prioritised short-term gains over long-term sustainability, but the tide has started to turn.

I welcome the progress that the Government has made, but I want to go further and faster. I want every coastal community to thrive not just because they receive a fair share of the wealth that is generated from fishing but because they benefit from renewables developments, critical infrastructure and the wider opportunities that come from healthy, well-managed seas. The Government's response to Environmental Standards Scotland's report will be an important test of whether the ambition is matched by action over the course of the parliamentary session. The future of Scotland's fishing industry depends on more than the fish that we catch today; it depends on the health of the seas that we leave behind and whether the communities who live beside them share fairly in their wealth.

17:12

Duncan Massey (North East Scotland) (Reform): There was a lot of consensus in the debate, despite some healthy differences of opinion about how Brexit was needed to free up our fishing grounds, among other things, from the tyranny of Europe. There was a lot of support for our fishing industry in the chamber, which is very welcome. It was recognised that our fishing industry is one of our great national assets, as it supports jobs, sustains our coastal communities around the country, contributes to food security and forms an important part of the identity and heritage of many of our towns and villages.

That being said, fishermen tell me that they feel that they are under pressure from every direction and that, most frustratingly, decisions affecting their livelihoods are being made without them being properly listened to. The Government needs

to deliver on the warm words that have been expressed in the chamber.

I was in Peterhead and Fraserburgh this week speaking to fishers. Their main concerns were about there being too many overseas boats, the threat of reduced quotas and the removal of fishing grounds due to wind farms and potential additional protection areas. Whether the overseas boats are foreign-owned vessels that are operating with UK registration or foreign vessels that are accessing our waters directly from Europe, many local fishermen feel that there is an imbalance. They feel that the marine directorate does not monitor foreign vessels robustly enough and believe that many French and Spanish vessels ignore the rules, but the directorate is not strong enough to challenge their behaviour. That directly contrasts with similar regulators in Norway, which are extremely robust with foreign-owned vessels, particularly UK vessels.

The fishermen are also frustrated that foreign-owned vessels operating with UK quotas do not use our local supply chains. They do not use port services and simply truck fish back to their domestic markets. Again, there is a feeling that we are not checking the quotas rigorously enough.

There is also concern over costs that are being imposed, such as in relation to remote electronic monitoring. James Adams set out the one-net policy very well. There is concern about those policies, which, again, seem to be being imposed without enough discussion.

Fairness matters to fishermen and to everyone. If fishermen are expected to comply with strict rules and regulations, they must have confidence that those rules and regulations are being applied consistently to everyone in our waters. At the moment, however, they do not feel that they are.

We have also heard concerns about quotas. When it comes to quotas, we need to ensure that we understand the benefits of fish coming from our own sustainably managed waters rather than being imported. We also need to ensure that, when we impose quotas, we do not penalise things such as incidental catches to such an extent that we, in essence, prevent and penalise normal fishing.

Many of us also talked about the challenge of the growing spatial squeeze. I do not know whether that is a trademark term, but I picked it up. As if those other challenges were not enough, fishermen are also seeing the amount of sea that is available to them steadily reduced. There is an expansion of offshore wind developments and there is the potential for a significant increase in the number of protected marine areas. The industry recognises the importance of protecting the marine environment, but there has to be balance: we need to ensure balance between conservation and sustainable use.

I recognise the time, so I will conclude.

The bottom line is that, for any measures to succeed, fishermen must be part of their design. That has been missing in historical fishing policies. Fisheries management is achieved successfully when fishermen are involved in all of the design, and when things are not simply dictated to or imposed on them. The fishing industry and the wider seafood industry remain resilient, productive and capable of delivering significant economic and social value. However, businesses, fishermen and production are facing huge pressures, so we must ensure that policy works with the fishing industry. Policy must ensure that we continue to have a strong industry that is able to attract, employ and retain people, and that we have a sustainable industry that allows a strong future for our coastal communities.

17:18

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank members for what has been, on the whole, a thoughtful and considered debate, with some excellent interventions. I also thank Dawn Black and Lloyd Melville for their reminder about the dangers of the sea and the fact that lives can be lost. I really appreciate it that they brought that to the chamber.

Fishing is the cornerstone of the economy and identity of many coastal towns, and it plays a vital role in supporting our national food security. As we have heard, the importance of our fishing industry cannot be overstated. That is why we have a responsibility here in Scotland to ensure that our industry is supported to be both profitable and sustainable while operating in a healthy marine environment. The minister set that out very well in his opening remarks, so I thank him for that.

We all spoke about our regions. There was a suggestion that Labour does not care about coastal communities, but it is fair to say that Donald MacKinnon and I are here because we care about our coastal communities. My South Scotland region relies heavily on thriving and successful fishing industries. My remarks will therefore be made with their strong opinions in mind, alongside the necessity to meet sustainable targets.

In last year's debate, I said that we should work together, and I continue to think that we should do so. We agree on so much—there were many contributions on food security, the dedication of the workers, the environment and the ability to make fisheries sustainable.

I want to make a point about what we could do to make a difference. Of course, the debate focused on UK Labour—I understand why that happened—but we could perhaps seek not to be so combative over the next year and seek to work together. My colleague Donald MacKinnon has written to the UK minister; last year, I talked about some of the work that the MP for the Western Isles had done; and I extend a hand to Karen Adam, Jenny Minto and other women in the chamber whose contributions brought real value to the debate. Let us see whether we can do some of that work over the next year when it comes to the fishing industry.

I move to our amendment. We are very keen to talk about community infrastructure. The minister and others in the chamber will know that I often talk about cross-portfolio working, which I think is relevant in this debate. Ensuring that our fishing industry remains sustainable includes supporting the coastal communities with the necessary infrastructure, skills, housing, other job opportunities, nurseries and availability for our young people. That will help to support the growth of the community and the industry, which is why we highlighted that aspect in our amendment. If we do not have those things, we chip away at the industry itself. I thank Ariane Burgess for bringing up the community quotas, which link quite nicely with community wealth building and community infrastructure. I do not know a great deal about those things, so I would appreciate if we could discuss them further in the Parliament.

There are definitely pressures on Scotland's marine space—we have heard about spatial squeeze from several members. I ask whether the minister could speak to us in his closing remarks about what the Scottish Government is doing about the issue because, as Ariane Burgess and others have mentioned, we are not delivering on it—[*Interruption*.] Sorry?

Donald MacKinnon: The minister was not listening. [*Laughter*.]

Carol Mochan: Sorry, I do apologise—[*Laughter*.] Now he will definitely mention how important the issue is.

It is about how we deliver on that marine space. Andrew Baxter made some really good contributions about that finite space and there is so much more to discuss in relation to that area.

Sometimes, in this place, we can be a wee bit guilty of not focusing on Scottish Parliament responsibilities. We are calling for proper planning and we urge the SNP Government to introduce a management plan for all those integrations between wind and sea, for example, and to ensure that our seabeds are healthy. We would appreciate that plan coming forward and hearing about some of those issues.

The future of our fishing industry is dependent on its sustainability. Without any rules to govern implementation, the impact of the marine protected areas is of limited value. We must support our marine habitats effectively. The Scottish Government needs to prioritise inshore waters for our ecosystems and the way of life of sustainable fisheries on our coasts. If too much damage is done to the natural environment, there will be no fishing—other members made that important point. If we work together, we can support Scotland's fishing industry and have a healthy sea and environment and communities that thrive. I hope that, by working together, we can do that.

17:24

Jim Fairlie: I am genuinely grateful to all members for their speeches and their interventions this afternoon. It has been a good debate and there has been a wide span of views. That in itself says something: that the fishing sector has the attention of the whole chamber.

I am very pleased that James Adams mentioned my good friend Hannah Mary Goodlad. Her advice and help to me has been absolutely invaluable since I was given the role of looking after marine in my portfolio. One of the most glorious days of my life was when Hannah Mary took me out on her boat. We were creeling for lobsters and line catching mackerel. It was an absolutely glorious evening. However, it reminded me that the sea is dangerous. As we were steaming out, Hannah Mary was perfectly comfortable, and I was a nervous wreck; I did not have the sea legs for that bit.

That touches on the point that Karen Adam made at the start of her speech, which is that people sometimes do not come home. It was also mentioned by Lloyd Melville, Dawn Black and other members—I apologise for not mentioning them all. The loss of Ben Dowie, a creel fisherman, in August last year shows the reality that fisherfolk deal with yearly. Fishermen are lost on a regular basis, and we must remember that they are genuinely the last of the hunters who go out there and catch food for us all to enjoy. It is important that we remember that.

I will touch on some of the points that have been mentioned by members across the chamber. Donald MacKinnon talked about HPMAs and people's perception that the MPA consultation is about the same thing. I completely understand that sentiment, and we have had a pretty good debate, but that means that it is up to us collectively across the chamber to get the message across that these

are two entirely different things. The MPA consultation is as much about protecting the long-term stability of fisheries as it is about anything else.

Donald MacKinnon asked that fishers be listened to. I can tell him that officials were in the Western Isles last week talking about the MPA consultation, and that will happen in communities around Scotland. I am very glad that Donald MacKinnon will add his weight to the call for the fishing and coastal growth fund to be rectified and for the appropriate amount of money to be brought back to Scotland. Carol Mochan also mentioned that we need to do that. I think that, rather than speaking to Angela Eagle, Donald MacKinnon might well have to speak to the Treasury, because it looks as though the Treasury is the issue. I will leave it to Donald MacKinnon to fix it and bring that money back to Scotland. Good on him.

Jamie Langan talked about the Barnett consequentials, and Carol Mochan was trying to argue against that, but what we had previously was land-based and landing share-based allocation; it was not about population. The funding should never have been Barnettised. We should have stuck with the previous position.

Ariane Burgess talked about the coastal state agreements, which are absolutely essential. We have to negotiate with our neighbours. Hannah Mary Goodlad brought to my attention that mackerel top slicing is already happening in Shetland. That SNP policy introduced the ability for small boats to top slice 1,000 tonnes of mackerel. When the population crashed previously, those small boats were sustained by that top slicing. Therefore, work is already going on.

We will support James Adams's amendment, and we will do so on the principle that fishers should be protected from disproportionate financial loss arising from onshore wind development. Our first priority must always be to avoid or minimise the impacts through careful planning, engagement and mitigation. However, where impacts remain, it is reasonable to expect developers to work constructively with affected fishers and fishing communities to identify fair and appropriate solutions, including financial arrangements. Supporting the amendment does not alter the current legal framework, nor does it create new statutory powers for ministers to require compensation; rather, it recognises the importance of protecting fishing communities and ensuring that the costs and benefits of the energy transition are shared fairly. That is an important recognition, and, on that basis, we will support the Tory amendment this evening.

James Adams opened by talking about immigration. I have to say that the irony of that, given that it was his party that gave us all the disasters post-Brexit, is really something to wonder at.

I will respond to Andrew Baxter. The Government is not—and I certainly am not—reluctant to use the phrase "spatial squeeze", but balance is essential, which is why we will support the amendment. We agree in principle, and balance is absolutely part of what we have to do. Food is critical, and I get the point that food and energy have to go hand in hand. As Andrew Baxter will have heard in committee this morning, we, as a Government, see the ability for us to produce food in this country as vital, and fish are very much a part of that. A raft of work is going on in the marine directorate, and I am happy to speak to Andrew Baxter about that offline—we simply do not have enough time to go through it here just now, but I am happy to have a conversation about that.

Where do we go from there? First off, Karen Adam mentioned the people who do not come home from the sea, and it is essential to acknowledge that in any fishing debate. However, I really enjoyed her slapping down of Reform—that was excellent. She also talked about the catching obligations. Last week, I held a round-table event with the catching and processing communities. I get that some individuals are not happy with the catching obligation, but it brings that valuable catch back into Scotland and it supports Scottish jobs, from those on the boats to those right through the processing sector.

To me, it is an opportunity. At the start of the debate, I talked about brand Scotland. We now have an opportunity to bring more of that fish into Scotland, brand it properly and sell it on the global market to the benefit of all the communities that we are all trying to protect. We will continue to discuss that, and no decisions have been made as part of the work that is going forward, but I highlight that the landing obligation brings money into Scotland and, in my view, that is a good thing.

Ariane Burgess talked about the legislative requirements from the marine directorate. I have to say that the marine directorate is under pressure, because we have more than 200 pieces of legislation on which the directorate has to work regularly. In addition, I note—I say this gently to members—that the number of portfolio questions eats up valuable resource in putting marine directorate staff to work answering them all. It is really difficult for the directorate to deal with the number of questions that ask the same thing but with different wording. I gently put that point on the record.

Andrew Baxter: [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Jim Fairlie: No, I will not take an intervention—I am sorry. We are rapidly running out of time—

Members: Oh!

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): You have time, if you want to take the question.

Jim Fairlie: Do I? I will take the intervention.

Andrew Baxter: Is the minister seriously saying that it is down to members putting pressure on the marine directorate? We rehearsed this issue at the Rural Affairs Committee today. There is a capacity issue. Will he commit to arguing, in his pre-budget talks with colleagues, for an increase to the funding that is available to the marine directorate, in particular to increase its scientific capacity?

Jim Fairlie: Ministers for every portfolio will have their elbows out, looking to get as much money into their budget as they possibly can; I can guarantee that the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs, who is sitting beside me, already has them well sharpened.

The point that I am making is this. If a member asks a PQ and gets an answer, that is the answer—they will not change the answer by changing the wording of the question ever so slightly and putting in 30 or 40 different PQs. They are going to get the same answer, and that is not going to give the marine directorate time to do the work that we actually want it to do.

Members made various other points. Dawn Black talked about recovery of the seabed, which is achievable—

The Presiding Officer: You need to wind up, minister—you are well over time, even including the extra time.

Jim Fairlie: You gave me extra time for the intervention—

The Presiding Officer: Yes, but you were already 20 seconds over time when I gave you that intervention.

Jim Fairlie: Yes, absolutely.

I want to respond to so many other members. Jenni Minto's oratory was absolutely fantastic, and I congratulate the Clyde Fishermen's Association. There are too many other things that I need to discuss, which I think indicates how well the debate has gone. I thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. That concludes the debate on supporting Scotland's fishing industry.

Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is consideration of motion S7M-01492, in the name of Stephen Kerr, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the Scottish parliamentary contributory pension fund.

17:35

Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): This is a straightforward procedural motion concerning the Scottish parliamentary contributory pension fund. The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body considered the composition of the fund's trustee board at its meeting on 24 September, following Gordon MacDonald's change of status from a participating member of the scheme to a scheme pensioner. Under the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Act 2009, that change of status means that the Parliament must formally resolve whether he should continue in office as a fund trustee. The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body considered the position, noted that the trustee board remains properly constituted, and agreed that the necessary resolution should be brought before Parliament.

I want to place on record the corporate body's thanks to Gordon MacDonald for his service as a trustee and for his willingness to continue in that role. [*Applause*.] I am sure that that applause was for Gordon MacDonald, not me. Judging by its source on the Scottish National Party benches, I doubt that it was for anything that I have said, although there is a first time for everything.

In all genuineness, we thank Gordon MacDonald for his willingness to continue in the role of a trustee.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that Gordon MacDonald, a Fund Trustee of the Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund appointed as a participating member, has ceased to be a participating member and has become a scheme pensioner within the meaning of Rule 12(1)(a) of Schedule 1 to the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Act 2009; further notes that notification of this change of circumstances has been provided in accordance with Rule 12(2)(a), and, in accordance with Rule 12(2)(b), resolves that Gordon MacDonald shall continue to hold office as a Fund Trustee notwithstanding the change of status from participating member to scheme pensioner.

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

Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill

17:36

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is consideration of motion S7M-01497, on legislative consent for the Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament, noting that the Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 14 May 2026, makes provision that falls within the legislative competence of the Parliament, agrees to give consent to such provision as is made by clause 7.—[*Tom Arthur*]

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

Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill

17:36

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is consideration of motion S7M-01498, on legislative consent for the Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament, noting that the Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 12 November 2025, so far as these matters fall within the competence of the Scottish Parliament, or alter the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers, agrees to give consent to such provision as is made by clauses 12, 15, 17-23, 25-35, 38, 40, 41, 45-52, 56, Schedule 1 and Schedule 2.—[*Kirsten Oswald*]

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

Armed Forces Bill

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is consideration of motion S7M-01499, on legislative consent for the Armed Forces Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament, noting that the Armed Forces Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 15 January 2026 (reintroduced on 14 May 2026), makes provision that falls within the legislative competence of the Parliament, agrees to give consent to such provision as is made by clause 8 (4) and clause 8 (5).—[*Jamie Hepburn*]

17:36

Stephen Kerr (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I support the motion, but I need to seek assurance from the minister. The principle behind the provisions is straightforward—it is that a victim's protection must not disappear simply because the person who is subject to a service restraining order leaves the armed forces. Clauses 8(4) and 8(5) deal with that problem. They ensure that, when a service restraining order applies and the individual subsequently ceases to be subject to service law, protection can continue through the Scottish civilian justice system. The order will be treated as a non-harassment order made by a sheriff, so a breach will be a criminal offence under Scots law, and our courts will have the power to vary or revoke the order where appropriate. All that is sensible and necessary, but there is an important practical point for Scottish ministers.

The Criminal Justice Committee was assured that there will be no gap in protection when responsibility transfers from the service justice system and that Police Scotland will be able to identify those orders through the police national computer. I therefore ask the minister to ensure that those arrangements will work seamlessly in practice from day 1. Victims must know that their protection continues. Police Scotland must be able to act immediately on an alleged breach, and there must be clear communication between the service justice system, Police Scotland prosecutors and the Scottish courts.

I ask the minister to keep the operation of those arrangements under review once cases begin to transfer into Scottish jurisdiction. A victim should never be left uncertain about whether an order still protects them, simply because the perpetrator has left the armed forces. Leaving service must never become a means of escaping the restrictions of an order designed to protect another person.

These are proportionate and necessary provisions. I support the motion, but I seek assurances from the minister in respect of the items of concern that I have and which many others share.

The Presiding Officer: I call the minister to respond. You have three minutes, minister.

17:39

The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans (Jamie Hepburn): I am certainly happy to respond, but I probably will not take three minutes.

In recommending that the Parliament gives legislative consent, I assure Mr Kerr that we want to enhance the position of victims. I think that we all share that position.

I will give members the wider context. We are seeking agreement to legislation that would give civilian courts in Scotland the power to enforce service restraining orders when someone moves from military jurisdiction to civilian jurisdiction. That will enhance the rights of victims.

If we were not to agree to give legislative consent, a person in Scotland would have to make a specific application to the civil courts in Scotland for a protective order, when the person who was subject to a service restraining order moved from the armed forces to civilian life, in order to get the level of protection that had been provided by the service restraining order.

For the system to be effective, we want to have a seamless transition, and the Government is committed to providing that. I give Mr Kerr the assurance that we take the matter seriously. I am happy to take away the point about a review to see how the Government could undertake that. I commit to writing to the Criminal Justice Committee with more detail on that.

With that, I recommend to the Parliament that we provide legislative consent for the provisions.

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

Business Motion

17:41

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S7M-01505, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of 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	Ministerial Statement: Keeping The Promise: Progress and Delivery to 2030
followed by	Scottish Government Debate: Scotland's Commitment to International Climate Justice
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	Scottish Government Debate: Strengthening Scotland's Public Health Approach to Preventing Alcohol and Drug Deaths
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Tuesday 3 November 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 4 November 2026

2.00 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.00 pm	Portfolio Questions: Climate Action and Rural Affairs; Education, Culture and Gaelic
followed by	Reform UK Business
followed by	Business Motions
followed by	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
followed by	Members' Business

Thursday 5 November 2026

1.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
1.30 pm	General Questions
2.00 pm	First Minister's Questions (Party Leaders)
followed by	Scottish Government 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 26 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.—[*Jamie Hepburn*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:41

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is consideration of motion S7M-01506, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a stage 1 timetable.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Scottish Local Government Elections (Candidacy Rights of Commonwealth Citizens) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 13 November 2026.—[*Jamie Hepburn*]

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

Decision Time

17:41

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): Members will be delighted to know that there are a mere 11 questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S7M-01460.2, in the name of Donald MacKinnon, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01460, in the name of Jim Fairlie, on supporting Scotland's fishing industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:42

Meeting suspended.

17:44

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the vote on amendment S7M-01460.2, in the name of Donald MacKinnon. Members should cast their votes now.

For

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)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
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)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
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)
Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
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)
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)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (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)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
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)
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)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

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)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
McKee, Cara (West 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 amendment S7M-01460.2, in the name of Donald MacKinnon, is: For 32, Against 71, Abstentions 13.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01460.1, in the name of Jamie Langan, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01460, in the name of Jim Fairlie, on supporting Scotland's fishing industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs (Maree Todd): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. My voting app did not work. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh North Western) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

Paul McLennan (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded, and it is great to see you in trousers. [*Laughter.*]

David Green (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

For

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (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)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
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)
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)
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)
MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
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)
Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)

Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the vote on amendment S7M-01460.1, in the name of Jamie Langan, is: For 26, Against 89, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01460.5, in the name of Ariane Burgess, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01460, in the name of Jim Fairlie, on supporting Scotland's fishing industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
McKee, Cara (West 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)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
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)
Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
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)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (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)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
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)
MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
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)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (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)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (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)
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)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the vote on amendment S7M-01460.5, in the name of Ariane Burgess, is: For 21, Against 78, Abstentions 15.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01460.3, in the name of James Adams, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01460, in the name of Jim Fairlie, on supporting Scotland's fishing industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: We are agreed. Well done, James. [*Interruption*.]

Oh, we are not agreed—well, speak up! You spoilsports. The new boy was gonnae get his amendment agreed to without a vote. We shall move to a vote—sorry, James.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
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)
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)
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)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (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)
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, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
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)
MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
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)
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)
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)

Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (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)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Against

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)
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)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the vote on amendment S7M-01460.3, in the name of James Adams, is: For 102, Against 15, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01460.4, in the name of Andrew Baxter, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01460, in the name of Jim Fairlie, on supporting Scotland's fishing industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McKee, Cara (West 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)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Bonnar, Steven (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
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)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (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)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hoy, Craig (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
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)
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)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

Abstentions

Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
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)
Smith, David (West Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01460.4, in the name of Andrew Baxter, is: For 22, Against 79, Abstentions 16.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01460, in the name of Jim Fairlie, on supporting Scotland's fishing industry, 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)
Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
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)
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)
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)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (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)
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, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
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)
MacCallum, Morven-May (Highlands and Islands) (LD)
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)
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)
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)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (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)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

Against

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)
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)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
Young, Jenny (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S7M-01460, in the name of Jim Fairlie, on supporting Scotland's fishing industry, as amended, is: For 102, Against 15, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the vital importance of Scotland's fishing industry in sustaining jobs and livelihoods in island and coastal communities and across the wider economy; acknowledges the international reputation of Scottish seafood and the value that Scottish provenance brings to the sector in markets both at home and abroad; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to supporting a profitable, innovative and sustainable fishing industry; believes that this requires ongoing engagement across the sector, including with its associated supply chain, environmental organisations and fishing communities; notes the continued support provided to the sector through the Marine Fund Scotland, and that effective quota management and licensing arrangements can provide stability and support investment; recognises the range of challenges facing the sector, including the UK Government's damaging decision to unfairly allocate only £28 million, or 7.78% of the £360 million Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund to Scotland, despite Scotland's fishing sector accounting for more than 60% of the UK's fishing capacity; agrees with industry stakeholders that the UK Government must reverse this decision; supports the Scottish Government's approach to the forthcoming international negotiations on fishing opportunities for 2027, where it will seek to balance the sustainable management of fish stocks with the long-term prosperity of Scotland's fishing communities; and backs the principle that fishermen should be protected from, or compensated for, any financial loss caused by the expansion of offshore wind farms into their long-established fishing grounds.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01492, in the name of Stephen Kerr, on the Scottish parliamentary contributory pension fund, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes that Gordon MacDonald, a Fund Trustee of the Scottish Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund appointed as a participating member, has ceased to be a participating member and has become a scheme pensioner within the meaning of Rule 12(1)(a) of Schedule 1 to the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Act 2009; further notes that notification of this change of circumstances has been provided in accordance with Rule 12(2)(a), and, in accordance with Rule 12(2)(b), resolves that Gordon MacDonald shall continue to hold office as a Fund Trustee notwithstanding the change of status from participating member to scheme pensioner.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01497, in the name of Stephen Flynn, on legislative consent for the Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament, noting that the Civil Aviation (Consumer Protection and Regulatory Reform) Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 14 May 2026, makes provision that falls within the legislative competence of the Parliament, agrees to give consent to such provision as is made by clause 7.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01498, in the name of Neil Gray, on legislative consent for the Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill, which is UK legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament, noting that the Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 12 November 2025, so far as these matters fall within the competence of the Scottish Parliament, or alter the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers, agrees to give consent to such provision as is made by clauses 12, 15, 17-23, 25-35, 38, 40, 41, 45-52, 56, Schedule 1 and Schedule 2.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S7M-01499, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on legislative consent for the Armed Forces Bill, which is UK legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament, noting that the Armed Forces Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 15 January 2026 (reintroduced on 14 May 2026), makes provision that falls within the legislative competence of the Parliament, agrees to give consent to such provision as is made by clause 8 (4) and clause 8 (5).

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S7M-01506, in the name of Jamie Hepburn, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on a stage 1 timetable, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Scottish Local Government Elections (Candidacy Rights of Commonwealth Citizens) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 13 November 2026.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Baby Loss Awareness Week 2026

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S7M-00815, in the name of Patricia Gibson, on baby loss awareness week 2026. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament supports Baby Loss Awareness Week, which takes place from 9 to 15 October 2026 and has the theme, Together, we care, focusing on nurturing mental and physical wellbeing and supporting one another; recognises that the week provides a safe and supportive opportunity for those affected by pregnancy and baby loss to share their experiences and to feel that they are not alone; recognises the devastating impact that baby loss can have on parents and the wider family; notes official statistics showing that there were 318 baby deaths including 159 stillbirths in Scotland and 4,477 baby deaths including 2,552 stillbirths across the UK in 2024; further notes research by the charity Tommy's indicating that half of adults in the UK have been affected directly, or through someone they know, by pregnancy or baby loss; acknowledges the significance of the global #WaveOfLight on 15 October, during which families around the world light a candle at 7PM local time in remembrance of babies who have died; pays tribute to the charities and organisations that support bereaved parents and families; commends the work of pregnancy and baby loss charities across Scotland and the UK, including Ayrshire Baby Loss Support, a non-profit organisation that supports anyone affected by baby loss and is a member of the Baby Loss Awareness Alliance, a group of more than 80 charities and organisations from across the UK that collaborate during Baby Loss Awareness Week to raise awareness of pregnancy and baby loss and to improve support for those affected, and recognises the valuable contribution that such organisations make in raising awareness and helping families through the painful experience of pregnancy and baby loss.

17:55

Patricia Gibson (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I thank all the members who signed my motion on baby loss awareness week, helping to make the debate possible, and those in the chamber and in the public gallery who are attending the debate this evening.

I pay tribute to all those charitable organisations that work so hard to support those who are living with baby loss; they visited the Parliament today and provided briefings for the debate. I especially thank Sands, Simba, Held In Our Hearts, Ayrshire Baby Loss Support and the Lullaby Trust. For the work that those organisations do day in, day out to support those who are dealing with baby loss, they deserve our thanks and recognition.

When I was a member of the United Kingdom Parliament, I secured the first ever debate in that Parliament on the issue of stillbirth. I led for my

party on the annual baby loss awareness week debates, and I worked cross party to deliver statutory paid bereavement leave for all parents who lose a child up to the age of 18, introducing an amendment with that leave added on to statutory maternity leave for those who endure a stillbirth. However, there is still much work to be done.

Many members will be aware of my and my husband's personal experience of the issue. In 2009, after five years of fertility treatment, I had what doctors and midwives called a "textbook perfect pregnancy". I was healthier than I had ever been, until my due date, when the most extreme form of pre-eclampsia, known as HELLP—haemolysis, elevated liver enzymes and low platelet count—syndrome, left me in terrible pain.

After being treated with appalling disregard when I arrived at the hospital, I was reluctantly—and with very poor grace, to put it mildly—shown to a bed and pumped full of morphine, only to awake and discover that my full-term, 8lb 5oz son, who was an otherwise perfectly healthy baby, had died. In a cruel twist of fate, the date of his death is recorded as 15 October, which is baby loss awareness day. With repeated attempts to force a natural delivery, to which my body would not respond, my liver ruptured and my husband was told that I, too, would not survive.

The reason that I begin the debate in this way is that, although my experience should be, and ought to be, an isolated and unusual event, even 17 years later I continue to hear other stories from other devastated couples that show that it is still not isolated or unusual. It is extremely hard to escape the fact that nothing much has changed since my experience in 2009. When things go wrong, the walls go up and the silence comes down. Hospitals close ranks, and promised investigations lead to nothing but meaningless clichés about lessons being learned.

The frustrations that I and my husband suffered after the loss of Kenneth James Stewart Gibson, and the lack of answers, led us to commission two independent reports of our own, from two top obstetricians at the University of Edinburgh and Newcastle University respectively. They found, independently and separately, that systematic and basic failings had happened at every turn. Still, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde refused to accept any responsibility or provide any meaningful explanation.

We left the hospital not with a child in the car seat, but with an appointment at the local undertakers to arrange a funeral. At the funeral of a baby, there is only the silence of unfulfilled potential—a life stopped in its tracks by a system that simply does not work and for whom no one is held accountable, due to cover-ups and evasion. The system is so huge that it simply rolls over and crushes those who question it.

Fast forward 17 years on from the death of baby Kenneth, and we hear the same experience repeated by too many bereaved parents. Today, therefore, I have some specific and commonsense reasonable asks of the Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs. I understand that the Scottish Government has launched an independent review of maternity services, and so it must. However, I urge the minister to ensure that the review extends to all health boards so that we can see clearly which boards have failings to address, and where, and which, boards model better practice from which others may learn.

Will the review launched by the Government ensure that it takes into account the serious and devastating maternity failings in the past on which the failings of the present have been built? The failings that are happening right now did not develop overnight; they have taken root in a culture of secrecy, cover-up and obfuscation when things go wrong. A meaningful review must not be limited in where it can shed light—it must uncover, admit and acknowledge the culture that has grown over time.

Will the review make sure that health boards are not marking their own homework? When things go wrong, they must be reviewed and investigated by an independent third party, not someone who themselves is embedded in the system and culture that they are charged with investigating. Will the review set out what can be done to ensure that the standards and protocols that are already in place are adhered to? If that is done, many of the babies who die would not do so—basically, people just need to ensure that they do their jobs in the way that they have been trained to do them, and if they do not, there has to be some accountability.

For the future, will the minister ensure that data collection is consistent across Scotland, so that we will know the extent of any progress that is made in saving babies' lives? Health boards across Scotland do not consistently record and disclose adverse incidents. Without consistent reporting, it is impossible to truly measure any progress that might be made. There needs to be compulsion and consistency across Scotland on the reporting and collection of data.

I fear that, unless those elements are included in the review's terms of reference, it will be difficult to see how we can move the dial on maternal and neonatal health. We cannot continue as we are, with recurring patterns and systematic failures—it simply will not do. If we are to have that independent review, it has to be meaningful.

In Scotland, in 2025 alone, 300 babies were stillborn or died in the first year of their lives. That is not inevitable—better care would make a huge impact on those appalling and unacceptable figures. If there was a disease that killed 300 babies each year in Scotland, there would be outrage and anger, and demands for action, yet with cases of stillbirth and babies dying in the first year of their lives, most of which are avoidable, there is simply not enough outrage. There needs to be.

I do not want to stand in the chamber every October, just as I did in the House of Commons, and hear that lessons will be learned, only for nothing to substantially improve. The experience of too many expectant parents is that they go into hospital to have a baby and emerge with their hearts broken, a sheet of card with handprints and a funeral to arrange. That cannot go on.

I referred earlier to the wonderful charities that help families through the trauma of stillbirth and neonatal death. The fact is that they have more people to support than they should. Maternity care has to be better. We cannot save the lives of all the babies who have died due to systematic failures—they are gone. However, the independent review, if it is to do what it needs to do, which is to save more babies' lives, address shortcomings and challenge poor care, needs to focus on the asks that I have put to the minister tonight.

I ask the minister to please do all that she can to make sure that the review is not an opportunity for meaningful improvement that passes us by. I ask the Parliament and the Government, and the minister, to grab the opportunity with both hands, for all the children who are yet to be born. [*Applause*.]

The Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate.

18:05

Steven Bonnar (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I thank Patricia Gibson not only for securing the debate, but for sharing the story of baby Kenneth with members today; I pass on my regards to you, too, Presiding Officer.

There are some things in life for which it is hard to find the words, and the loss of a baby is one of them. When a baby passes, it is a loss of firsts: the first cuddle, the first Christmas, the first birthday and all the other firsts that will never come.

I believe that every human life has dignity and value, and I do not think that that dignity depends on how long somebody gets to spend on this planet. A life does not become less precious because it was brief. Loss is loss and grief is grief, and we should not measure the value of a life by how far along a pregnancy was, or measure grief by how long the child was here. For some families, the grief is immediate; for others, it comes back years later, with a birthday, a photograph or a song, or simply seeing another child when their child would have been around the same age. There is no timetable for grief and there is no right way to grieve.

That is why this year's baby loss awareness week theme, "Together, we care", matters so much. You do not have to have experienced baby loss yourself to care about someone who has. Sometimes you do not need to find the right words—you just need to be there. We need to remember that the person carrying that grief is not always the person we see crying. It can be the dad, the husband, the brother or the uncle, who has gone back to work, day after day, making the dinner and trying to keep everybody else in the family going. They need support, too.

There has to be the right support at the right time, and in the right place, and that is where our local communities can make a real difference. I pay tribute in particular to Julie and Bryan Morrison and everyone at the Baby Loss Retreat. Julie and Bryan know this pain themselves—they lost their baby daughter, Erin. From that terrible loss, they have built something that helps other families through some of the darkest moments in their lives. They provide counselling, trauma support and remembrance retreats for bereaved families.

I have spoken before in the other Parliament about the work of the Baby Loss Retreat and the importance of recognising babies who are lost before 24 weeks, because recognition matters. Being able to name a baby, remember a baby and acknowledge that a life existed matters to those families. The work of the retreat reminds us that support is not about saying the right thing once; it is about being there afterwards. It is about recognising that grief does not have an expiry date, and ensuring that families get the support that they need.

The Scottish Government has taken important steps such as introducing a graded model of miscarriage care and funding the national bereavement care pathway, but there is more to do. The baby loss awareness alliance tells us that

"1 in 5 late miscarriages, stillbirths and neonatal deaths may have been prevented with better care".

Where there are lessons to be learned, we have a responsibility to learn them, and where care can be improved, we have a responsibility to improve it.

However, Governments cannot do everything, and a lot of the real work happens through charities, healthcare professionals, volunteers,

friends and family. For some families, faith is a part of how they make sense of their loss. It might be simply lighting a candle, saying a prayer or having a quiet moment to remember their child. There is something powerful in lighting a candle for a child who is no longer here, saying their name, remembering that they brought joy and knowing that their life had meaning. On 15 October, families around the world will take part in the wave of light, lighting a candle at 7 pm in memory of babies who have passed. It is one small light in the darkness—a small way of saying, "You were here, you were loved and you will never be forgotten."

There is a quote from the Sands website that I think says a lot about what grief really is:

"Behind grief sits love, and who doesn't want to talk, and celebrate and remember that?"

Let us remember these families and their babies; let us say their names and recognise the lives that they had and the love that surrounded them. Most importantly, let every family that is affected by baby loss know this: you are not alone. Your precious baby mattered, your grief matters and you do not have to carry that grief alone.

18:10

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I thank Patricia Gibson for securing time for the debate and for her very powerful contribution, and I associate myself with all her remarks and her requests of the minister. Her words will give comfort to others in knowing that they are not alone, and that is the ethos of baby loss awareness week.

Presiding Officer, I had sought permission to leave the debate early as I am sponsoring an event in Parliament this evening, but I will now stay.

Baby loss is something that many families live with long after it occurs. It is the loss of a life that might have been, and a future that parents had imagined. When a woman or a family leaves hospital, the clinical care ends, but the grief does not. This week is an opportunity to remember that behind every experience of baby loss is a person, a family and a story.

For many people, the grief can be incredibly lonely, and that is why talking matters. I hope that women and men feel able to share their stories with those around them because, by speaking openly, they can let others know that their grief is real and their feelings are valid. They are doing a service to those around them by sharing their experiences with others who have experienced something similar.

This year's theme, "Together, we care", focuses on nurturing mental and physical wellbeing. We must recognise our responsibility to see that services are appropriate to the mental and physical toll of baby loss and are there for those who need them. A parent who needs counselling in the weeks and months following baby loss should not have to wait, search endlessly or pay for the support that they need. Our duty does not end with offering condolences; we have a responsibility to take meaningful action and provide tangible support to families at one of the most painful moments of their lives.

We cannot erase the pain of losing a baby, but we can change how our society, and our healthcare system, respond to families that are experiencing that loss. First, we need to address the consistency and quality of care. Every hospital in Scotland should have appropriate, dedicated spaces for bereavement care. No grieving parent should have to sit in a maternity ward, surrounded by the sounds and cries of newborn babies, immediately after being told that they have lost their own child. Compassion should not depend on which hospital someone attends.

Equally, support cannot end when a family leaves hospital, because women need access to specialist, long-term psychological support following baby loss. We need adequately funded, easily accessible mental health support that recognises the trauma that is associated with miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death. That applies to fathers, too.

Supporting families also means preventing avoidable loss wherever we can. A briefing from Sands and Tommy's has highlighted serious concerns about the quality and consistency of pregnancy-loss care in Scotland. We have heard directly in the Parliament, too, from families that are struggling to access care because the "Delivery Framework for Miscarriage Care in Scotland" is largely undelivered.

I pay tribute to the charities and the healthcare professionals and, above all, to the bereaved parents who have been brave enough to share their experiences and campaign for change. Let us honour them today with not only our words but our decisions, through better services, stronger standards and meaningful action. To repeat what Patricia Gibson said, let us make that part of the review.

18:14

Helen McDade (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform): I offer many thanks to Patricia Gibson for securing the debate and for sharing her dreadful loss.

We almost certainly all know someone, or a family, affected by a stillbirth or miscarriage or the death of a baby. About one in seven pregnancies end in miscarriage. Public Health Scotland collects

miscarriage data routinely, but the results have not been published. Those statistics should be published routinely and without further delay. Often, in particular in the case of a miscarriage, those around the mother—fellow workers, or extended family and friends—feel and express sorrow and sympathy, and then expect the family to move on. Those affected are expected to bounce back and try again.

The charities that we have heard from know well that that is not what happens. We have heard how mothers can suffer from post-traumatic stress and may well be unwell themselves. Fathers and other family members may get little support. Children in the family who have been being prepared to welcome a brother or sister have little understanding, and their feelings may not be understood.

Sands, the baby loss awareness alliance and all the other charities that support these families have stepped into that void to support the families of the 338 babies who were lost last year. Each of those babies was someone's son or daughter, and each death a tragedy.

The figures for stillbirths that are quoted in the motion are from 2024. National Records of Scotland has now published the 2025 figures, which show that stillbirths rose; we have to hope that that is a blip. Each one of those babies is a huge loss. Many of those losses happen in hospital, and we must be thankful to the staff who are present with the families in those moments. Those staff need support as well, as they are doing such a difficult job. I understand entirely that this is not always the experience that some have had from staff, but in general those staff do their utmost and feel very strongly about what happens.

It is encouraging that Scotland has, in general, been making steady progress in reducing stillbirths, and we hope that the rise in 2025 is a blip, but it is important that the deaths are recorded correctly. Each family deserves to know why their baby died and that the death was recorded correctly, and they want to know whether it could have been prevented. Across the UK, nearly every review of a baby's death finds at least one issue with care. In more than a third of cases, the issue was relevant to the outcome.

I extend my thanks to the services that support families, such as the cherry blossom suite—a dedicated bereavement facility at Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy that opened in June this year. It is designed to provide compassionate, private care for families who have experienced such a loss and who need the type of support that Jackie Baillie mentioned. The service has been funded by a £40,000 investment from the Fife Health Charity, and more than £8,000 was raised by local couple, Marley and Jon Dickie, in memory of their late son, Jase.

Held In Our Hearts also supports families across Scotland, including in Fife and Forth Valley, with its hospital to home service, which is so important in helping families who have lost a baby from 12 weeks of pregnancy up to preschool age. We hope that that can be extended to other areas.

NHS Tayside organises a children's memorial service of remembrance each spring in Perth for parents and relatives who have lost a child before or shortly after birth. I am sure that that is much appreciated, and I am sure that we would all hope to take part in such activities.

Reform Scotland welcomes the independent maternity review that is now under way, led by Professor Christine McCourt. The remit for the review must be wide enough to ensure that lessons are learned from past deaths. Many parents are watching and wish to tell their stories, so I fully support Patricia Gibson's asks of that inquiry and of the Scottish Government. We must listen to families.

18:12

Kayleigh Kinross-O'Neill (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green): I, too, thank Patricia Gibson for bringing the debate to the chamber. I am so sorry that she has had to bring a debate every single year, as we are still not seeing the progress that is so needed.

I thank every constituent that has written to me, shared their experience or advocated alongside Sands or other groups. Before I forget, I would like to give a shout-out for a local event, which will happen just across the road from the Parliament. The wave of light walk is organised by Held In Our Hearts and will take place on Thursday 15 October, starting in Holyrood park at 6 pm. It is a family-friendly event, allowing people to come together to honour all our babies and the families who grieve for them. It would be great to share that information widely for people in the city or further afield who would benefit from that in-person support, and I am happy to share more information with other members if that would be helpful.

I listen with a heavy heart to other contributions and always ask myself what we can say and do now. We cannot bring babies back, but we can act to show that those deaths were not in vain, as sharing awareness can drive improvements in care and support.

We are in a window of significant healthcare and local government reform that can bring opportunities in how we address inequalities, data gaps and workforce sustainability.

A briefing from the joint policy unit that was set up by Sands and Tommy's, which I was grateful to receive, says:

"Unlike stillbirths and neonatal deaths, the total number of miscarriages and miscarriage rates are not reported in Scotland."

If it is the case that we do not have the full picture, how can we set targets, monitor variation, address poverty outcomes and consider staffing needs? Of course, we have information from the Scottish pregnancy births and neonatal data dashboard and, as Helen McDade mentioned, data from Public Health Scotland on equality, but that does not go far enough. As health board reform progresses, I hope that the Government considers what data boards have, what they do not have and what they need to ask for.

Again, none of that will bring back the babies lost, but there is an opportunity for learning as we consider the future of maternity and neonatal workforces and look at recommendations, especially from the nursing and midwifery task force. Programmes such as hospital to home are fantastic examples of how counselling, peer support, guidance and services can come together.

The issue that we are discussing is not solely a health concern, but is more social and community related. It is a prime example of how care involves much more than just the medical setting. We know that mothers do not start and end with pregnancy and their child. They may have mental health conditions that must be considered, they are at risk of experiencing certain medical issues such as diabetes and pre-eclampsia, and they could be living in poverty or in difficult housing circumstances. Situations involving a stillbirth, neonatal death, pre-term birth, maternal death or brain injury can all be exacerbated by environment and might mean that targeted and fruitful support is required. Systemic and wide-reaching support is necessary: this is not just a hospital issue.

While we look at reform across the board, I encourage the Scottish Government to stay true to its commitments. I ask parties to come together on this issue, and it sounds like we really are. I ask organisations to continue holding us to account in order to ensure that we improve bereavement care and reduce preventable deaths in the future.

18:22

Miles Briggs (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con): I also start by thanking Patricia Gibson for bringing this debate to the chamber and for her significant and important campaigning over many years on the issue. It is also important that we acknowledge our Presiding Officer for the way in which he and Patricia Gibson have spoken so kindly and beautifully about the loss of baby Kenneth.

Over the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to engage with some of the charities that work to support bereaved parents and their families and friends. From the outset, as others have done, I want to pay tribute to them for the love and support that they provide at the most unimaginably difficult time for any parent.

A family friend once said to me that every life is important and must be celebrated, whether it is that of a stillborn baby or someone who has lived to be 100 years old, and I hope that today and baby loss week gives us the opportunity to do just that.

I know that every parent who has lost a baby wants to celebrate the life of their child and make sure that the world knows that they are loved and will never be forgotten. I welcome the positive progress that we have seen in trying to take forward the work that must be done on this issue, from the early mental health support that is provided by Held in our Hearts to the memory boxes that Simba provides to families across our country to honour and remember their baby.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that, for many parents, especially for fathers, the point at which they can often seek help is different. I have been told stories of fathers returning to work the day after such a bereavement. Often, for many fathers, especially if they have other children, the need to hold things together to protect and provide for the family will kick in and, therefore, it is critically important that we understand that services must be available and responsive at the time that is right for an individual when they want to seek support.

That whole-family support model is invaluable, and I want to pay tribute to Held in our Hearts, which has supported bereaved families for more than 30 years. It provides the specialist counselling, peer support, trauma-informed early intervention services and practical guidance that many people seek. Its flagship programme, hospital to home, is Scotland's first early intervention opt-out bereavement service, and is delivered in partnership with the national health service.

What is frustrating, though, is that that standard has not become a standard that every parent in this country should be able to expect. As a Lothian MSP, I know how many parents have benefited from the programme and value it. However, by now, we should have implemented the programme as a national clinical standard, so that that care and support is available to people regardless of where they live in Scotland.

I hope that the Government's implementation of its public service reform plans provides an opportunity for that situation to be fixed and to ensure that bereavement services are put in place wherever they are needed, and that we see that once-for-Scotland approach delivered in this area.

Charities have issued a number of asks, and I very much support Patricia Gibson's call for the independent review of maternity services to be expanded so that it addresses the asks that Patricia Gibson has outlined. However, this debate also gives us an opportunity to ask the minister where the Scottish Government is going to move services forward and at what pace. For example, the provision of funding for the hospital to home programme in the Scottish Government's budget is a fair ask, as charities are finding it more and more difficult to fund the services that they provide. As I have said, we need to ensure that the services that are being provided in Lothian are provided across the country. I hope that, in summing up, the minister will be able to touch on some of those points.

Finally, as other members have said, for many people in Scotland who have lost a baby, there will never be an opportunity to move forward. We need to make sure that our public services are there for them and that we can, in future debates, say that that is something that we have made right in this country.

18:26

David Linden (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow Miles Briggs. I thank Patricia Gibson for the leadership that she has shown on this issue, not just in this chamber but over many years, including when she was in Westminster. I associate myself entirely with her remarks and with the calls that she has made to Government tonight. I say to the minister that Ms Gibson is not somebody who is particularly large, but she is not somebody whose requests I would shirk. If she is making calls to the Government, do not ignore her.

Moving on from that humorous point, I acknowledge that this is an incredibly difficult debate. The point that Mr Briggs put on the record about dads sometimes not being able to express themselves is a classic example of that. Even as I stand here just now, I do not know how much I plan to share tonight about our most recent experience of baby loss, which occurred just in June. The point that Mr Briggs makes about the support that is available to parents is incredibly important.

As Steven Bonnar has done, I want to make reference to Baby Loss Retreat in Glasgow. He was right to mention Bryan and Julie Morrison, who I would consider to be friends now. They are remarkable people, and the journey that they have been on and the way that they have channelled their energy to remember Erin, particularly through Erin's app, is something that is to be commended.

I came to know about Baby Loss Retreat not through my own recent personal experience, but through the experience of a very dear friend I grew up with, Gillian McClellan, who also went to Garrowhill Primary School. Gillian and her husband, Christopher, experienced the loss of their child, Daisy, and they benefited from support from Baby Loss Retreat, not just through counselling but in terms of the retreats as well. It is a challenge for Bryan and Julie Morrison to run that organisation, because much of the work is done on the basis of good will. Given that many such organisations are doing the work that, frankly, the NHS has often vacated, I ask the Government to be mindful of that. I know that resources are tight—I am very alive to that—but I ask the minister to engage with Baby Loss Retreat, if for no other reason than to learn about the amazing work that it has done on Erin's app, which I have certainly found quite helpful.

I do not want to make this debate about me or us—I do not think that that is the right thing to do—but there is a niche issue that I want to ask the minister to liaise with colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care in England on, and she will understand why in a moment.

In England, there are baby loss certificates and, in Scotland, we have the memorial book of pregnancy and baby loss. We need to understand that families come in very different shapes and sizes. People's arrangements are very different. The reality is that the arrangements around the baby loss certificate mean that, if a father is domiciled in Scotland, he cannot be recognised as the father of that child, and the same thing goes for the arrangements in Scotland: if the other parent is domiciled in England, they are not recognised.

I realise that that is a niche point. We will not be the only people who have been affected by that, but when things really matter to you, they really matter. I therefore ask the minister, politely and courteously, to engage with her colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care and to rectify what I think is a very simple issue, which would bring an awful lot of serenity to those of us who have experienced the pain of baby loss.

18:30

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow David Linden. This debate, like so many debates of its type, really shows Parliament at its best. Families who have bravely shared their stories, MSPs and campaigners have all come together to

highlight the importance of remembrance and reflection for baby loss. I thank Patricia Gibson, too, not only for sharing her story with us, as she has done in other chambers, but for bringing this members' business debate to the chamber, because it is important that we get back on track to support families who need it most.

Many members have mentioned outstanding charities such as Tommy's, Simba, the Baby Loss Retreat, Sands and Held In Our Hearts, to name but a few. Recently, I had the honour of meeting Nicola and Rossi in Edinburgh, and I was blown away by the kindness, compassion and support that they provide to families who have experienced loss. I watched a film in which families whom they had supported over many years spoke about their own stories and about what Held In Our Hearts had meant to them. It was incredibly moving—if any colleagues want to visit Held In Our Hearts to see the services that it provides, I would seriously recommend it.

However, the support that Held In Our Hearts provides to many families is not as widespread as we would all like it to be. If we want such organisations to expand their reach, they need Government support. It should not matter where you live—if you experience one of the most difficult losses imaginable, that support should be available to you. I hope that the minister can update members tonight on the work that is currently being undertaken to support organisations in this vitally important area.

I know that there is a review under way, but I would also like the minister to explain, if she can, why there is no framework for the minimum level of support that should be provided when a baby dies; why the hospital to home service has not been expanded; why health visitors do not routinely include families who have suffered a loss; and why there is no dedicated mental health support for families who have suffered the loss of a baby. I hope that the new session of Parliament brings plans and, crucially, as Miles Briggs said, clear timescales for the implementation of those plans.

I also highlight the need to increase the provision of overnight accommodation for families in neonatal units. I have had conversations with the minister about that, because, even at present, for every 10 babies who need neonatal care, there is only one bed available in a neonatal unit. Parents need that precious time with their babies, to participate in care and, should the worst happen, to create memories with their children, because those moments can never be replaced. Ensuring that hospitals have appropriate accommodation is about dignity and compassion, and we have all spoken with dignity and compassion this evening.

We need to treat parents as parents and babies as babies. If the worst should happen and a baby is lost, we cannot change that; Patricia Gibson made that absolutely clear. However, we can make sure that parents are supported and that we give them time with their baby. If the minister can announce that she will implement a framework and work with health boards to increase the number of neonatal unit beds for families, that would a good start in changing the support that is currently available to parents.

We can look at reviews, as they are helpful, but we also need the Government to look at which recommendations have already been implemented from previous reviews; what has perhaps been missed out; and what fixes could be put in place—as many of us have mentioned tonight—as we wait on the review that is currently under way to conclude and report. If there are quick fixes that everyone can get behind, we should absolutely implement those.

I will end on that point, because we are here to remember babies who have been lost and the families who have lost them, but we are also here to ensure that the supports that we give families in the future are supports that will hold strong and that we can all get behind as a Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): In order to accommodate the final two speakers, I am minded to accept a motion without notice, under rule 8.14.3, to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes. I invite Patricia Gibson to move such a motion.

Motion moved,

That, under rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Patricia Gibson*]

Motion agreed to.

18:36

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Like others, I am privileged to speak in tonight's debate. I thank Patricia Gibson for bringing the debate to the chamber, and for the manner in which she did so. Her speech was probably the most moving speech that I have heard in this session. I wanted to put that on the record.

Like David Linden, I am not sure how much to share personally. I found myself agreeing with the sentiment of his speech a lot. As colleagues know, I have three children. However, before each of the children were born, my now wife and I experienced losses. Each experience was different in terms of the interactions with medical professionals, as well as the experience itself. However, what I will say is that, in my experience, and as most colleagues—I was going to say most women, but

it is probably most colleagues—in the room will understand, mum carried most of the burden. I think that that is the case across the country and across the world. Women continue to carry the burden, the stigma and the shame that still exist, although we are getting much better.

The support that is there is limited and it is not fully focused on a mum's needs. Meghan Gallacher and others touched on that. Baby loss can occur in various ways: for example, at a routine check-up or through an ectopic pregnancy. Various different types of support are needed, and we should be doing a lot better in that area. I wanted to make those remarks to start off.

Like others, I want to praise all the organisations that are involved. Today I met Joanne, who is from Airdrie, outside the Parliament. I think that she might be in the public gallery. I missed the photo call, but I met her as it was finishing and we had a wee chat. She works for Sands, which is a charity that does an absolutely fantastic job. I thank it for all that it does for parliamentarians in raising awareness of the issue, as well as for the work that it does across Scotland. I also want to thank Joanne. As I said, she is from Airdrie, which is nearly Coatbridge and Chryston; she is almost a constituent.

As Steven Bonnar and David Linden have already done, I also want to pay tribute to Baby Loss Retreat. I have known Julie and Bryan Morrison since about 2016, when they first contacted me. Like David, I consider them friends. The work that they have done through the charity has been absolutely phenomenal. The work that they do to keep Erin's name out there is wonderful, whether through the retreat itself, Erin's app, which has been mentioned, the men's counselling, which Bryan runs, or the advocacy and policy change work in conjunction with Sands and others. It is just fantastic. I know that the minister is due to meet Baby Loss Retreat. The meeting was meant to happen today. However, because of other parliamentary business, it has been moved. We are looking forward to having that meeting. Julie and Bryan are my constituents. I hope that that alleviates David Linden's concern: they will get to meet the minister soon.

Progress has been made, as members have talked about.

I feel sorry for the minister, because, obviously, we are all standing up on what is an emotionally charged subject and—rightly—asking for various things to be changed. However, given my experience of knowing the minister for 10 years—we were elected at the same time—I do not think that there is a better one for this, because Maree Todd cares deeply about women and children, and she is the right person to take the issue forward. I hope that she can take that away as well as all the asks that she has been given today.

Obviously, we are making progress. There has been the memorial book and certification, which was mentioned by David Linden. The point that he made about where people are domiciled was a good one. I had not been aware of it, and I hope that it can be taken up as well.

Memorial gardens are popping up in different council areas. For example, Julie and Bryan Morrison have done quite a lot of work in North Lanarkshire to make sure that memorial gardens come up in various cemeteries. Those are becoming more apparent now as we break down the stigma.

However, more must be done. I do not think it acceptable, in this day and age, as we hear all the time from constituents, that mothers and families who have lost a child are in the same ward or hall—or whatever people want to call it—in which children are being born. That is not the fault of any nursing staff or hospital. We could never blame it on them. It is just the way that the system is. However, surely we can fix that, because it just seems really cruel. It gets mentioned a lot. As I said, it is not the fault of any individual, and I hope that we can all come together to find a solution.

The theme of the week is, "Together, we care." That has been shown in the Parliament tonight.

18:41

Paul McLennan (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP): I am grateful to Patricia Gibson for the members' debate tonight and for her motion marking baby loss awareness week 2026. I am truly humbled to speak in the debate. As we have heard from various members, the week comes under the theme, "Together, we care." As Meghan Gallacher touched on, we are seeing the Parliament at its best tonight, because we do all care, and it is wonderful to experience the debate.

The reminder is simple but powerful: no one should face alone the devastation of pregnancy loss or baby loss. We have heard the numbers: 318 baby deaths in 2024, including 159 stillbirths. Research tells us that half of adults have been touched by the loss of a pregnancy or baby, either personally or through someone that they know. Behind every number is a family whose lives have been changed forever. Parents, grandparents, siblings and friends carry a grief that is too often silent and still too little understood. It is not an abstract issue. It is about quiet conversations in general practice surgeries, empty nursery rooms and anniversaries that are marked in private.

I have been humbled and privileged to work with the Scottish baby loss collaborative—Held In Our Hearts, Sands, Simba, Miscarriage UK, Antenatal Results & Choices Scotland, Baby Loss Retreat and the Lullaby Trust—which we hosted in the Parliament last year. I remember—and have heard about from Miles Briggs and Meghan Gallacher—Held in our Hearts. I was privileged to meet its representatives about four years ago. They had contacted me. I still remember that visit. It stays with me and will do so for the rest of my life. Both are here today, and I am humbled to have them as friends as well. Their message is clear and consistent: every family in Scotland deserves timely, compassionate, specialist support, wherever they live.

I have been humbled to meet families who have suffered baby loss. Tonight and this week, their experiences should be at the forefront of our thoughts. Just last year, we had a round table on the issue. I met a family—a mum and dad—who had lost their daughter at three years old. They left the hospital and their aftercare support was being given a leaflet. I remember how that felt to them. That stays with me. The mums and dads need our support.

Support across Scotland varies. The hospital to home model should be adopted across Scotland. I thank the minister for meeting Held In Our Hearts with me just last month. It was a fantastic visit. I agree with Fulton MacGregor that we could not ask for a more caring minister.

Another important point that Fulton MacGregor made was about dedicated spaces away from busy maternity wards. Consistent bereavement pathways are important. Psychological care should be available when it is needed, not just when baby loss happens but for the months and years after that. There should also be opportunities for families to acknowledge and remember their babies. Those are not optional extras but the basics of a caring society.

I pay tribute to the charities, the specialist midwives, the bereavement support workers and the countless volunteers who work alongside the families in their darkest hours.

This week is about awareness, but it must also be about action. Let us use this debate to reaffirm our collective commitment to listen better, to support better, and to ensure that no parent in Scotland feels isolated in their grief.

18:45

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs (Maree Todd): I am grateful for the opportunity to close this important debate.

I thank Patricia Gibson for bringing this motion before Parliament to mark baby loss awareness week. I absolutely agree that her contribution was powerful and moving, and I will respond to her specific asks in the course of my closing speech. I hope that the Presiding Officer will indulge me, as there have been a number of asks.

I also thank all the members who have contributed this afternoon, particularly those who have shared personal experiences of pregnancy or baby loss, or the experiences of their constituents. Those contributions help to break down the stigma, challenge the silence, and ensure that families who are affected by pregnancy and baby loss know that they are not alone.

Baby loss awareness week provides an important opportunity for reflection, remembrance and awareness. This year's theme, Together, we care", reminds us that supporting those affected by pregnancy and baby loss is a shared responsibility. It involves healthcare professionals, but it also involves employers, communities, charities and wider society.

Throughout the debate, members have highlighted the profound impact that pregnancy and baby loss have on families. Although every experience is different, the need for compassionate and person-centred care remains constant. Members have rightly highlighted the vital role that is played by charities and third sector organisations. Organisations such as Sands, Held In Our Hearts, Bliss, Tommy's and many others provide practical and emotional support, advocate for change, and ensure that lived experience informs improvements in care. The Scottish Government recognises that contribution, and continues to fund organisations that provide bereavement support, counselling, peer support, neonatal family support, and support for implementation of the national bereavement care pathway across Scotland.

The national bereavement care pathway remains central to our approach. It was developed with bereaved parents, healthcare professionals and third sector organisations, and it sets out standards for care following miscarriage, stillbirth, neonatal death and other forms of pregnancy and baby loss. All NHS boards are signed up to the pathway and continue to progress implementation, and we continue to fund the baby loss charity, Sands, to support all 14 boards in that implementation. As I said, all 14 boards are officially signed up to the NBCP. They have all appointed a lead, and they are at different stages of implementation.

I had a wonderful visit to Held In Our Hearts recently with Paul McLennan. It was really

powerful and humbling to hear directly from the people involved in that charity about the work that they do and the difference that they make. In addition to the £245,000 in funding that we already provide for the continued support of that project, we have been absolutely clear that we would consider further match funding where NHS boards commit to implementing the service in their areas. That would help to ensure that more bereaved families can access the support that they need. If one thing becomes simpler through the public service reform that we are progressing, I hope that it is that process. It is about ensuring that things happen once for Scotland, and that would be a great win for us.

Members have also spoken about miscarriage care. Scotland's delivery framework for miscarriage care and national progesterone pathway are helping to deliver more consistent and compassionate care. We continue to support implementation across NHS boards, backed by £3 million of Scottish Government funding over the past two years.

David Linden, and others, mentioned the action that we have taken to recognise pregnancy loss before 24 weeks through Scotland's memorial book and certificate, giving families an opportunity to acknowledge their baby and create a lasting record of their loss. I am ashamed to say that I was not aware of the issue that David raised. I am absolutely more than happy to commit to resolving that cross-border issue, and I will keep him updated on progress.

We know that support does not end when a family leaves hospital. Pregnancy and baby loss can affect mental wellbeing, relationships and family life for years afterwards. That is why ongoing support is so important. Families want assurance that we will continue to improve care for women and babies, and do everything that is possible to prevent baby loss. That includes acting on the best evidence available, ensuring that mothers and babies receive the right care at the right time, funding the Scottish patient safety programme's work to reduce stillbirth and neonatal death, and participating in UK audits that identify opportunities to improve care.

When things go wrong, parents deserve compassionate support and clear answers. Healthcare Improvement Scotland's maternity standards, which were published in March, include standard 11 on loss and bereavement, setting out the care that women should expect following pregnancy or baby loss. Since September, maternity units are being inspected against those standards. Healthcare Improvement Scotland is also reviewing its approach to adverse events to ensure that investigations remain robust and supportive for families.

Finally, I highlight the review of maternity services, which was raised by a number of members around the chamber, including Ms Gibson. The review began on 5 October 2026—just last Monday—and is chaired by Professor McCourt. Work and engagement with families and clinicians will be central as the review considers further improvement to maternity and neonatal services. On ensuring that the review extends to all health boards and learns from good practice, I can confirm that Professor McCourt has outlined that she will meet all health boards as part of her review. She will also do intensive week-long deep dives to visit a smaller number of health boards.

On taking account of the failings of the past, Professor McCourt absolutely appreciates how essential it is to listen to women and families throughout Scotland to ensure that their experiences are at the heart of the review. She has already begun meeting families who have contacted her.

Meghan Gallacher: I thank the minister for answering many of the concerns that have been raised by members this evening. I have not yet heard anything on neonatal beds. I understand that the minister is trying to address many issues in a short period, but I believe that there was meant to be an update on data issued in autumn 2026 on on-site accommodation and provisions for partners and siblings. Is that data coming soon, and can the minister share that with members who are interested?

Maree Todd: On the specific point, as the member knows, all neonatal units in Scotland can provide overnight accommodation for families when needed, but we recognise that in some areas there is pressure on that accommodation. We need to respond to that. I am more than happy to pick up that issue with the member outside the chamber—I know that that issue is of long-standing interest to her. I expect us to work together to continue to deliver on that.

On the independence of reviews, as Ms Gibson said, we do not want boards marking their own homework. We have published the "Maternity and neonatal (perinatal) adverse event review process for Scotland", which sets out clearly our expectations for the review of adverse events, including involving external panel members in reviews. All NHS boards are expected to follow that process in full in maternity and neonatal services, and we monitor that through ongoing activity with NHS boards. Additionally, the Scottish Government is undertaking work jointly with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service's Scottish fatalities investigation unit to improve the quality and timeliness of significant adverse event reviews in health boards.

On ensuring that standards and protocols are adhered to and, if not, accountability is pursued, we published our maternity standards in March this year. Those set out our expectations about standards of maternity care, including bereavement care. HIS is continuing inspections of maternity units; that will include, from now onwards, inspection of boards against the maternity standards. However, we recognise that there are multiple demands and pressures on our maternity services. That is why we have initiated the independent review, which will learn from past experiences and practice—both poor and positive—to make recommendations.

On Ms Gibson's ask in relation to consistent data collection on adverse events, I absolutely agree that that is really important. Our perinatal adverse event guidance sets out when boards should carry out a perinatal significant adverse event review, and boards should consistently report all category 1 SAERs to Healthcare Improvement Scotland. This time last year, the former cabinet secretary wrote to every health board chief executive in Scotland to make clear his expectation that all boards work with Healthcare Improvement Scotland to improve the timeliness and quality of significant adverse event review investigations and reporting, and that they provide regular reporting to HIS in order to strengthen the oversight and scrutiny of such reviews.

Today's debate has demonstrated the progress that has been made and the challenges that remain. The Scottish Government remains committed to improving care, reducing inequalities and ensuring that everyone affected by pregnancy or baby loss receives compassionate and person-centred support.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): Every member who has spoken has made an important contribution, and I appreciate the minister's remarks. I emphasise that, as I am sure she is aware, there are some difficulties with outcome rates among ethnic minority women, so it is important that firm measures in that regard are put in place in relation to any of our reviews and standards.

Maree Todd: I absolutely agree. That is an important point, which will be covered by the independent maternity review. We have asked the chair to look specifically at outcomes for black and minority ethnic groups, including the indigenous Gypsy Traveller community, because we know that their outcomes are significantly worse than those for the rest of the population.

As we mark baby loss awareness week, we remember the babies whose lives were sadly cut short and recognise the pain that is carried by parents, siblings, grandparents and wider families, as we have heard during the debate. On 15 October, families around the world will participate in the wave of light, and the Scottish Government will once again illuminate its buildings as a symbol of remembrance and solidarity with bereaved families.

I close by thanking our NHS staff, our charities, our volunteers and campaigners and, most important, those with lived experience who continue to share their stories and drive change. Together, we care; together, we remember; and, together, we will continue to strive to ensure that no family experiences pregnancy or baby loss without the compassion, dignity and support that they deserve.

Meeting closed at 18:57.

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