The rest of this Official Report will be published progressively as soon as the text is available.

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 5 November 2026

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

General Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): Good afternoon, colleagues. The first item of business is general question time.

Energy Infrastructure (Planning)

1. **Duncan Dunlop (South Scotland) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the strategic spatial energy plan and whether it has any plans to set out where new energy infrastructure should be built in Scotland. (S7O-00449)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy (Stephen Gethins): We regularly engage, and we have been clear that the plan must reflect Scotland's full renewable energy potential, including Scotland's full offshore wind pipeline. The UK Government must act quickly by backing Scotland's renewable energy industry through delivery of the SSEP as soon as possible in order to provide certainty and to secure jobs, investment and economic growth across the country.

The Presiding Officer: I call, er, Duncan Dunlop.

Duncan Dunlop: Thank you for remembering me, Presiding Officer.

The Scottish Government has the devolved powers to give clearer guidance on planning applications for wind farms. It can set out where they should be built, how many can be built in any given area and what proper community benefits developers must pay. If the Government does not do that, we risk turning more people, such as my constituents in Tweedsmuir and Stow, who are naturally pro-renewable energy, against new projects. Will the minister inform my constituents when the Scottish Government will use its devolved planning powers to issue clear guidance and end the current free-for-all, developer-led approach?

Stephen Gethins: I thank Duncan Dunlop for raising the issue on behalf of his constituents. The SSEP is now with the UK Government and is a matter for it. More broadly, I am always keen that we engage with communities on such projects and make sure that we take them with us, including on community benefit. I am happy to discuss that with him further.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): When building new energy infrastructure in Scotland is in conflict with reducing energy bills, which is the Scottish Government's priority: the infrastructure or lower energy bills?

Stephen Gethins: I am not sure that those things are always mutually exclusive if we get them right. It is about getting the infrastructure right and getting the energy. We have huge potential that is delivering jobs across Scotland, including in the north-east. I know that Liam Kerr is supportive and mindful of that. I share concerns with him about the infrastructure, and I am not sure that giving people £200 off their bills when their bills are skyrocketing, as we saw from the UK Government, is quite the way to do things.

As I said, the two are not mutually exclusive. We need to make sure that new energy delivers for communities across the country, including in the areas that Liam Kerr and I represent.

Bonfire Night (Public Safety)

2. **Colm Merrick (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken to address public safety concerns regarding this year's bonfire night, particularly in relation to the work of operations amberlight and moonbeam. (S7O-00450)

The Minister for Victims and Community Safety (Kirsten Oswald): There is a comprehensive, police-led, multi-agency approach in place for this year's bonfire night period. I was pleased to join partners at the launch of operation moonbeam to reaffirm our shared commitment that the period around bonfire night is safe for communities. We continue to be briefed by Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and we have been assured about the level of preparation that has been put in place.

This year, a rare combination of events is taking place on 5 November, contributing to the need to ask for mutual aid, so that Police Scotland has enough resources and capability to police the Celtic versus Beşiktaş UEFA Europa league match and possible protest activity.

Through the provision of guidance and finance, we have supported local authorities to exercise their powers to designate firework control zones. A number of such zones are in place in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Colm Merrick: I encourage everyone to act safely and responsibly tonight. In my constituency, there is particular concern about the use of fireworks outwith bonfire night, and I thank the local community council for High Knightswood and Anniesland for its continued efforts in highlighting residents' concerns. Will the minister say what the local community can do and whether the Government is considering further efforts to address people's concerns, such as through further restrictions on sales or supporting calls for reduced statutory noise limits for fireworks?

Kirsten Oswald: I am grateful for Colm Merrick's interest in this area. We have provided local authorities with powers to designate firework control zones, which ban the use of fireworks in specific areas. Their designation is a local decision, and local authorities are accountable for their introduction and use. I understand that Glasgow City Council is encouraging communities that are interested in pursuing a zone to begin early engagement ahead of the next application window opening.

We have also introduced other measures, including a ban on buying fireworks for, or providing fireworks to, under-18s, and making attacks on emergency workers using fireworks an aggravating factor that courts can take into account when sentencing offenders.

In response to the United Kingdom Government's recent consultation on fireworks, we supported a reduction in the maximum noise levels for consumer fireworks, recognising the distress and disruption that loud fireworks can cause. If Colm Merrick's constituents, or anyone else, witness fireworks misuse or antisocial behaviour, I encourage them to contact Police Scotland or Crimestoppers

Holly Bruce (Glasgow Southside) (Green): My Glasgow Southside constituency is home to one of the largest firework control zones in Scotland, covering Pollokshields and Govanhill. Residents welcome that, but many say that it does not tackle the root of the problem. A more comprehensive step would be to restrict the public sale of fireworks, as has been indicated. When will the Government implement the licensing powers that it introduced as part of the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022?

Kirsten Oswald: I am grateful to Holly Bruce for raising the experience of her constituents. I reflect on what one of her constituents said about firework control zones on Radio Scotland this morning. They said that, since the zones have come into place, their experience has been like night and day when compared with the previous challenging experiences. Therefore, I understand her focus on this area, and it is also an area of focus for the Government.

We continue to look at the 2022 act's provisions, the majority of which have been introduced, and we continue to examine the potential for further provisions. I welcome the fact that communities are able to engage on the issue so that the system can work effectively for them.

Patricia Gibson (Cunninghame South) (SNP): The Scottish Government has done a lot of good work in this area, some of which the minister has outlined. Does she agree that, until the Scottish Parliament has all the devolved powers to ban the sale of fireworks except for specially licensed community events, we cannot truly tackle the roots of the challenges, the social costs and the disruption that we always see in our communities at this time of year and beyond?

Kirsten Oswald: Patricia Gibson is correct that we do not have the power to ban fireworks entirely. We have done and continue to do significant good work, and a lot of that is built on important partnerships with the emergency services. I put on the record that the emergency services do exceptional work, and they have been planning for this evening for many months. They and everybody else should be able to enjoy bonfire night without any antisocial behaviour and without any of the challenges that Patricia Gibson outlined.

I absolutely encourage people to think about their behaviour and, if they have any concerns, to report them.

Voluntary Sector (Collaborative Working)

3. **Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what support it is giving to the voluntary sector to promote collaborative working with the public sector. (S7O-00451)

The Minister for Equalities and International Development (Simita Kumar): Collaboration between the public sector and the third sector is more important than ever, as Scotland faces increasingly complex social and economic challenges. Partnership working is central to the public service reform strategy, and we are committed to strengthening how we work together to improve outcomes for people and communities.

We are committed to developing a new third sector partnership agreement, and a steering group has begun to co-design the shared vision. Collaboration is also at the heart of the new whole family support third sector delivery fund, enabling more joined-up, locally tailored support for families across Scotland.

Jenni Minto: I have been truly inspired by the incredible work of POP Shop Enterprises, a community interest company in my constituency, which runs Dunoon's rhubarb revolution and supports enterprising women and social entrepreneurs. However, real challenges exist for such groups and organisations due to the lack of parity of funding between the third sector and the public sector. How can the Scottish Government ensure that the situation improves?

Simita Kumar: From Jenni Minto's description, POP Shop Enterprises sounds fantastic.

The Scottish Government recognises and greatly appreciates the third sector's essential role in providing person-centred support to our communities. We have heard from the sector that the current system is not sustainable. As the demand for services increases, so do the financial pressures.

We recognise that the Government has a shared responsibility with the sector and other third sector funders to make changes to the current system in order to support the sector's ability to thrive.

Julie MacDougall (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform): The minister mentioned some of the work that is going on with third sector organisations and how much their role has changed over the years, as they have increasingly taken a primary role in delivering key services across councils. Will the minister confirm whether a cohesive third sector strategy will be embodied in the up-and-coming local government reforms?

Simita Kumar: We are working in collaboration and partnership with all our partners. Any public sector reform provides an opportunity to work with our third sector services. As Julie MacDougall rightly said, they are providing more services, so we need to take a cohesive approach.

Cara McKee (West Scotland) (Green): On Tuesday, in the chamber, we heard about the amazing work that is being done in the hospice sector across Scotland. Given the increasing need for hospice care, how will the Scottish Government ensure that the valuable expertise across Scotland is recognised and championed during public service reform?

Simita Kumar: That goes back to my answer to Ms MacDougall. The third sector, including those who provide fantastic hospice care, is part of the fabric of Scotland. I see PSR as an opportunity to ensure that those partners are equal partners in our discussions.

Rent Increases (Landlords)

4. **Holly Bruce (Glasgow Southside) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government how it proposes to hold mid-market rent landlords to account for how they implement rent increases, including where the developments concerned have received Scottish Government funding for their construction. (S7O-00452)

The Minister for Equalities and International Development (Simita Kumar): If mid-market rent homes have been supported through Scottish Government funding, landlords must comply with contractual conditions governing rent levels. Should any concerns arise regarding compliance with those requirements, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing's officials will engage with the landlord concerned to establish the relevant facts and, when necessary, will work with them to ensure that the matter is addressed appropriately.

I expect landlords to consider affordability when implementing any mid-market rent increases, and I encourage anyone who has concerns about a proposed increase to make an application to rent service Scotland.

Holly Bruce: I thank the minister for that, but I rebut her answer. What is the meaning of "affordability"? In my constituency, members of the C~urb tenants group have been forced to band together to try to protect themselves from rent hikes, which put immense pressure on older people and families. They are scared about their future and how they will be able to feed and clothe their kids.

In light of the homelessness financial pressure in Glasgow, does the minister agree that it is vital to keep people secure in their homes and that mid-market landlords risk pushing more people into homelessness with irresponsible rent increases?

Simita Kumar: I absolutely understand what Holly Bruce has said about the responsibility of landlords. She will know that the issue does not sit in my portfolio, but I hear her concerns. I can take those concerns to the cabinet secretary and officials before corresponding with her accordingly.

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): Of course landlords must be mindful of the affordability crisis. I am concerned—and I urge caution from the minister on the matter—about the fact that we spent a lot of time during consideration of the Housing (Scotland) Bill in the previous session of Parliament trying to incentivise investment. We are in the middle of a housing emergency and there is no point in someone having control of their rent if they do not have a home at all, as is the case far too often.

I urge the Government to act cautiously, to treat landlords with respect while ensuring that they comply with contracts, and to incentivise the building of more houses, because—for goodness' sake—we need to get out of this housing emergency.

Simita Kumar: I absolutely understand where Mr Rennie is coming from in relation to being cautious and our reliance on landlords. We must take the partnership approach that I spoke about. I will relay what he has said back to the cabinet secretary, so I thank him for his supplementary question.

Moray FLOW-Park Project

5. **Tim Eagle (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its position on the proposed Moray FLOW-Park development. (S7O-00453)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy (Stephen Gethins): In August this year, Offshore Solutions Group, the developer of Moray FLOW-Park, requested a scoping opinion from the Scottish ministers to identify the environmental topics to be covered in its marine licence application supporting documents. Officials are working on that, and it will be issued shortly.

Tim Eagle: I am immensely proud of the campaigners who have worked tirelessly to show that the Moray FLOW-Park is not required in the area. They have told me that the exclusivity agreement with Crown Estate Scotland runs out in March 2027. Will the minister give a cast-iron assurance that he will ensure that Crown Estate Scotland properly and fully considers its environmental responsibilities if an extension is asked for after that date?

Stephen Gethins: That is an important issue for the member, and Laura Mitchell has raised it with me, too. Of course we want to ensure that anybody is mindful of their environmental obligations and of the visual impact, the impact on fisheries navigating and other issues. That needs to be addressed as part of the due process.

Audiology Services (Rural Areas)

6. **David Green (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to improve access to audiology services in rural Scotland. (S7O-00454)

The Minister for Community Care (Alison Thewliss): Our recent programme for government included a commitment to work with the national health service, the third sector and other stakeholders to deliver an audiology improvement plan that is focused on the creation and implementation of more community-based models of care. The plan covers governance, quality assurance and workforce pipelines, ensuring that we have a strong foundation in place from which we can deliver sustainable improvements to audiology services over the long term. That will enable us to deliver more accessible, consistent and patient-centred care, including for our rural communities.

David Green: Responses to recent freedom of information requests by Caithness Health Action Team have revealed that there are 946 Highland patients waiting on average 47 weeks for their first audiology appointment, and 632 patients waiting more than 40 weeks for hearing aids. Significant delays to audiology care have a profound impact on patients' ability to be independent and connect socially and to prevent cognitive decline.

What actions will the minister take to ensure that my constituents are seen within the 18-week treatment time guarantee? Will she confirm when the welcome expansion of RNID near you community services will reach the Highlands?

Alison Thewliss: I thank the member for his questions, and my sympathies are with everybody who has had to wait too long. We want to make improvements to audiology services, because the position just now is clearly not good enough. The sustained pressures that we are facing are not unique to Scotland, and many similar challenges are being faced in audiology services across the United Kingdom.

The Scottish Government is committed to bringing down those long waits. The 2026-27 budget provides a record £22.5 billion for health and social care, and we have underlined our commitment to improve audiology services by increasing the funding for those services by £1 million. I am happy to meet the member to discuss the RNID near you service and to look at what might be done to improve services in his area.

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I welcome the commitment that the Scottish National Party Government gave to meeting the audiology sector within the first 100 days to develop plans for future community audiology services. What was the outcome of those meetings and how will plans be enacted moving forward?

Alison Thewliss: The developments will include an audiology improvement plan with Public Services Delivery Scotland, which will include supporting NHS services to work towards a target operating model for audiology; the creation of a regular audiology stakeholder forum; work to strengthen the collection and publication of data on audiology; the roll-out of the RNID near you initiative, as signalled in our manifesto; and work to learn from some of the excellent practice that happens in audiology in Scotland, in particular in NHS Tayside, which I understand has a particularly good audiology service.

Irshad Ahmed (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab): In August, the Scottish Government announced a move to more local audiology services in rural areas to bring down backlogs. Have community clinics been identified to deliver the near you roll-out? When does the Government hope that those services will be operational nationally?

Alison Thewliss: The RNID near you service is excellent—I visited one such service fairly recently and was really impressed by what could be done with the support of volunteers in the community to help provide a very local response to audiology waits. Those volunteers can, for example, help to clean hearing aids and do small hearing tests; I was glad to have a test when I went to visit, so I can really see the benefit of that. I am happy to discuss further with the member where he thinks that that service would be useful in his region.

Scotland Together Fund

7. **Clare Haughey (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it anticipates that the £30 million Scotland together fund will open to applications. (S7O-00455)

The Minister for Equalities and International Development (Simita Kumar): As the First Minister said when he announced the Scotland together fund, it is vital that our communities are empowered to fight poverty and inequality and to tackle the blights of racism, division and hatred. That is why community organisations across Scotland will share £30 million over three years, enabling them to take forward projects that boost living standards and help our communities to become more cohesive, inclusive and resilient. Details of the application process for the fund will be confirmed soon.

Clare Haughey: Healthy n Happy is a long-established and well-respected community development trust that is based in Rutherglen in my constituency. Previously, it received around £300,000 in Scottish Government funding through the investing in communities fund. I hope that it will be one of the many organisations that benefit from the new Scotland together fund. Can the minister provide more details on the criteria for the scheme and whether it would welcome applications from organisations such as Healthy n Happy that work to address local inequality, health disparities and poverty?

Simita Kumar: The eligibility criteria are yet to be confirmed. We will determine them during the detailed design process, which is currently taking place.

I warmly congratulate Healthy n Happy on the significant difference that its work is making for the people of Cambuslang and Rutherglen. I strongly encourage it to apply to the fund, should it meet the criteria.

Police Officers (Non-crime Demand)

8. **Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports from the Scottish Police Federation that measures introduced to reduce non-crime demand on officers have had no impact on operational policing. (S7O-00456)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Neil Gray): Of course I recognise and understand the concerns raised by the Scottish Police Federation about the impact of mental health and vulnerability-related demand on front-line policing. I have heard directly from it in that regard.

The Scottish Government is clear that people experiencing a mental health crisis should receive the right support from the right service at the right time. That is why we have been working closely with Police Scotland, national health service partners and community and voluntary organisations to improve pathways of support and reduce unnecessary demands on police officers when a health-led response is more appropriate. Although there is more to do, that work has contributed to a reduction in mental health-related incidents recorded by Police Scotland over the past two years. Through our programme for government, we are continuing to expand access to mental health support, strengthen early intervention and improve partnership working to ensure that police officers can focus on their core public safety responsibilities.

Maggie Chapman: The Government has acknowledged that police should not be the default response to people in mental health distress. The framework for collaboration has been in place for nearly two years, yet people in crisis are still being left without appropriate support. Police officers are still picking up the pieces when other services are unavailable.

In September, the cabinet secretary discussed a cross-portfolio plan with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Care, which is intended to deliver demonstrable improvements. When will that plan be delivered? What concrete commitments will it contain to ensure that people experiencing mental health crises can access timely and appropriate support in their communities, including during out-of-hours periods, rather than having the police turn up at their door?

Neil Gray: I respect the question from Maggie Chapman, and I acknowledge her long-standing interest in this area. Ms Constance and I, along with our respective officials and partners, are in collaboration to deliver on all those areas.

The Government considers that progress is being made through a range of measures, including the enhanced mental health pathway, the expanded access to NHS 24 mental health services, clinical triage arrangements, improved transfer of care processes and the development of community-based alternatives to police attendance. The Scottish Government also continues to work with partners through the mental health unscheduled care network and has committed to expanding mental health triage cars and other crisis response services across Scotland.

Alongside that, on Tuesday, I gave evidence to the Criminal Justice Committee about the work that the Scottish Association for Mental Health is doing through the nook service and in other areas that will assist in ensuring that the core activity of the police is able to be led in just that way.

Gynaecology Services (Waiting Times)

9. **Monica Lennon (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how phase 2 of its women's health plan will address the impact of prolonged gynaecology waiting times on women's ability to work and their financial security, particularly for those whose symptoms leave them unable to work. (S7O-00457)

The Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol and Drugs (Maree Todd): I appreciate that waiting for gynaecology treatment can have a significant impact on women and that symptoms can stop them working and enjoying their lives. Our first priority is to further shorten waits, and an additional £17 million is available this year for that purpose. We have also provided more than £18 million to organisations such as citizens advice bureaux, which can help people who are experiencing financial difficulties to claim the payments and support for which they are eligible. In the longer term, we aim to transform gynaecology services so that women can get the treatment that they need more quickly, often without having to go to hospital.

Monica Lennon: I bring to the minister's attention my Glasgow constituent Alison, who is a teacher. Sadly, Alison experienced a miscarriage in April, had surgery and has ongoing issues. She is in a lot of pain, is unable to go to work and has had to pay £10,000 for private treatment. She is waiting to see a specialist gynaecologist, but has been told that the first appointment will not be before August 2027. She wants to work, but she cannot afford to pay for any more private treatment. What can the Government do now to help women such as Alison?

Maree Todd: I pass on my condolences to the member's constituent, because that sounds as though it is a very difficult situation. I am more than happy for the member to write to me with details, so that I can look into the case to ensure that it is being appropriately responded to by the health board. A number of workplace adjustments are available for employers to support people with chronic conditions to work, but I recognise the situation that the member is describing.

Katie Hagmann (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): I am pleased that the Scottish National Party Government is delivering a radical new phase of the women's health plan and, importantly, that it is backing it with investment of almost £17 million in gynaecology services. Can the minister elaborate on how those measures will support plans to transform services across the country, including in rural areas?

Maree Todd: We are seeing sustained improvements as a result of our investment to address the longest waits, which is helping to create more capacity within our wider healthcare system. The investment will continue in every year of this parliamentary session in order to shorten the time that women wait. We will also publish a vision for transformed gynaecology services in early 2027. As we redesign services, we will be working to reduce inequalities in access and outcomes, including for women and girls in rural and island areas. That will provide the basis for a national plan that will aim to ensure that women can get the care that they need in the right place and at the right time.

Public Procurement (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises)

10. **Colin Beattie (Midlothian North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with SMEs regarding the accessibility and effectiveness of public procurement processes. (S7O-00458)

The Minister for Public Finance (Hannah Mary Goodlad): We have a long-standing commitment to SME engagement, which is reflected in Scotland's procurement legislation and practices. The quarterly procurement supply group includes SME representatives and supports supplier engagement and influence on public procurement policy and practice. Alongside that, we have monthly engagement with the supplier development programme and regularly attend meet the buyer events to engage directly with SMEs where it matters. We also facilitate targeted SME engagement through round-table meetings.

Colin Beattie: I regularly hear from SMEs in Midlothian North that are keen to offer their services to the local authority, but fail. Can the minister advise what discussions she has had with local authorities to ensure that the procurement process is accessible for SMEs?

Hannah Mary Goodlad: Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting Midlothian Council, which is a member of the supplier development programme. We regularly engage with Scotland Excel, which is the centre of expertise for local authority procurement. The council also regularly engages with our stakeholder forums. Procurement is an important lever for unlocking business growth, economic growth and community wealth. I encourage all local authorities to ensure that they engage with the Scotland Excel programme.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes general questions. I apologise to members whose questions I was unable to take due to time pressures.

Remembrance Day 2026

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): Before we move to First Minister's questions , as remembrance day approaches, I know that members across the chamber will wish to join me in remembering those who have served and sacrificed and all those whose lives have been affected by conflict. I invite each party leader to make some remarks.

13:59

The First Minister (John Swinney): This remembrance Sunday, we will come together in solemn reflection to honour the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives to protect the freedoms that we enjoy today and which we hold dear. Their sacrifice should be the compass that guides us towards peace, today and always.

As we pay tribute to the memory of those who gave their lives in the two world wars and in other conflicts, we resolve to support those who are currently serving in our armed forces around the world. We resolve to care for the many veterans who have given us their service and, of course, we each commit to doing everything that we can to promote peace, democracy, respect and understanding across communities and across the world.

This remembrance Sunday, we remember with the utmost gratitude and respect not only the sacrifices of the past but the courage of members of our armed forces today.

We will remember them.

14:00

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): This weekend of muted coats and scarlet ceremony rightly calls the nation to give pause for the dark memory of the blood spilled and the mortal sacrifice of so many Scots in far-flung fields. They laid aside their daily bread of work and friends and their life's rest of family, that we might all feast.

The trumpets and ceremony are too little compensation for the sacrifice of those wives, husbands and children:

"The Flooers o the Forest are a' wede awa".

The politicians' commitment to our brothers and sisters under arms must be to show them care, to give respect for the damage that war has done to them and, for those lost, to honour their memory by searching for the surest common ground of peace.

14:01

Malcolm Offord (West Scotland) (Reform): Remembrance Sunday is indeed a solemn day for all of us in the United Kingdom. We all gather in our respective towns and cities to commemorate the fallen: those who gave their today for us to have our tomorrow.

We will also give thanks for those brave men and women who are serving in our armed forces right now, in these uncertain times. We thank them for their service, and we shall always remember the fallen.

14:02

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Green): On Sunday, we will remember all those whose lives have been cut short by the horrors of war. We will remember civilians killed by brutal militaries in the past and the present. We will remember the victims of genocide and those killed in the persecution of minorities. We will remember those brave men and women who gave their lives or sacrificed their youth defending the sacred values that we hold dear, of freedom and democracy.

14:02

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): In 1914, "For the Fallen" was first published. The poem was in honour of British forces killed in the early days of the first world war. Many more men and women have since laid down their lives to protect our country and our freedoms. The poem is now spoken at remembrance Sunday services across the United Kingdom.

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."

14:03

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh North Western) (LD): Every year, for 100 years and more, farmers ploughing fields around places such as Verdun, Passchendaele and Mons unearth shrapnel, barbed wire and other material of war. It is known as the iron harvest and it is a perennial reminder of the mechanised slaughter of the western front—of the fact that war can leave an indelible mark on people and places for many generations.

This Sunday, in Corstorphine and Kirkliston, I will join my communities in an act of remembrance that will be replicated the country over. We will give thanks to those who have fallen or who have been wounded in the service of this country and its ideals, and to those who are serving far away overseas, in harm's way today.

"At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."

The Presiding Officer: I thank all our party leaders for those remarks.

First Minister's Question Time

Party Leaders

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): The next item of business is First Minister's questions from party leaders. The first questions will be from Michael Marra, who has seven minutes for questions and answers.

Alexander Dennis Ltd (Furlough)

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): This morning, I read in the *Daily Record* that the decision not to pay furlough to workers at the Scottish bus manufacturer Alexander Dennis Ltd was signed off by the First Minister the day before the election. At that exact point, the leaflet that I am holding was being pushed through letterboxes in Falkirk East and Linlithgow, with the SNP pledging to protect local jobs at the bus manufacturer. Why were voters in Falkirk told that furlough at Alexander Dennis was possible before an election when ministers had already decided that it was not?

The First Minister (John Swinney): The rationale for the circumstances that Mr Marra narrated was that, in a pre-election period, the Government is restricted in what announcements it can make about particular policy questions. That is the explanation for the decision making and the timescales on the Alexander Dennis decision.

Michael Marra: I am afraid that that is of little comfort to the workers, and it might be the excuse that applies in relation to Monklands hospital as well.

I am afraid that, in the rationale that he is going to set out today and in the press from his Government, the First Minister is tying himself in knots. The simple reality is that the SNP did not buy enough Scottish buses. We have been here before. As mayor of Manchester, Andy Burnham did more to support Scottish bus manufacturing than the Scottish Government did.

Today, Scottish Labour will publish details released under freedom of information laws showing that the Scottish National Party rushed through its bus order scheme in order to announce it before the election campaign, realised that it had made a mess of it and then decided to cancel the furlough offer to workers the day before Scotland went to the polls. The First Minister must understand how that looks. He surely understands how breathtakingly cynical it makes people feel—especially the 115 workers who have lost their jobs and the further 164 who look set to possibly do so, too. There is a representative of the Alexander Dennis workforce in the public gallery today. What does the First Minister have to say to them?

The First Minister: The first thing that I will say is that the Scottish Government engaged constructively with Alexander Dennis to try to protect the employment at Alexander Dennis for a sustained period of time. We offered Alexander Dennis a furlough scheme that the Scottish Government has never offered to any other employer before, which was designed to ensure that there was support for Alexander Dennis, to enable it to overcome the difficulties and challenges that the company faced. The final decision on the furlough scheme came down to the fact that the company decided to opt for a model that it was not possible to support under the furlough scheme. The very clear explanation that has been given by the Government is that we cannot change the basis of a scheme once it has been offered.

In relation to support for Alexander Dennis, I say to Mr Marra that, since 2020, through the Scottish zero emission bus challenge fund—ScotZEB—that the Government has in place, and through its predecessor schemes, Alexander Dennis Ltd has received around 483 vehicle orders, or more than 40 per cent of its orders. That includes orders proposed in the successful bids to the most recent ScotZEB funding round.

I am afraid that the point that Mr Marra advanced—that the Government is not enabling the procurement of buses from Alexander Dennis—does not stand up to scrutiny, given the detail that I have put on the parliamentary record.

Michael Marra: The furlough scheme was dependent on the purchase of buses, and it was not enough. There were not enough buses bought by the Government to ensure that the scheme went ahead. That is where the Scottish Government always ends up. We have an industrial policy that exports Scottish jobs—buses built in China, wind turbines built in Denmark and ferries built in Turkey. The Government cannot even give Scottish kids an overpriced school bag without handing the contract to Chinese manufacturing.

Last week, the First Minister was asked seven times whether he supported Rosebank, which supports Scottish jobs, and he could not once bring himself to support it. If he does not support the projects that protect and deliver Scottish jobs, how on earth is he going to grow our economy?

The First Minister: To take one example of the schemes that Mr Marra is talking about, let us look at the ScotZEB scheme—a scheme for procuring buses. As part of that, the Government makes the funding available to organisations, because the Government does not buy buses and because we do not operate our bus network in that fashion. However, as Mr Marra will know, the Government is introducing legislation to change the way in which the bus network is controlled, and it will be interesting to see whether the Labour Party can find it within itself to support what the Government wants to do.

The ScotZEB scheme is governed by the Subsidy Control Act 2022, and that is the United Kingdom legislation under which the Government must operate. One helpful thing that I can say to Mr Marra is that, in my various constructive meetings with the Prime Minister on Friday, I encouraged the Prime Minister to revisit that legislation, because it is restrictive. It does not give us enough scope to invest in industries within our own country, and I wish the UK Government would change the legislation to enable us to do so.

Michael Marra: The core of the First Minister's argument is that he thinks he is not allowed to do any of that or to buy Scottish buses. I think that the First Minister is wrong about this Parliament's ability to protect and enhance Scottish jobs through procurement and public money.

The Government has been prepared—even willing—to go against legal advice time and again when it comes to policy and legislation, repeatedly ending up in court and racking up millions of pounds in legal fees in the process because the Scottish National Party judges that to be in its political interests. It has just never done it in the interests of Scottish workers. Why is that?

The First Minister: I have, quite simply, no idea what Mr Marra is talking about. The Government acts within the law. I point out to Parliament—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Let us hear the answer.

The First Minister: I point out to Parliament that the courts have just found in favour of the Government in a legal case that Jackie Baillie told me I should not pursue, and they have recognised that the Government was acting lawfully and in accordance with its obligations. I simply place that on the record to refute the accusation that has been made here.

I have set out to Parliament the priority that this Government attaches to economic growth. It is about investing in our economy, investing in our infrastructure and investing in the skills of our country. That is the economic strategy of the Government and that is what will deliver growth for the Scottish economy. We could, of course, do a great deal more if we had more financial powers and a greater ability to invest, but we are held back in that respect by the United Kingdom.

The Presiding Officer: Malcolm Offord now has seven minutes for questions and answers.

Scotland's Oil Sector

Malcolm Offord (West Scotland) (Reform): "It's Scotland's oil" was arguably the most successful political slogan before "Make America great again", and it was coined by Gordon Wilson. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me. Can we hear the question, please?

Malcolm Offord: I thought that that would get a reaction, Presiding Officer.

"It's Scotland's oil" was coined by Gordon Wilson, who used it in 1974 to power the Scottish National Party to 30 per cent of the Scottish vote, and it was turbocharged by Alex Salmond, who used it in 2014 to power the SNP to 45 per cent of the Scottish vote. Why has John Swinney's SNP given up on Scotland's oil?

The First Minister (John Swinney): Malcolm Offord demonstrates spectacularly every week how to put one's foot in it. His comments are allegedly designed to be funny, but, if he is ruling out being a comedian in his next life, he will have to think of somewhere else to go once the man to his right takes over from him, very soon.

The Government has set out our view of the oil and gas sector, which is that, because we will be using oil and gas for years to come, there is a rational basis for considering oil and gas developments within our own jurisdiction if those will deliver lower carbon emissions than imported oil and gas from other jurisdictions. That is the Government's position on oil and gas.

Malcolm Offord: The SNP Government's position on that changes almost daily. In the meantime, we had some pretty important news yesterday from Westminster, where the Labour Government has introduced an energy independence bill that would bring a statutory end to any new North Sea oil and gas licences.

This is a seismic moment for the United Kingdom economy. It sounds a death knell for Aberdeen and means that Scotland cannot re-industrialise and create wealth for all Scots. Why has John Swinney's SNP given up on Aberdeen and Scotland?

The First Minister: The Energy Independence Bill, which the United Kingdom Government has introduced, brings together a number of measures that the Scottish Government supports, but we do not support the bill's provisions in relation to the position on the granting of new licences for the exploration of new oil and gas fields, for the simple reason that I have given to Malcolm Offord—which I gave to Michael Marra in my answers last week—that any applications need to be considered in relation to their impact on our carbon reduction targets, given that we will be using oil and gas for some years to come.

When it comes to the question of the north-east of Scotland's economy and the reindustrialisation of that area, I have a number of points to make. First, I would like renewable energy developments in the North Sea sector to be delivered at greater pace. Those developments are there to be undertaken, because we have given the consents, but they are being slowed up by the United Kingdom authorities' lack of progress on grid connections.

Secondly, when it comes to the development of carbon capture and storage, project Acorn was plunged into uncertainty by the contents of the UK Government's budget last week. As a result of decisions by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, £200 million of grant funding has been made very uncertain.

We will take an approach that is designed to lead to investment in the Scottish economy, to ensure that the renewable energy wealth of our country can be capitalised and, crucially, used to the maximum advantage of the people of Scotland by lowering the sky-high energy bills that are delivered in an energy-rich Scotland by the UK Government.

Malcolm Offord: I am delighted to hear the First Minister do yet another U-turn on his position—so much for the presumption against new oil and gas licences. I am delighted to hear that.

Let me comment on renewables. Renewables involve the biggest transfer of money from poor people to rich people since Robin Hood. Two thirds of people's energy bills are the result of net stupid zero subsidies and tariffs. Meanwhile, the country is covered in wind turbines, not a single blade of which is made in Scotland. Renewables will never give us secure, reliable and affordable energy like North Sea gas.

Let us talk about what is happening in day-to-day Scotland. Today, 900,000 Scots of working age are not working. That is a tragedy for them, their families and their communities. I walk up and down the high streets of towns across our country, and I see the same neglect and decline in Greenock, Kirkcaldy, Kilmarnock, Paisley and Ayr—once-proud towns that made world-class goods and exported them around the world.

It is time to reindustrialise our country, to re-energise our country, to get our people back to work and to make them loud and proud again. We cannot do that when we have the most expensive energy in the western world. We are floating on a sea of affordable and secure oil and gas. It is madness to shut down the North Sea.

I again ask the First Minister why he has not fought tooth and nail to keep the North Sea open. It's Scotland's oil. Why has John Swinney abandoned Scotland's oil?

The First Minister: Next year, Scotland's energy will generate more than £2 billion in extra tax revenues for the United Kingdom at the same time as the UK Government is cutting Scotland's budget by £650 million. That is the reality of the United Kingdom that Mr Offord consistently argues for in this chamber. [*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me. Let us hear the First Minister.

The First Minister: The United Kingdom is doing something that it has done consistently for the past 50 years, which is taking the energy wealth of Scotland and ensuring that it is not used for the benefit of the people of Scotland.

The choice that my party offers people in Scotland is the ability to take advantage of the investment and the opportunities of Scotland's energy wealth. Our enormous renewable energy potential will, in the years to come, deliver us clean green energy, but that resource cannot just now be invested to lower the energy bills of people in Scotland. That can come only when Scotland's energy is in Scotland's hands—with independence.

The Presiding Officer: Gillian Mackay has six minutes for questions and answers.

Data Centres

Gillian Mackay (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green): Today we learned that a senior civil servant has warned the Scottish Government about the risks of data centres, including rising energy bills for locals. We know that the Scottish Government has been lobbied by artificial intelligence firms and that it is refusing to carry out a public consultation on its new guidance.

The Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education has dismissed people who are sceptical about big tech firms' AI promises. He said that they would have called the light bulb a "dangerous anti-candle device" when it was invented. Is that how the First Minister views those campaigners who are worried about hyperscale data centres?

The First Minister (John Swinney): I believe that we should engage constructively with members of the public at all times and listen to their views. The Government has to take a considered view of all the views that it hears on a range of different topics and then set out the policy position that it will pursue, which is exactly what the Scottish Government will do on this occasion.

Gillian Mackay: This week the First Minister's Government has removed the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment from its upcoming Scottish human rights bill. That is despite more than 100 civil society organisations, including the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland, Action on Smoking and Health Scotland and Asthma + Lung UK, urging it to support that right. It is not some abstract concept: it offers people protection from pollution and toxic chemicals, and it could help them to protect their communities from harmful developments, such as hyperscale data centres. It means people being legally guaranteed clean air and pure water. Why does the First Minister's Government not think that Scots should have a legal right to clean air?

The First Minister: As Gillian Mackay will know from the various legislative instruments that have been put in place by the Government and its policy programme, we have a commitment to reach net zero and to improve the public health and the natural environment of our country.

The issue that we have wrestled with in relation to the human rights bill is that the proposed legislation that is put to Parliament must be clear, coherent and effective in practice. The issue in relation to the specific measures that Gillian Mackay raises is that the right to a healthy environment is not yet grounded in an

international treaty or well-established body of interpretative guidance, unlike the other rights that are proposed for incorporation in the bill. The challenge is that we might jeopardise the strength of the legislation by legislating in a way that does not have a satisfactory basis of interpretation for our courts to judge on it. The Government is concerned that that would delay the implementation of the human rights bill.

This is an important issue, and I appreciate the strength of feeling about it. I have responded today to a letter from a number of organisations that have written to me about the issue. It is not that there is a lack of will on the Government's part; we fear that, in the absence of such a body of interpretative guidance, there is a vulnerability that the legislation that we pass in this Parliament may not be able to be implemented effectively or to deliver the rights and protections that the Government wants to see in place.

If members are sceptical about what I am saying, I would simply cite my experience. I was the legislating minister on the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law. I took a maximalist position on the implementation of that legislation, which was supported unanimously by the Parliament. The Government lost its case in the Supreme Court when we were challenged by the United Kingdom Government.

I do not say that any of those things to be difficult; I say them to set out the legislative realities that the Government must consider when we are proposing legislation to Parliament.

Gillian Mackay: I appreciate that and the things that must be balanced by the First Minister, but he claims that his Government is a world leader in so many places. This is one of those places where we could be bold and a world leader and establish what it means to have that right.

In the upcoming budget the Scottish Government has a real chance to make up for some of the climate-damaging decisions that it has made recently. If it sets a high rate for the incoming private jet tax, it could raise tens of millions of pounds. Looking ahead, a frequent flyer levy could bring in £50 million. Measures such as those, which make wealthy polluters pay, could be used to make rail travel cheaper, perhaps through a millennial railcard, as proposed by the Scottish Greens. Will the First Minister commit to making wealthy polluters pay their fair share?

The First Minister: The Government is engaging with political parties and stakeholders on the contents of our budget, and the issues that Gillian Mackay raises will be considered as part of that process of dialogue. The Deputy First Minister is leading that work for the Government and she will set out the budget to Parliament in early December. We have taken a wide variety of actions to put into practical effect the measures to protect our natural environment. That is one of the central commitments of the Government, and we will consider the issues that Gillian Mackay raises as part of that process.

The Presiding Officer: You can ask a final brief question, Ms Mackay.

Gillian Mackay: We have seen from Hungary, Serbia, Brazil and, this week, the United States that, when politicians tackle big polluters, stand with communities rather than dodgy tycoons and give them hope for a fairer future, we can defeat the far right. The US has its first Muslim senator in Abdul El-Sayed from Michigan and its first black woman governor in Georgia's Keisha Lance Bottoms, tapping into the power of the country's diverse communities.

The Presiding Officer: Will you ask a brief question, please?

Gillian Mackay: Will the First Minister join the Scottish Greens in condemning those who would stir division and those who would deny the rights of Scotland's diverse communities to live in the way that they want to, even trying to police what women wear?

The First Minister: I am absolutely happy to associate myself with Gillian Mackay's comments. I have championed diversity in our society. One of the hallmarks of my Government's programme is the determination to create cohesion in our communities and to stand up to the divisive forces of the far right. I will give every ounce of political leadership that I can to protect Scotland from the scourge of racism and division. We heard a whole barrel load of it in Parliament yesterday afternoon in the debate that was led by Reform. I am delighted that this Parliament has expressed with such strength and solidarity its revulsion at the invitation to support the hard right. I will always stand up to the far right in this Parliament and in this country.

The Presiding Officer: Russell Findlay has five minutes for questions and answers.

Rosebank Oil and Gas Field

Russell Findlay (West Scotland) (Con): Last week, I gave John Swinney five chances to back the Rosebank oil field, but he refused to give a clear yes or no answer. One of his MSPs has since told me that the SNP does back Rosebank. Does John Swinney agree with his former adviser Jack Middleton?

The First Minister (John Swinney): I set out the Government's position in my answer to Malcolm Offord. We accept that there is a necessity for us to continue to use oil and gas resources for some time to come. The decision making that has to be undertaken, which is required by law—this may be inconvenient for Mr Findlay—is that each individual application has to be assessed as to whether it would deliver a greater or lower impact on our journey to net zero compared with the importation of resources that we might use.

That is the Government's position. Mr Findlay can characterise that as he wishes. I have long given up trying to see any way in which Mr Findlay can avoid characterising answers in that way. I will set out the detail of my answers to the public and to Parliament and allow them to judge the contents of those answers.

Russell Findlay: What the First Minister has long given up on is giving any sort of sensible answer.

The SNP MSP Jack Middleton was quite clear. Here is what he said:

"We agree that the Rosebank oil field should be given the green light."

Will John Swinney take this chance to now put on the record his unequivocal support?

The First Minister: I have set out the Government's position in relation to oil and gas developments. It might not be to the liking of the Conservative Party, but I simply make the point that a lot of the things that I say are not to the liking of the Conservative Party. However, when the public are invited to judge whether they want to take on board my views or the views of the Conservative Party, the public have for many, many years accepted my arguments in preference to the arguments of the Conservative Party. I am delighted with the choice of the public.

Russell Findlay: The public in Aberdeen South were asked and they gave a very clear answer. That is because I and my party—the Scottish Conservatives—support Rosebank. John Swinney still refuses to do so while thousands of Scottish jobs are being lost, and now Labour plans to outlaw all North Sea drilling. Will John Swinney tell his MPs to vote against Labour's ban?

The First Minister: We now see a very interesting pattern emerging in Parliament: it is the merger of the Conservative Party and Reform. What Russell Findlay has just asked me is exactly what Malcolm Offord just asked me, and I have set out what the Government's position is. There are measures in the Energy Independence Bill—[*Interruption*.]

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me. Let us hear the answer that the First Minister is giving, please, Stephen Kerr.

The First Minister: There are measures in the Energy Independence Bill that the Government supports, because they will help us to ensure that individuals in Scotland are lifted out of fuel poverty and that we have further investment and support for this Government's schemes to ensure that more renewable capacity is taken forward in this country. The Scottish Government does not support the measures in the bill in relation to oil and gas developments, for the reasons that I have already set out to Russell Findlay and Malcolm Offord.

The Presiding Officer: Final question.

Russell Findlay: That is a desperate deflection from John Swinney. We should vote against Labour's drilling ban. The Scottish Conservatives back new drilling. We would extract every valuable drop of North Sea oil and gas, for Scottish jobs, lower bills and energy security. Why is John Swinney content to stand by as that critical Scottish industry is destroyed?

The First Minister: The issues that are uppermost in my mind in relation to the energy situation are the need to ensure that members of the public have lower energy bills, that we have sustained employment in energy industries in Scotland and that Scotland benefits from the energy wealth of our country. For 50 years—a lot of years among which we were led by Conservative United Kingdom Governments—Scotland has not benefited from the energy wealth that has come from its own waters. I want it to be crystal clear to the public, in every respect, that I want to see the energy wealth of Scotland used to benefit the people of Scotland, and that that will come about only when Scotland is an independent country.

Firefighters (Vacancies)

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh North Western) (LD): On this bonfire night, will the First Minister tell us how many vacancies are there for retained on-call firefighters in Scotland?

The First Minister (John Swinney): I do not have that information to hand, but I can assure Mr Cole-Hamilton that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Police Scotland are actively positioned to address any issues that emerge as a consequence of bonfire night, as they have been for several weeks. Ministers have been advised and supported, with information from both services, about the steps that have been taken to ensure public safety.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: That is not happening in every part of the country, but, like the First Minister, I wish our fire service well tonight. Let me furnish him with the answer: there are 1,000 vacancies for on-call firefighters. They are the lifeblood of Scotland's rural fire stations. The Fire Brigades Union told Parliament that that is leaving

"huge swathes of Scotland's landmass … without fire cover."—[*Official Report*, *Criminal Justice Committee*, 28 October 2026; c. 10]

Does the First Minister really grasp just how serious those shortages are?

The First Minister: I am aware of those issues. I represent a large rural area in Scotland, and I understand the challenges that exist. Almost all of the scenarios that Mr Cole-Hamilton will put to me will involve the retained fire crew services. There are challenges in the recruitment of individuals because of changes to the way in which people are living their lives. In the past, the retained fire crew service was significantly anchored by people who lived and worked in individual localities and were able to commit to that service.

I would point out to Mr Cole-Hamilton that, when I met representatives of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service at the wildfire site at Loch Morlich, I met a range of retained fire crews who had an extraordinary commitment to tackling what was a very serious situation.

Although I acknowledge the challenges in recruitment, I would make the point that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service attaches the most significant importance to ensuring that our fire crews are well served in all parts of the country, so that they can offer public protection to members of the public.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I do not disagree for a minute that our retained firefighters are doing a valiant job but there are simply far too few of them, and the lack of staff means that more than half of our on-call fire engines can be unavailable at any point in the day. Larger fire stations should have at least two engines ready to go at all times but, today, we are publishing new research that shows how often, in places such as Kilmarnock, Stirling, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh, that second fire engine cannot be operated because there is nobody there to do so. Can the First Minister see the basic arithmetical problem that could arise—two fires, one truck?

The First Minister: The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service goes through extensive work to ensure that it has effective resources in place in retained and full-time stations around the country through a carefully considered assessment that looks at the incidence of fires and the pattern of fire activity, so that the public are able to experience that protection from the service and are kept safe.

We have previously wrestled with different issues that members raised in Parliament, and service reviews have been carried out. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service considers all the evidence and comes to a conclusion about the appropriate steps to take. In all that work, public safety will be the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's principal consideration.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Our firefighters run towards danger, but I do not think that the Government has their backs. When they return to their station, too many lack the basics—toilets, showers, running water and proper decontamination. That means that our firefighters are potentially treading hazardous materials into their own homes—indeed, into their children's bedrooms. The unions call that "a mark of shame" and they are right to do so. When will every single Scottish firefighter be able to properly shower before they go home to their families after a shift?

The First Minister: It is important for appropriate facilities to be in place for all public service workers, particularly our emergency service workers, and that commitment lies at the heart of the Government's funding for the Fire and Rescue Service. The budget for 2026-27 provided an additional £23.8 million to the SFRS, bringing the total budget to more than £435 million. The capital budget was increased, too, to enable some of the issues that Mr Cole-Hamilton raised to be addressed.

Of course, Mr Cole-Hamilton voted for the budget—he voted for exactly the provision that is in place for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. I invite him to engage in discussions with the Deputy First Minister, who I know met representatives of the Liberal Democrats this week to discuss the contents of the budget. That is the opportunity for us to resolve many of the financial commitments that the Government makes to key services in our country.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister's question time. We will have a couple of minutes for a changeover of personnel on the front benches.

Safeguarding and Protecting Children

The rest of this Official Report will be published progressively as soon as the text is available.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): The next item of business is a statement by Màiri McAllan on safeguarding and protecting children. I ask members who are leaving the chamber and visitors who are leaving the gallery to do so quickly and quietly, please.

14:39

The Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic: Child sexual abuse and exploitation are among the most serious harms that can be inflicted on a child. Our responsibility is to ensure that every child is protected, that perpetrators are pursued, and that survivors are listened to, supported and believed. I want to assure victims and survivors that the Government will never shy away from addressing the difficult truth that children and young people in Scotland are abused, that that is most often done by people who know them, but also by strangers, and, in some cases, by groups of perpetrators.

That is why, in February 2026, the Government announced its intention to establish a public inquiry under the Inquiries Act 2005 into group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation. That reflected the significant public concern surrounding the issues, the cross-party support in the previous parliamentary session, and our determination to protect children and young people from harm in Scotland.

The Government established the inspectorate-led national review into group-based abuse in December 2025, which published its findings in September 2026. Although the findings provided a baseline in our understanding of that type of harm, the scope of the review was limited to recent practice and responses. It was based on local data or knowledge of known or reported instances of group-based abuse.

The statutory public inquiry is a separate and independent undertaking, with the strongest possible powers to examine the full extent of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation, including historical events, systemic issues and potential institutional failings. Ministers have listened to victims and survivors who highlighted the hidden or unreported nature of group-based abuse, the overlap with child criminal abuse and the circumstances in which harm took place. Survivors' testimony was instrumental to the Government's decision to establish the inquiry, and their stories demonstrated the complexity of group-based abuse, which must be unpicked to fully identify past failings and the action that is needed to address them now and in the future.

I announce to the Parliament today the publication of the terms of reference for the inquiry. I confirm that the chair has no personal or professional relationships, interests or associations relevant to the inquiry that require declaration.

This marks a significant milestone and provides a clear framework to guide the inquiry's work. I confirm that the statutory inquiry into group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation will begin on 11 November. Professor Alexis Jay will chair the inquiry, bringing her substantial experience and knowledge on the issue, as evidenced by her groundbreaking work as chair of the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse and exploitation in England and Wales. I have been pleased to meet Professor Jay, and we have discussed our shared determination to confront and address this appalling form of abuse. I am assured by Professor Jay's commitment that the inquiry be timely and conducted at pace, and her advice has been instrumental to ministers' consideration of the terms of reference.

As regards the remit, the inquiry will undertake a thorough examination of Scotland's response to group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation, both non-recent and in the present day. Its purpose is not only to understand what has happened but to ensure that it cannot happen again, that accountability is strengthened and that we do everything possible to better protect children and young people in the future.

The terms of reference commit the inquiry to examining the scale, extent and prevalence of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland and to examining their impact on victims and survivors. It will examine the characteristics of perpetrators, so that risk factors can be better understood and stronger protections can be developed. The inquiry will scrutinise any failures in practice by state and non-state bodies and relevant institutions, and the extent to which that might have occurred. That includes consideration of any deliberate concealment or failures to disclose information. The inquiry will examine any actions taken to address such failures and their effectiveness, as well as the actions that are required now to strengthen policy, practice and, where required, legislation.

The inquiry's function is not to determine, attribute or rule on civil or criminal liability. Its purpose is to provide clear, evidence-based recommendations that strengthen the protection of children and help to ensure that failures are never repeated.

Careful consideration has been given throughout to the views, experiences and priorities shared by survivors. Ministers and the chair are all determined that survivors be at the heart of the inquiry's work. In February, the Government announced the establishment of a truth project, so that survivors can share their

experience and contribute directly to the inquiry. I announce today that the beginnings of the truth project will launch this month, before national roll-out in 2027.

On temporal scope, the inquiry will examine the period from 1 January 1996 to the setting up of the inquiry on 11 November 2026. That timeframe was carefully determined by considering evidence of the time that it can take survivors of child sexual abuse to disclose their experience, which, understandably, can be many decades.

The timeframe also pragmatically reflects the likely availability of records in local authorities under their current boundaries, which were established under the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 and took effect at the beginning of 1996. However, the inquiry will have latitude to consider any relevant evidence or findings relating to its scope that fall out with that timeframe.

In establishing this inquiry, careful consideration has been given to the important wider work that has already been undertaken by the Scottish child abuse inquiry, chaired by Lady Smith, and the United Kingdom Government's grooming gangs inquiry, chaired by Baroness Longfield. The Scottish child abuse inquiry has demonstrated the importance of creating opportunities for survivors to be heard, of rigorous examination of systemic failings and of ensuring that public institutions are held accountable. It is ministers' expectations that the Scottish and UK inquiries, which are operationally independent, will engage appropriately to ensure that they complement and do not replicate each other's investigations.

The terms of reference also set out that the inquiry has a clear aim to make recommendations for action. I am assured that the chair will identify and report those recommendations to Scottish ministers as soon as reasonably practicable. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that lessons are translated into action. I understand that the chair intends to report on specific aspects of her findings as they emerge, and we will consider any more immediate opportunities to improve the response to group-based child sexual abuse ahead of the conclusion of the inquiry. That is very important to me; we will not wait to take action.

We have worked at pace, balancing our ambition to bring the inquiry to fruition as quickly as possible against the time required to develop thorough and robust terms of reference. However, that has not been our sole focus. Work has already been under way to strengthen Scotland's collective response. As I set out earlier, the national review published its findings in September, recommending actions to improve the consistency of definitions in data collection, support intelligence sharing and increase workforce guidance and capability. The Scottish Government accepts those findings in full, and we will work with partners to implement recommendations at pace.

The national child sexual abuse and exploitation strategic group has continued to bring together key partners to deliver its work on data improvement, workforce training and skills, and it has informed the Government's commitment to legislate for mandatory reporting of abuse of children in Scotland. I attended the group in September, where I held positive discussions on its future direction and on how that important work can continue to evolve and align with the group-based inquiry.

I also highlight the ongoing work of Police Scotland's operation descerno, which is reviewing disclosures, intelligence and cases relating to group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation. Although the review remains an operational matter for the chief constable, the Government has provided additional funding to support that important work, recognising its complexity and sensitivity.

Our determined and ongoing work to keep the Promise is another vital part of that work. So, too, is the roll-out of our bairns' hoose programme, our public health approach to online harm, our national and local responses to the family C learning review, and the work of our newly established National Social Work Agency, among many other strands of work.

This inquiry represents the strongest of measures in our efforts to address the scourge of child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland. It reflects our commitment to listen to survivors, examine institutional responses honestly and transparently, and ensure that all lessons are learned and translated into action. Above all, it is about strengthening our ability to protect children and young people from harm now and in the years to come.

I want survivors to know that their voice will be heard. The inquiry will investigate what they went through without fear or favour, and action will be taken as a result. To those who would seek to perpetrate harm to our children in Scotland, I say simply and directly: there will be nowhere to hide from justice.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): Thank you, cabinet secretary. I will allow 20 minutes for members to ask the cabinet secretary questions on the issues raised in her statement. Members who wish to ask a question should press their request-to-speak button now. A large number of members wish to ask questions, so I appeal for succinct questions and answers.

Katherine Sangster (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab): The Government and survivors have our full support in ensuring that there is robust scrutiny of the failures to protect our children and young people. However, survivors have waited for nine months since the initial announcement, so will the cabinet secretary give an indication of when we can expect the first findings and when the inquiry will reach its conclusion?

Màiri McAllan: I thank Ms Sangster for her support and the Scottish Labour Party's support for this work, and for their support for the survivors, whose voices and testimonies have been central to this work.

I mentioned in my statement that we have been keen to balance our desire to get the work running as quickly as possible with the need for thorough consideration of the terms of reference. I think that we have achieved that, and I am pleased to say that the inquiry will begin next week. What happens thereafter, in terms of witnesses called and reporting, is entirely a matter for the chair, and I shall leave that to her, with her unrivalled experience in these matters.

I will be very glad to keep Ms Sangster up to date on the matter.

Senga Beresford (South Scotland) (Reform): Although I welcome the cabinet secretary's statement, I find it shocking that it has taken 14 years for us to get here. There can be no greater responsibility than protecting our children, yet children have been abused, ignored and failed by the very state that should have protected them. They deserve protection before abuse and justice afterwards, not promises 14 years later.

That failure is not history. In Dumfries, my home town, schoolchildren are being handed rape alarms because they are frightened to walk to school. Think about that—children in Scotland carrying rape alarms just to feel safe going to school. What does the cabinet secretary say to the victims who were failed and to the children who are still being failed today on her Government's watch?

Màiri McAllan: In the spirit of co-operation, I say that there is something in Senga Beresford's question that I agree with, which is that there is no greater responsibility than protecting children. I hope that it is clear to Ms Beresford, and to members across the chamber, that the pursuit of that is at the heart of the work that the Government has set out.

To the victim/survivors, I say that the independent inquiry, which has been set up with the strongest powers, will examine the full extent of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland, including historical events, systemic issues and any potential institutional failings. It will do so without fear or favour, and it will report to ministers, who are committed to action.

Patricia Gibson (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary's announcement. I know that it will be a huge milestone and a significant day for survivors. Will the cabinet secretary tell us a bit about the specific longer-term infrastructure that the Scottish Government will put in place to support survivors financially, practically and with ongoing emotional and trauma challenges so that, alongside the inquiry, survivors can access the ongoing support that they need?

Màiri McAllan: There are a range of ways that we want victims and survivors to be supported, and it is worth mentioning in that regard the redress scheme in Scotland and the support that it has offered over several years. In the context of the inquiry and its setting up today, I draw Ms Gibson's attention to the truth project, which is for victims and survivors to share their experience in a trauma-informed way. It will be led by John O'Brien, who is the former secretary to the inquiry on child sexual abuse in England and Wales, and who worked closely with Professor Alexis Jay in that regard. It will be a safe space, an open space, a trauma-informed space and, most of all, a supportive space for those who have been impacted by this abhorrent abuse.

Laura Moodie (South Scotland) (Green): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of the statement. I am encouraged by the importance that is placed on hearing the voices of victims and survivors, and I urge the cabinet secretary to ensure that those voices remain central in the process.

One of the simplest and most immediate things that we can do to protect children from sexual abuse is provide age-appropriate and stage-appropriate education. What progress is the cabinet secretary making to ensure that all schools are following the Government's relationships, sexual health and parenthood guidance so that we can address the rise of misogyny and violence against women and girls?

Màiri McAllan: There is always a delicate balance to be struck between empowering young people with knowledge and resilience and the ability to support themselves, while, equally, being clear that, where sexual abuse is perpetrated, it is the fault of the perpetrator alone. I just wanted to emphasise that point.

Nonetheless, Laura Moodie is absolutely right that our education system is a fantastic opportunity to equip our young people with the knowledge that they need to support themselves. It is the Government's expectation that age-appropriate relationships education is rolled out in our schools across Scotland. I also point to the

First Minister's very recent commitment that anti-misogyny education of an age-appropriate and stage-appropriate nature will be rolled out and made mandatory in every school in Scotland.

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Con): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement, but why has this taken so long? It is not just me who is baffled by the lack of urgency—survivors of grooming gangs have also criticised the Scottish Government for taking too long. Some have waited decades for justice.

We all knew that there was a significant issue the moment the inquiry south of the border began to uncover the true extent of grooming gangs. How confident is the cabinet secretary, therefore, that this inquiry will finally deliver the answers and the justice that the families and survivors deserve? Most importantly, when will they see that happen?

Màiri McAllan: I am confident, and one of the things that most gives me confidence is that we have the unrivalled experience of Professor Alexis Jay, who is chairing the inquiry, and that the inquiry has the strongest possible powers to investigate the extent and prevalence, the impact on victims and survivors, the characteristics of perpetrators and any failures in practice of institutions, and to do that in every setting in which group-based abuse may have occurred.

The absolute expertise of our chair, coupled with the strongest statutory powers and what I believe are robust terms of reference, ought to give Meghan Gallacher a lot of confidence. I appreciate that, for victims and survivors, their confidence will be able to come to light once they have seen the action that comes from that. From the Government's perspective, I commit us to taking action in the light of the inquiry.

Duncan Dunlop (South Scotland) (LD): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement. I also thank the survivors who bravely shared their stories that led to the inquiry and who will no doubt revisit their pain as it goes forward—without them, the inquiry would not be occurring.

Although the cabinet secretary has the support of the Liberal Democrats with the inquiry, I am concerned that there is a real danger that the inquiry will produce another set of recommendations about partnership working, better information sharing and training, only for the children to find, again, that there is little change in practice. We already have the Promise, and the care review and years of other reviews identifying failings in how we protect children, yet the Oversight Board for the Promise has warned that commitments continue not to translate into improvements in children's lives.

How will the Government ensure that this inquiry will not simply add to that list? Will the Government commit to ensuring that there is accountability for organisations and individuals who are found to have failed in their duties to appropriately investigate and respond to concerns?

Màiri McAllan: I understand the tenor of Mr Dunlop's question, and I share his desire and the desire of others to ensure that important work such as the inquiry has everything that it needs to be successful and that the recommendations are then taken forward and action is taken.

I understand that, no matter the sphere of Government that we are talking about, it can sometimes feel as though progress is slow. However, I assure Mr Dunlop that action is always being taken that is changing children's lives. He mentioned the Promise, which is an example of that. The Promise is for change everywhere in the services that touch certain children's lives. Although we are not there yet, most people who are engaged with the Promise would say that practical change has happened in places and that it is making a difference.

My overarching commitment is that we are setting up the inquiry to make sure that it has the fullest powers to reach its conclusions. I reiterate today that the Government is committed to action in response.

Heather Anderson (Dundee City West) (SNP): I welcome the announcement of an inquiry into Scotland's response to group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation, and the appointment of Professor Alexis Jay.

Health and justice agencies, as well as local authorities, all play lead roles in the protection of children, and it can be a complicated and cluttered landscape. How will the Scottish Government ensure that Professor Jay has full access to all those agencies and, more importantly, that her recommendations are implemented across all those different portfolios?

Màiri McAllan: Protecting children from harm requires a whole-system response. I add that it is everybody's responsibility to take that on. Through the national child sexual abuse and exploitation strategic group, which was chaired by Alexis Jay before she took up her current role and is now chaired by the expert Iona Colvin, we are bringing together those partners from across health, justice, social work, education, policing, local government and the third sector to drive co-ordinated action. The group is looking at a number of things just

now, and it has working groups on improving data, on workforce skills and capacity and on mandatory reporting. Those are practical actions that are being taken forward by a co-ordinated group of experts.

Jenny Young (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for today's statement. We welcome the news that the inquiry will commence next week. These are some of the most abhorrent crimes and abuse that have been perpetrated on the most vulnerable in our society, and it is vital that we get answers.

A significant issue in the ongoing Eljamel inquiry was NHS Tayside's inexplicable decision to destroy crucial theatre logbooks in direct contravention of the do-not-destroy order that was issued by inquiry chair Lord Weir. Can the cabinet secretary confirm whether Professor Alexis Jay has already issued such an order to all relevant bodies, including local authorities? What is being done to ensure absolute and total compliance?

Màiri McAllan: I put on the record today that absolute and total compliance, as the member puts it, is both our desire and our expectation. We have already been in conversation with a number of survivors' representatives about that very point, and it is my expectation that all the normal procedures in respect of do-not-destroy orders will be taken forward as part of this inquiry.

Dawn Black (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I welcome the announcement that the inquiry will start next Wednesday, 11 November.

My concern is for the victims and survivors. Will the cabinet secretary elaborate on what support the Scottish Government is providing those victims and survivors? In particular, how can the bairns' hoose programme help to support the delivery of justice, care and recovery for children?

Màiri McAllan: I mentioned the truth project for victims and survivors, which, as I said, is starting this year, prior to national roll-out from next year. That will allow people to share their experience and to talk about the impact on them and what they believe needs to change to prevent such harm to children in the future. I have also mentioned Scotland's redress scheme.

Ms Black mentions the bairns' hoose programme, which is a gold-standard child-centred and trauma-informed model that brings justice, health and care services together in one setting for under-18s. I have visited the north Strathclyde bairns' hoose and have seen at first hand the kind of supportive environment that it is creating for children who have the need to engage with health and justice in that way. The Government is committed to a national roll-out of the programme, and my colleague the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise confirmed multi-annual funding support in that regard just recently.

Amanda Lindsay (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform): I welcome the focus on safeguarding children. Given that Police Scotland has identified nearly 2,000 children as being at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation in the past year alone and that significant data gaps remain in relation to the scale of group-based abuse, can the cabinet secretary set out what concrete steps the Government is taking now to improve the collection and sharing of that data and ensure that the forthcoming phase of the child abuse inquiry leads to practical and timely changes that better protect children in care and in the community?

Màiri McAllan: I will pick up on the last point, about children in care and in the community. It is worth reiterating that the scope and remit of the inquiry will not be restricted to children in care—it is wider than that and will cover all settings in which group-based child sexual abuse may have taken place. I hope that that brings the member some confidence.

With respect to instances now, which the member asks about, the inquiry will look at the state of play up until now and will consider actions for the future. Any current criminality is very much a matter for Police Scotland under its investigatory powers. I know that the chief constable takes that extremely seriously and that the police will be pursuing matters to the fullest extent possible within its operational independence.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I am sure that the cabinet secretary will be pleased to learn that the cross-party group on adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse formally reconvened yesterday. It is possibly the Parliament's longest-running CPG and it puts survivor voices at the heart of its work. Can the cabinet secretary confirm her commitment that survivor voices will be at the heart of the inquiry? Will the inquiry engage with the cross-party group where it is appropriate to do so?

Màiri McAllan: I commend the work of the cross-party group on adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse for its longevity and for ensuring that survivors' voices are heard. As I said in my statement, ministers and the chair of the inquiry are determined that survivors will be at the heart of its work. I reiterate that the truth project will run alongside the inquiry as a trauma-informed space for survivors to share their experience. Decisions on stakeholder engagement are for the chair, but I encourage the CPG to engage with the truth project and, indeed, with the new chair of our national strategic group, Iona Colvin.

Cara McKee (West Scotland) (Green): We know that a disproportionate number of victims of child sexual exploitation are care-experienced children and young people. Although there remains a strong commitment to keeping the Promise, care-experienced children and young people do not always see that commitment reflected in their day-to-day lives. Less effective and fragmented support is one of the contributing factors that leads to the targeting and abuse of children. Will the cabinet secretary provide an update on the Government's action to implement the Promise and to address the fragmented legislative landscape? Will the Government ensure that its commitment is fully delivered by 2030 and that the vision of the independent care review is met?

Màiri McAllan: I am happy to, because I recognise, as Cara McKee does, the centrality of the Promise and its delivery to this work. The issues do not only affect children who are in care, but we know that, when there are additional vulnerabilities, perpetrators will exploit them. That is exactly the challenge that we have in keeping all our children safe. I reiterate that the breadth of the inquiry's terms of reference will allow it to look at children who were in care as well as those who were not and to look across the board for the presence of group-based child sexual abuse.

My colleague the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise recently gave a statement to update the Parliament on the actions that the Government is taking to fulfil the Promise. There were three key tenets to the update: first, our work to implement the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act 2026, which sets out a wide variety of actions that we are working on; secondly, the Government's intention to produce a final implementation plan that pulls together the significant bits of work that have to be done in the coming years; and, lastly, our intention to chair a final delivery board. As Cara McKee challenges us to do, it will bring all the actors together with a focus on keeping the Promise by 2030.

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary's statement. It is vitally important to recognise that the core of what is being discussed in the chamber is the lived experience of survivors. Looking to the future, can the cabinet secretary provide an update on work to ensure that reporting of harm is mandatory for adults who have responsibility for safeguarding children?

Màiri McAllan: Clare Haughey is absolutely right. I go back to my earlier point about how the protection of all children from all forms of sexual abuse is everybody's responsibility. The Government is committed to legislating for mandatory reporting and, as I said in answer to an earlier question, the issue is being examined by a sub-group of our national strategic group, and other groups are looking at improving data and at workforce skills and capacity. There is an opportunity for this to be transformational by putting on a statutory footing something that we would all agree on: that everyone is responsible for the protection of children from sexual abuse.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): That concludes the questions on the statement. I apologise to the members who I was not able to call.

Strengthening Scotland's Bus Network

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S7M-01881, in the name of Stephen Flynn, on strengthening Scotland's bus network. Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request-to-speak button now. I will give a few moments for members on the front benches to change over.

15:11

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport (Stephen Flynn): At its core, the motion is about ensuring that our bus network serves the public interest rather than being shaped solely by commercial considerations. Buses are not simply another service; they are a lifeline. They connect people to employment, education, healthcare and the social and economic opportunities that many of us take for granted.

It has been well documented—and it is important to recognise—that bus operators have faced significant challenges in recent years, including rising operating costs, changing travel patterns and driver shortages. Operators have worked hard to maintain services in a difficult environment, often under considerable financial pressure.

At the same time, some communities across Scotland have experienced reductions in services, changes to routes and weaker transport connections. Local authorities have limited scope to influence outcomes on behalf of the people they represent. That can make it more difficult to ensure that bus networks fully support wider public policy objectives such as access to healthcare, housing development, education, employment and new infrastructure projects. Greater local involvement in the planning of bus services can help ensure

that networks are designed around the specific needs of communities in the places that they serve, while continuing to draw on the expertise and experience of operators.

Ben Macpherson (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP): [*Made a request to intervene*.]

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

Stephen Flynn: My goodness—I think that Mr Macpherson was first.

Ben Macpherson: I thank the cabinet secretary for taking my intervention and I am grateful to colleagues for their patience. In relation to the situation that the cabinet secretary set out, will he acknowledge that Edinburgh's municipally owned public transport system—run by Lothian Buses, which includes Edinburgh trams—was recently named by *Time Out* magazine as the fourth best in the world? We need to ensure that future policy and legislation support and enable further development of municipally owned bus networks and services. Will the cabinet secretary accept my invitation to visit the headquarters of Lothian Buses, in my constituency, so that it can speak to him and his officials about the service and about making sure that it is sustained and supported through this period of change?

Stephen Flynn: Yes. It is important to recognise the incredible work that Lothian Buses undertakes. If I recall correctly, in the early 1990s, there was a significant challenge to the work that Lothian Buses was undertaking in Edinburgh. It managed to persevere, which is a testament to it, and that is to the benefit of the people of Edinburgh now. Ben Macpherson is right to highlight that, and I would be more than happy to join him on that visit in his constituency. I hope that we can arrange that in the not-too-distant future.

I believe that Mr Rennie also sought to intervene.

Willie Rennie: That is a helpful answer about Lothian Buses, but I would like to be a bit more precise. Does this mean that franchising will be imposed on the Lothian area and on Lothian Buses, or will there be a bespoke system across the country that meets the needs of every part of the country?

Stephen Flynn: No, I have no intention of imposing a franchise on Lothian Buses. I will come to that in my remarks, but it is important that I make that clear. I thank Willie Rennie for bringing that to my attention.

We want to strengthen the alignment between transport planning and wider public services. We can create networks that are better connected, more responsive to local priorities and more effective at supporting economic growth and social inclusion.

That is why the motion matters. It recognises that those closest to the needs of communities should have a far greater role in shaping local transport networks. Local authorities and regional transport partnerships understand the economic, social and geographical challenges in their areas, and they are best placed to shape services at the level that reflects passenger needs and travel patterns.

Max Bannerman (Highlands and Islands) (Reform): Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Stephen Flynn: I will in one second.

Giving those bodies greater powers to influence service provision is not merely desirable but essential if we are serious about building a transport network that is responsive, accessible and focused on passengers.

Max Bannerman: I thank the cabinet secretary for his courtesy in taking an intervention. The school bus service in Portgordon in Moray, which is in my region, has been reduced and schoolchildren must now walk for 50 minutes along a poorly lit road. What will the Government do to ensure that adequate transport for school students in rural areas is maintained?

Stephen Flynn: Max Bannerman will be aware that that is a matter for the local authority, but I am more than happy to engage further with him on it. I hope that he and his colleagues can bring themselves to support the Government's motion, which seeks to make progress on Scotland's bus network across the entirety of Scotland.

Our approach is entirely consistent with the wider programme of public service reform and local government reform. Across Scotland, it is recognised that public services are most effective when decisions are made at the levels that are best placed to deliver for the people they affect.

The motion also reflects a wider principle.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform): The cabinet secretary has said twice already that he believes that local people know best, and I agree with him on that. However, if that is the case, does he still propose to impose certain models on areas all across Scotland, or does he want to leave that decision up to local people?

Stephen Flynn: As I sought to make clear to Willie Rennie, I will come to that. If Graham Simpson bears with me, I hope to make some progress on my speech and get beyond page 3. However, before I do so, I notice that Lloyd Melville is keen to intervene.

Lloyd Melville (Angus South) (SNP): I agree with Graham Simpson. Section 10 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 allows the Government to transfer significant additional powers to regional transport partnerships. If we are considering bespoke models, is the Government considering such an approach?

Stephen Flynn: I will come to the approach that we are seeking to take, but I welcome Mr Melville's input, as always, on matters relating to buses, given his wider advocacy since he came to Parliament.

As members will be aware, the motion reflects the wider principle that public transport should be planned in the interests of passengers. Bringing Scotland's bus network under public control offers an opportunity to create a system where decisions are driven by the needs of communities, integration with wider transport objectives and long-term public benefit.

We have already seen what can be achieved when the Government intervenes to make bus travel more accessible and affordable. The national concessionary travel schemes are some of the most significant and impactful policies that have been introduced in Scotland in recent years. The older and disabled persons scheme continues to be popular and well used; it eases the financial pressure for 1.6 million cardholders, provides opportunities for social connection and encourages the use of public transport over private vehicles.

By encouraging early adoption of public transport, the young persons scheme has also made a lasting impact. It is reducing travel costs for families, expanding opportunities and reconnecting younger generations with bus travel. In December 2025, the Child Poverty Action Group estimated that free bus travel can save families in Scotland more than £3,000 in the lifetime cost of a child compared with costs in the United Kingdom as a whole.

More recently, we have seen the success of the £2 fare cap initiative, which has demonstrated that people respond when barriers to public transport are reduced. It has helped to make bus travel more attractive, supported household budgets and shown the positive impact that targeted public policy can have in encouraging greater use of public transport. Crucially, the fare cap also demonstrates what can be achieved when the Scottish Government, regional partners and operators are aligned around a clear passenger outcome. We are committed to ensuring that public transport is affordable and accessible for everyone.

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I absolutely agree that we need better access to buses. However, with regard to lifeline services, I met constituents yesterday who have raised concerns that the £2 fare stops them getting on a bus at a ferry terminal, because the bus is already full when it comes north from Campbeltown. Can that be part of the Scottish Government's thinking?

Stephen Flynn: In many respects, that is a good news story, because we have more people using public transport. However, that has an impact on those who are unable to access that transport, so we must work with our regional partners to mitigate any such problems.

Such a successful use of public transport derives from the launch of the bus fare cap across the Highlands and Islands earlier this year, and we have also now expanded that scheme to the Strathclyde area, as promised. Crucially, that means that single bus fares are now capped at £2 across 60 per cent of Scotland's land area and in places where half of Scotland's population lives. The Highlands and Islands scheme recently reached the 2 million journeys mark, which is a huge achievement that underlines the demand for affordable and sustainable public transport.

The bus fare cap is helping to put money back into people's pockets, addressing cost of living concerns, supporting greater use of public transport and contributing to our climate objectives, but we want to go further. The First Minister confirmed last month that the bus fare cap will be expanded to the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire areas from April 2027, extending the benefits of lower bus fares to hundreds of thousands of people across the north-east of Scotland and reaching another key milestone in our journey to deliver a nationwide bus fare cap. I look forward to working collaboratively with a range of partners, including bus operators, local authorities and regional transport partnerships to deliver on our commitment to ensure that the cap is available across Scotland at the earliest possible opportunity.

The challenge that is before us now is to build on that success. Affordability is important, but so too are reliability, accessibility and availability. I understand that a low fare is of little comfort if there is no bus to catch. Public control, combined with stronger local influence, offers the opportunity to deliver all those objectives together. That is not an ideological proposition; it is a practical one. It is about creating a system that provides communities with the services that they need, gives local authorities the tools and opportunities to shape those services and ensures that public transport works for the people who depend on it every day.

We have already given local transport authorities powers to improve services in their areas, and now we want to build on the existing regulatory structures for bus services to specify minimum adequate service levels across the country from next year. We will progress plans to support regional-level franchising and are committed to working with LTAs and other stakeholders to ensure that the Scottish franchising model meets the needs of passengers and communities across Scotland.

We have committed to investing up to £4 million to support local transport authorities to build business cases for local bus improvement through franchising, using powers created by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. However, we will go further and will bring forward legislation next year to remove the franchising panel, as set out in the 2019 act, to enable us to take the necessary steps to accelerate and implement the programme across Scotland. We have already engaged with stakeholders—including the Confederation of Passenger Transport, trade unions and opposition MSPs—to work constructively and will continue to do so as we develop our plans to build a resilient and strengthened bus network for Scotland.

We recognise that parts of Scotland's bus network—such as in Edinburgh—are already working well under council-owned operators, and we know that plans are under way in Strathclyde Partnership for Transport to pursue the franchising model. That is why it is critical that we work with regional transport partnerships to understand what works best in their areas and learn lessons from best practice where we can.

Members will be aware that the 2019 act gives local transport authorities various powers. Let me be clear that my intention is not to remove opportunities but to build on them. We believe that communities should be able to help shape a modern transport system, rather than that being something that happens to them. In fact, we are in the process of implementing bus open data legislation. That will require bus operators to provide accurate standardised information about timetables, fares and the live location of buses for release as open data, which will put information about services into passengers' hands.

Therefore, greater local influence over bus services is not simply a transport reform but part of a wider commitment to local empowerment, democratic accountability and better public service delivery. By supporting the motion, members can take a significant step towards a more affordable, better connected and more equitable bus network for Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the opportunity to strengthen the availability, affordability and accessibility of Scotland's bus network by bringing the bus network back into public control through franchising and regulation across Scotland; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to bring legislation before Parliament to deliver this at the earliest possible opportunity; recognises the successful delivery of the £2 bus fare cap scheme in the Highlands and Islands and Strathclyde areas; welcomes that this means that bus fares are now capped at £2 across 60% of the land area of Scotland and in areas where half of the population of Scotland live; supports expansion of the fare cap to Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire from April 2027 in advance of further roll-out to the rest of Scotland; notes that this measure makes a real difference to people during a cost of living crisis, helping with the cost of everyday travel and supporting access to work, education, healthcare and leisure, and recognises that this builds on the success of the free bus schemes available to 2.4 million people, including everyone aged under 22, eligible disabled people, and over 60s.

15:25

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): I thank the Government for lodging the motion for today's debate, which comes merely weeks after the welcome extension of the £2 bus fare cap to the Strathclyde region. Members across the Parliament have long demanded a proper opportunity to scrutinise the Government's so far sluggish progress on bus franchising. That frustration extends to people in the public gallery, where members of Get Glasgow Moving and the better buses for Strathclyde campaign, which has been working on the issue for a decade, are present.

The most exciting aspect of the cabinet secretary's speech was his confirmation that the panel process for bus franchising will be removed. That pays dividends for campaigners who have spent hours of their lives pouring through all the small print of the detailed guidance notes to identify inefficiencies and how we could speed up the process—all credit to those campaigners. The cabinet secretary's announcement shows that being a public transport nerd sometimes pays off, and, on this occasion, it has done so in the interests of public policy in Scotland. I congratulate the campaigners.

We welcome that progress, but we wish to robustly yet constructively challenge the Government to go further. I must question the rather timid title of the Government's motion. After 27 years of devolution, the fact that we are merely talking about "strengthening" our bus network makes it feel as though we missed an opportunity. We could have got much further down the road before now.

As we look around our constituencies and regions, the stark reality is that our bus network has been structurally decimated, as we have heard in some of the interventions that have been made. Our bus network

is the victim of nearly 40 years of a disastrous, deregulated, free market experiment that was imposed by the Transport Act 1985. Indeed, the number of passenger journeys has plummeted from 484 million in 2008 to just 334 million today, which represents a decline of nearly a third and a daily haemorrhage of 410,000 journeys.

The crumbling raised kerb of a former bus stop is a physical scar of civic vandalism that is visible in every community across Scotland. In our rural areas in particular, it leaves villages entirely economically stranded. In our peripheral housing schemes, it leaves working-class families left behind from economic opportunities. In our urban centres, it embeds a chaotic and deeply unequal reliance on the private car—nowhere more so than in Glasgow, which has the lowest car ownership levels of any major British city.

Let us be clear about the context for that decline. As our public realm has been increasingly centralised in the name of efficiency—with hospitals downgraded and centralised, civic amenities shuttered and local services rationalised into regional hubs—the physical geography of working-class life has expanded and its dependence on public transport has increased, but how many of those centralising decisions involved rigorous transport impact assessments? How many of the people who made those decisions had to stand in the rain on a dark November morning, waiting for a ghost bus that never arrived? How many of them were held accountable when a service was cut arbitrarily?

We must stop treating public transport as a speculative venture for private operators and reclaim it as an essential municipal service.

Bob Doris (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP): I support much of what Mr Sweeney has said, but, as we move forward with franchising and the public demand better services across the city of Glasgow, which we both represent, the loudest voices will not always be those that call for services for the socially necessary routes. Does Mr Sweeney agree that it is important that we ensure that not just those with the loudest voices but all our communities benefit from those bus services?

Paul Sweeney: I completely agree with the point made by my fellow member for Glasgow—we share a view on that issue. We privatise the profits and socialise the losses and the social issues. It is unacceptable for democratically elected representatives to be forced to petition private companies to reinstate what are, in essence, public services. The franchising approach will allow us to redress that balance in the interests of all our communities and constituencies.

Willie Rennie: I have a lot of sympathy with what Mr Sweeney is saying, but we also have to accept that simply franchising or providing public ownership will not solve all our problems, because patterns of travel have changed significantly over the years, and there is greater dependence on the car and other forms of transport. Does Mr Sweeney recognise that it will be expensive to make substantial changes? Exactly how does he think we will be able to budget for all those changes in order to make the right ones?

Paul Sweeney: I take Mr Rennie's point. As Keynes said,

"Anything we can actually do, we can afford."

I think that we need to make the change.

Our amendment seeks to bolt on more ambition to the Government's motion. Although Labour entirely supports the £2 bus fare cap as an essential cost-saving intervention in the short term, the cap alone is merely a sticking plaster on a broken extractive economic model.

True public control through regional and municipal franchising fundamentally rewrites the rules of the game. It ensures that the revenue that is generated through the fare box is retained by the public sector and reinvested into cross-subsidising the network, rather than extracted as unearned rent by distant shareholders.

We should consider the sheer economic absurdity of the current arrangement. In the most recent financial year, more than half of all bus operator revenue in Scotland—nearly £500 million—was handed over directly from the public purse. The Scottish taxpayer is already underwriting the inherent risks of the bus network across Scotland. As Mr Doris said, it is fundamental to democratic accountability that the public should dictate the routes, set the fares and have integrated ticketing across buses, subways and trains.

The second half of our amendment deals with the critical subject of industrial strategy. What does the public money actually buy, and who benefits from it in the value chain, with that multiplier effect? It is a dereliction of economic duty to allow the deskilling of our domestic bus manufacturing base while using taxpayer capital to import buses from overseas.

We are facing a lose-lose scenario. Grant funding must explicitly embed robust social value criteria. Firms that want public money must deliver domestic manufacturing jobs, train modern apprentices and build up the Scottish supply chain.

Transport for London has already provided that blueprint. By utilising patient institutional capital and fleet-leasing frameworks—which represents exactly the kind of strategic financial engineering that the Scottish National Investment Bank was established to perform—we can eliminate the prohibitive up-front capital costs of zero-emission fleets for municipal operators. That will provide our domestic manufacturers, such as Alexander Dennis in Falkirk, with a guaranteed long-term order pipeline. London's model sustains more than 3,000 high-value manufacturing jobs across the United Kingdom. Chasing short-term unit-cost savings by importing cheaper buses from state-subsidised Chinese companies is a false economy, which leaves our sovereign industrial capability facing destruction.

A modern civic transport network cannot operate in administrative silos. Yesterday, ScotRail's managing director admitted to the Transport Committee that the peak rail fare pilot cost £750,000 in unrecouped revenue.

Decisions on our railways dictate the viability of our buses, too. We must end the fragmented free-for-all and build comprehensive regional transport authorities like the old Greater Glasgow Passenger Transport Executive. Manchester and London have decisively turned their backs on deregulation and have proven that integrated, publicly controlled transport works. What we lack in Scotland is not necessarily the legislative framework but the political will to implement it.

By supporting Labour's amendment, the Parliament can finally begin the work of rebuilding a public transport network that is designed for the common good.

I move amendment S7M-01881.4, to insert at end:

"; regrets the reduction in bus services across Scotland, including in rural areas, over the past decade; believes that true public control through regional bus franchising must ensure that money raised through passenger fares is retained by the public sector and reinvested directly into the network rather than extracted as profit by private operators; further believes that public control will also enable integrated smart ticketing across Scottish public transport; calls on the Scottish Government to reform taxpayer-funded bus grant processes to give significantly greater weighting to meaningful social value criteria, including measurable commitments relating to domestic jobs, apprenticeships, skills and supply chain growth, and urges the Scottish Government to adopt institutional patient capital leasing models for zero-emission bus fleets, learning from the financing approach being deployed by Transport for London, to reduce upfront financial barriers for franchised or publicly-owned bus operators and secure a long-term order pipeline for Scotland's domestic bus manufacturing base."

15:33

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland and Lothians West) (Reform): It is really good that we are having this debate, because it gives us an opportunity to shine a light on the Government's thinking on any proposed buses legislation. Having read the Government's motion, I am unclear about what it means. My instinct at the moment is to oppose the motion. I need some clarity on what is meant by

"bringing the bus network back into public control".

I am still not clear what that actually means. Does it mean ownership? I do not think that it does. Does it mean having a bespoke approach with different models in different parts of the country? If the cabinet secretary wants to intervene on me at any point to clear that up, I will take his intervention, because we could change our minds on the motion. We can be flexible, because this is a debate and we should listen to what is said. At the moment, unless the cabinet secretary can correct me, I think that the Government is on the wrong track when it comes to franchising.

Paul Sweeney: Will Mr Simpson take an intervention?

Graham Simpson: I was hoping that it would be the cabinet secretary who would seek to intervene, but I will take Mr Sweeney's intervention.

Paul Sweeney: I can hope to get a promotion, but Mr Simpson will have to make do with me in the meantime.

It is often said that a barrier to direct municipal ownership is the up-front capital costs, but there are alternative methods of financing. There are innovative proposals from the likes of Rock Road, which would use pension fund investments to allow the capital acquisition of buses to expand fleets. That opportunity could be seized to benefit us all.

Graham Simpson: There are lots of different models out there, including different models of franchising, and we should be open to them all.

I happen to believe that franchising can be a good thing. We have seen it in parts of England. However, it should be a choice and, at the moment, most of Scotland's regional transport partnerships do not want it. The cabinet secretary was not here when the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 was created, but he will have been

briefed on it, so he will know that it gives councils that choice. That legislation exists and the power exists. Councils can choose to establish bus companies, enter statutory partnerships with operators and introduce franchising if it is wanted.

So far, only Strathclyde has wanted to pursue franchising, and it has found the process painfully slow. It took the Scottish Government more than five and a half years to bring into force the franchising powers in the 2019 act. They came fully into force only in June last year, and it will be 2030 at the earliest before SPT can roll out its bus franchising plans. There is a real risk that it will never get there because, as things stand, before it gets final approval, it will have to face the additional scrutiny of the so-called independent panel. It is therefore really good to hear that Stephen Flynn wants to introduce legislation to remove that panel stage.

The people at Get Glasgow Moving should be commended for their work on the proposals. If they want to describe themselves as public transport nerds, I will join them in being a nerd, too. [*Interruption.*] I hoped for a moment that that was the crucial intervention from Stephen Flynn in which he would explain all the missing details.

Stephen Flynn could remove the panel stage. He has said that he will, and that is good. That is mentioned in my amendment. He could go further by empowering whatever will replace Transport Scotland with the ability to help authorities that want franchising in order to speed up the process. That is also covered in my amendment. I do not believe that ministers in Edinburgh know better than every transport authority in Scotland which model is right for every town, city and rural community.

I am rapidly running out of time. We are still waiting for final Scottish Government guidance on bus service improvement partnerships, which were established under the 2019 act, despite clear interest from transport authorities and regional transport partnerships across Scotland. The regional transport partnership for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire has made the most progress, but even its proposals are not due to take effect until 2027.

We do not need a one-size-fits-all approach. There can be different models across Scotland. We have the tools, which are already in the toolbox. The question is whether we have the will to use them.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): Will you conclude, please?

Graham Simpson: Yes. I will finish by mentioning the final part of my amendment, which is about multimodal smart ticketing. That was first promised by the Scottish National Party in 2007, when Stephen Flynn was still a teenager, but we are still waiting. I have offered to help the cabinet secretary with that, and it is a genuine offer, whether he believes me or not. The technology to do it exists. My final suggestion is that the Government speaks to a provider, funds a trial and then rolls out the scheme nationally by 2031, which is what Stephen Flynn wants to do. Let us make transport easier for everyone.

I move amendment S7M-01881.1, to leave out from first “welcomes” to end and insert:

“calls on the Scottish Government to introduce legislation that will speed up the process of franchising where it is wanted as well as assisting regional transport partnerships that want to introduce franchising; further calls on the Scottish Government to introduce a trial multi-modal smart ticketing scheme in order that it can be rolled out nationally by 2031, and urges the Scottish Government to set out how it sees bus service improvement partnerships progressing.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Clare Adamson): I call Patrick Harvie to speak to and move amendment S7M-01881.2.

15:40

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): As others have said, this issue goes back a long way. Paul Sweeney correctly traced it back to the bus deregulation of the 1980s. In this Parliament, we have heard the quote, which is said to be from Margaret Thatcher but which is widely thought to be apocryphal, that if a man finds himself a passenger on a bus, having attained the age of 30, he can count himself a failure. In truth, regardless of whether she said anything like that, that sentence captures the way that bus travel and bus passengers have been treated. Decades of deregulation and privatisation have left most parts of the country with a service that is unreliable, inconsistent, of poor quality and highly priced. In short, it is a classic free market mess, from which a tiny handful of individuals and companies have grown very rich.

That needs to end. Over recent years, a consensus has begun to grow that we have the will to make it end and to return to a model whereby public transport is seen as a public service. However, progress has been slow. Members have mentioned the SPT area. It is more advanced than other regions in that respect. We have political consensus on franchising, we have initial plans and there is Government support and funding for the initial stages. However, even under the current arrangements, the best-case scenario for the SPT area is for franchising to be in place sometime in 2029 or even 2030.

Paul Sweeney: Mr Harvie makes an important point about resourcing. It is one thing to will franchising in legislation, but the fact that the Government has allocated only £4 million, when, by its own estimate, SPT alone needs £6.5 million, shows that there is inadequate resourcing to move it forward.

Patrick Harvie: I certainly think that there is inadequate long-term commitment to it. I do not think that SPT is underfunded for the work that needs to happen in the current financial year, but a long-term commitment needs to be there, as well.

Let us look at the sequence of events. In the previous session of Parliament, we had a tied vote on whether to remove the unnecessary delay of the panel stage; not removing it then was a missed opportunity. Later, the SNP manifesto contained an undefined commitment to "Better Buses legislation". It is clearly welcome that the SNP wanted to do something in that space, but it was not clear what that was going to be. The same language was used in September in the programme for government—again, without definitions. Throughout September and October, we got no answers on what the legislation would contain, what purpose it would set out to achieve or when it would arrive. In October, I was told in this chamber:

"Over the coming months, we will undertake further engagement and discussion regarding potential options before decisions on next steps are taken."—[*Official Report*, 8 October 2026; c 11.]

Then there was the SNP conference, where the First Minister announced that there would be franchising everywhere by 2031 in order to take back control of the bus network. Let us be clear what that means. The First Minister said in his speech:

"through franchising and regulation, the SNP will bring the bus network back into public control".

That does not mean franchising in a few places, BSIPs in a few places and the current free market mess in a few other places. If the First Minister's commitments are to be taken seriously, we have to acknowledge that they will not be met under today's legislative framework, which is permissive of franchising and even municipal ownership but entirely fails to proactively drive change.

Willie Rennie: What would Patrick Harvie do with Lothian Buses?

Patrick Harvie: My next paragraph acknowledges that there needs to be a reasonable exception made in the case of Lothian, which is further forward with regard to public control, so it would be perverse to force it back a stage, when franchising is the natural route towards, ultimately, municipal ownership. It is the Green view that to force any region back a step in that journey would be odd.

The cabinet secretary's words seemed carefully chosen. Having listened to him, it remains unclear to me whether the full meaning of the First Minister's words will be delivered. If the momentum is there, the Greens certainly welcome it. However, the clock is ticking and if legislation is not introduced quickly, it will not happen in this session of Parliament.

The matter is not, as some people argue, simply about one mode of public transport versus another—I know that some argue that the £2 bus fare cap, for example, has harmed rail patronage. However, we should proudly say that every mode of public transport should be cheap, reliable, available and run for public benefit. I am proud of the Greens' success in negotiating the under-22s bus pass and the £2 fare cap, but I do not want those things to end up as a subsidy for private companies; instead, I want that benefit to be captured for the public.

Paul Sweeney: *rose*—

Patrick Harvie: I am afraid that I am coming to the end of my time.

There is a long-term decline in bus patronage. That is partly about price and reliability, but it is also about the dominance of car culture, and our building places and communities that are too car dependent. That will only be reversed if transport policy truly works with a hierarchy, which the Government claims to support, of putting active travel and public transport ahead of other modes, as some other European countries have done successfully for decades.

Franchising should be a natural step towards municipal ownership. I support many of the arguments made in the Scottish Trades Union Congress briefing that has been circulated to members. However, as I said earlier, a different approach is justified in the case of Lothian, because it is a step further ahead in the progress towards public control. I hope that the momentum will be there to achieve the full meaning of the First Minister's words during this session of Parliament, but it will require legislation—and soon.

I move amendment S7M-01881.2, to insert at end:

"; believes that, if the Scottish Government is going to deliver on its commitments, it must urgently update Parliament with a timeline of when the £2 bus cap will be rolled out nationwide, and calls on the Scottish Government to introduce an ambitious bill by Spring 2027 to reform the legislative framework for bus services and accelerate the franchising process."

The rest of this Official Report will be published progressively as soon as the text is available.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Tim Eagle to speak to and move amendment S7M-01881.5.

15:47

Tim Eagle (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To some extent, here we go again, with Stephen Flynn, along with the SNP, announcing more plans, some parts of which I admit that I agree with and some I do not. However, for members who have been in the chamber for a little more than a few hours, it becomes painfully obvious at times that SNP promises could be likened to a bad bus—they look great on the timetable but often just do not turn up.

I know that SNP members like examples, so I want to go back to some of the things that have been mentioned. The SNP's £500 million bus partnership fund was announced back in 2019 by none other than Nicola Sturgeon, who said:

"I can therefore announce today a major—indeed, transformational—capital investment programme."—[*Official Report*, 3 September 2019; c 18.]

That great announcement made plenty of headlines but, by March 2024, only £25 million had actually been spent before the fund was paused.

What about the SNP's flagship Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, which has been mentioned? Seven years later, the industry is still raising concerns about the guidance that is needed to implement parts of it, although I welcome the good news from the cabinet secretary about the removal of the panel.

The problem is that Scotland does not need another performance; it needs delivery, because behind all the political announcements, buses really do matter to people right across Scotland—I think that we will agree on that. Whether for someone who is travelling across Edinburgh or Glasgow to get to work, or for a student who is heading to college in Aberdeen, or for an older person in the Highlands who is trying to reach a hospital appointment, reliable and affordable buses are essential. In our cities, we need frequent services that reduce congestion, support businesses and give people a genuine alternative to using their cars.

We have good examples of what works: Lothian Buses demonstrates success, investments and a focus on passengers—all despite being publicly owned. Companies such as Ember are bringing welcome innovation, with new electric services that connect communities across Scotland, including in Moray and the Highlands, in my region.

We should be encouraging competition and innovation. The challenges are often different in rural Scotland; I brought a debate on that to the chamber last week, as it is in my heart. In our cities, the question might be how frequently a bus runs, but, in parts of the Highlands and Islands, the question is whether there is a bus at all. We saw that recently with the loss of the X99 service that connected Caithness with Inverness, including the important direct connection to Raigmore hospital. I recognise that operators make commercial decisions, but we cannot simply abandon communities because a service is not commercially profitable, which is why I am persuaded to engage on the topic with the cabinet secretary.

The Scottish Conservatives have called for a dedicated rural and small towns bus fund to help to protect essential services that might otherwise disappear. We should recognise local innovation. In Moray, the council's m.connect service is demonstrating how more flexible transport can help to fill gaps in rural provision.

I am not sure that there is a single model that will work for everyone. I want to see competition, innovation and strong partnership working between operators and councils. I will watch with interest how the Government takes forward its franchising proposals, but, whatever approach is chosen, it must deliver for passengers and it must provide genuine value for taxpayers.

I want to mention safety, because, in Moray, the tragic death of Keith Rollinson following an assault at Elgin bus station shocked my community. Sadly, that is not the only place where there has been violence. My message to the cabinet secretary is that, in any expanded or improved bus service, we must do more to tackle antisocial behaviour and to protect our passengers and drivers. People should feel safe while they are travelling, whether through Glasgow city centre or when waiting for a bus in Elgin.

Ultimately, I want to see reliable, affordable and safe services across the whole of Scotland. Passengers need thriving urban networks, better connections between our towns and cities, and vital rural and island services that connect our communities and on which they can depend. That is why I support the Scottish Conservatives' amendment.

I move amendment S7M-01881.5, to leave out from first "welcomes" to end and insert:

"recognises the vital role that reliable, affordable and accessible bus services play in connecting communities, supporting businesses and providing access to employment, education and healthcare; recognises the particular importance of bus services to rural and island communities, where they are often an essential lifeline; supports a bus network that encourages competition and innovation, delivers value for money and puts passengers' needs at its heart; recognises the need to ensure that public transport subsidies deliver value for money, and supports the introduction of a dedicated Rural and Small Towns Bus Fund to protect vital services that might otherwise be commercially unviable."

15:51

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): The cabinet secretary looked over at me when members were discussing the chief transport nerd in the Parliament, as if I was the chief nerd. I do not know whether that is in retaliation for some previous encounter; nevertheless, I will take that badge.

There is common agreement today about the importance of buses. Previously, we have endlessly debated roads, railways and trains, but never has the bus been up there in the way that it is now, which is a good thing. At this rate, the number of times we debate buses might even match the number of times we debate the ferries.

There is common agreement that there should be greater control over the buses. How far we go is part of that debate, but, nevertheless, we are agreed that there should be greater control.

There is also common agreement that, since 2007, bus usage and the number of bus journeys have plummeted. Our estimate is 150 million fewer journeys every year since 2007, and 100 million fewer kilometres travelled by buses every year since 2007. As Lloyd Melville probably experiences too, in our part of the world there is an almost annual round of cuts and changes to bus services, which disrupts people's lives and endangers their jobs because they are incapable of getting to work. As we have seen in the Highlands and in Dumfries and Galloway, there is the collapse of private operators, with those services increasingly being taken over by the local authority.

I think that we can all agree on all that.

Paul Sweeney: Does Willie Rennie agree that this is intrinsic to the idea of a network? If you start pulling bits of the network apart, its usefulness to everyone starts to collapse, which accentuates the decline in patronage.

Willie Rennie: We all agree on that, too—how we get there is what we need to debate.

I am in favour of an orderly process that works effectively and that we can deliver, because I am fed up of us saying wonderful things in the Parliament but not delivering the product at the end of the day. I want an orderly process that delivers the result.

What I get frustrated about with recent policy—in fact, not just when it comes to bus policy—is that, although there has been support on the bus cap, for instance, which I support, and on concessions for old and young people, a piecemeal approach is taken. I get frustrated by the fact that we have cut the network support grant in real terms, which disproportionately affects rural areas and has contributed to the decline of services in those areas, and by our not having a comprehensive approach to assessing the impact on rail services. I really worry about intercity services—the buses are now of far better quality, so if people can go from Glasgow to Inverness for £2 on the bus, why on earth would they pay £21 to go on the train? We must consider all parts. It is not one against the other; we need to have a collective and considered approach, which I do not think is in place.

We have had the 2019 act for seven years now, and we have only just recently had the guidance. Now, all of a sudden, we are expecting the Government to implement a fully comprehensive franchising scheme in every part of the country in five years. In fact, on the bus partnerships, we do not even have the guidance yet. We still do not have a comprehensive view. Again, the £4 million that was allocated and that we negotiated as part of the budget has still not been spent, and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport does not have the money to spend on the process.

I know that Graham Simpson is, rightly, obsessed with smart ticketing. The national smart ticketing advisory board that had been sitting for years apparently did nothing and has now been scrapped. Why has smart ticketing not progressed faster than it has? All of a sudden, we are going to move towards—

Paul Sweeney: Will the member take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: Not just now—I am getting into my flow.

I am pleased about what the minister said about the panel. I think that he is right, and if I am honest, we made a mistake by backing the introduction of the panel. I am pleased that the minister has considered that it should be withdrawn.

There are other things that need to change, too. We need swift change to the powers of regional transport partnerships so that they are able to move forward without delay towards the franchising model.

I will set out some of my asks in my concluding speech, but my plea is for a comprehensive plan that is, perhaps, a little bit boring but that is orderly and that allows us to deliver something that improves the experience for the bus user.

I come back to the beginning of my contribution. I think that there is agreement that we need to prioritise buses, so let us make it happen and make it happen soon.

I move amendment S7M-01881.3, to leave out from first "welcomes" to end and insert:

"believes in the importance of improving the availability, affordability and accessibility of bus services in Scotland; welcomes the opportunity to consider how this can be achieved through franchising and regulation; notes the Scottish Government's commitment to introducing a £2 bus fare cap to all areas of Scotland; believes that any such measures should be carefully considered in order to recognise the existing provision and differing needs across Scotland, and that they must be part of a wider strategy for bus services that includes the delivery of integrated ticketing and continued network development; notes with concern that over 150 million fewer passenger journeys were made on local bus services in 2024-25 compared to the peak in 2007-08, the year in which the SNP entered government, and that annual local bus service vehicle kilometres have also fallen by over 100 million in the same period; recognises concerns regarding the sustainability of bus services in rural and remote areas and a lack of coherent integration of bus and rail services; believes that the reduction in the real-terms value of the Network Support Grant base rate has undermined the viability of bus services, particularly in rural and remote areas, and recognises the importance of community transport services in the delivery of public transport across Scotland and the challenges which the sector faces, including increased fuel and maintenance costs."

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): We move to the open debate. The time limit that has been agreed with relevant business managers for all speeches in the open debate is four minutes.

15:57

Lloyd Melville (Angus South) (SNP): I refer to my entry in the register of members' interests as a sitting Angus councillor.

The SNP Government has taken many steps to improve public transport across Scotland, including funding bus travel for 2.5 million people, scrapping peak rail fares for good, bringing ScotRail into public ownership and now the £2 fare cap, which is a real help during the cost of living crisis. However, under the current model, when Stagecoach cut services in Monifieth and Muirdrum in my constituency, nobody informed the local health centres, nobody asked NHS Tayside about folk getting to Ninewells and the public were not meaningfully consulted. So, 150 people came together at a public meeting that I held to pressure Stagecoach. Lara Bird MP and I got the operator and the council around the table, and the new community solution started on Monday. I thank stakeholders for working with me and Lara to find a way forward, but no community should have to fight that hard just to stay connected to vital services when private operators make damaging decisions.

The bus framework is not fit for purpose in 2026. In Angus alone, young people have made 4.5 million taxpayer-funded journeys yet, despite that, on commercial routes where there is vast public subsidy through concessionary fares, operators can act entirely in their own interest at the expense of our communities. When a service is withdrawn, particularly in-year, councils have no time to try to organise a replacement.

That is why the SNP Government is right to bring buses back under public control. I very much welcome the commitment to scrapping the independent panel, which has been holding back franchising in Strathclyde, alongside the commitment to minimum service levels. I mentioned the 2005 act in my intervention on the cabinet secretary, because I want regional authorities to be empowered to deliver public transport.

Presiding Officer, you wait ages for one bus debate and then two come along at once: Tim Eagle very kindly brought a debate on rural buses and rural transport to the Parliament, highlighting that improvements to our bus network must also work for rural Scotland.

Last week, I talked about Connecting Ireland, which aims to give 70 per cent of rural residents a bus service that provides three return journeys per day to a nearby town. That effort grew rural bus use by 38 per cent in a single year. It can be done, and I encourage the cabinet secretary to meet Ireland's National Transport Authority to learn more about that. As deputy convener of the Transport Committee, I am very keen for us to do likewise.

Paul Sweeney: Any promotional activity to encourage greater passenger use is welcome, but does Lloyd Melville accept the points that were made earlier in the debate about putting one mode of public transport in competition with another? Does he recognise that that issue needs to be overcome with fully integrated ticketing, so that a bus ticket is not in competition with a train ticket?

Lloyd Melville: Yes, and I am coming to that.

Of course, whatever the model, the bus fare must also be affordable. The expansion of the £2 cap to Aberdeen and the shire in April is very much welcome, but I gently point out to the cabinet secretary that the Angus border is right there, so Tayside must be next. Cutting fares from Arbroath and Kirriemuir into Dundee will make a significant difference to my constituents.

However, as Paul Sweeney just said, and as he mentioned in his speech, cheaper buses must not undercut our publicly owned railway. ScotRail told the Parliament that the Highlands fare cap has cost it £750,000 in lost revenue as train passengers switched to the bus. Therefore, I would welcome the cabinet secretary's views on how we protect ScotRail's revenues as we seek to expand the cap nationwide.

Better buses legislation must put communities first, give authorities proper notice of network changes, make health services a statutory consultee, improve powers for regional authorities and learn from Ireland about connecting rural communities. We are making the fares cheaper, but with public control we must make the system work for everyone.

16:02

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North) (SNP): When we speak about building a fairer Scotland, reducing inequality and reforming public services, we must ask a simple question: can people actually access the opportunities and services that we create?

If someone cannot get to work, reach college, attend a hospital appointment or participate fully in their community, even the best policies can fall short. That is why buses are not simply a transport issue; they are an economic issue, a social justice issue and a public service reform issue.

As the MSP for Midlothian North, I see at first hand the difference that reliable bus services make. For older residents maintaining their independence, young people accessing education and employment, working families balancing work and childcare and many other people, a bus route is not a convenience but a lifeline.

In Midlothian, communities have repeatedly faced uncertainty when services are reviewed or withdrawn. The current debate around the 46 and 48 Lothian Buses services demonstrates how important those routes are. Given the degraded access to hospital appointments and the failure of routes and timetables to support access to work, cancelling those services was a disgrace. To make matters worse, I was extremely disappointed that Lothian Buses refused my invitation to it to meet me and council officials to discuss the reduction in those services.

Constituents who are affected by those cuts are frustrated that decisions are too often driven by passenger numbers and commercial considerations rather than the needs of local communities. Communities are asking a different question: what is lost when that connection disappears, when an older person becomes isolated, when a young person cannot access education or when a worker can no longer make a straightforward journey?

Those costs may not appear on an operator's balance sheet, but communities pay for them every day. Lothian Buses must take responsibility for what I regard as its callous indifference to the communities that use those important routes, with not even the courtesy of a community consultation. The City of Edinburgh Council, as the majority shareholder, must also take responsibility. In my view, the council has shown insufficient interest in such cases and has refused to have a meaningful dialogue on the issue.

If, in effect, nationalisation is the only option to ensure that communities are properly served by the bus network, that must be the next step. That is why I welcome the direction that the Scottish Government has taken through the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, and its commitment to giving communities and local authorities a stronger voice in shaping services.

However, public ownership must be about more than who owns the buses; it must be about who the buses serve. Public ownership must not simply replicate decisions based on passenger numbers—the goal must be to connect people, support communities, reduce inequalities and create opportunities. Every community deserves an equal voice. Without that, busy city centres will always command the greatest attention while smaller towns, villages and rural communities risk becoming an afterthought. Their services become easier to reduce and their concerns easier to overlook, and that cannot be right.

The message from my constituency is clear: we should put communities at the heart of decision making, measure social value alongside financial value and recognise that the true value of a bus route lies not simply in the number of passengers that it carries but in the opportunities that are created, the independence that it supports and the communities that it keeps connected. Strong communities need strong connections, and strong connections build a fairer Scotland.

The rest of this Official Report will be published progressively as soon as the text is available.

16:05

Pauline Stafford (Bathgate) (SNP): I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests as a sitting councillor in West Lothian Council. I am pleased that there is so much synergy in the debate today; I was going to begin with a quote from the economist Mariana Mazzucato, which Paul Sweeney has already mentioned. She said:

"For too long, governments have socialized risks but privatized rewards: the public has paid the price for cleaning up messes, but the benefits of those cleanups have accrued largely to companies and their investors."

Nowhere can we see a clearer example of that than in our current bus system. The public have been paying for this market failure since Thatcher's 1986 privatisation 40 years ago—for almost my entire life.

Public transport is an essential public service—its economic, social and environmental benefits to society far outweigh what it costs to build and run. KPMG research found that every £1 that is invested in bus services can yield between £4.55 and £5 in wider economic benefits. Why, therefore, should we continue to accept a system that is largely determined by commercial interests, and which results in fragmented, expensive and often unreliable services?

It is time to shift the balance of power. The people in West Lothian know only too well the stark reality of the lack of control over such an important public service. In 2023, McGill's Buses pulled every service that it ran out of West Lothian, with just a couple of weeks' notice and no consultation. That resulted in huge disruption, leaving entire areas with almost no service; staff and patients at St John's hospital unable to access their work and important medical appointments; and West Lothian Council having to launch an immediate review to assess the impact on affected communities and try to realign the remaining commercial and subsidised network. That is no way to run a service that should be designed around people's needs.

I also highlight that when we see something like the reference in the Conservatives' amendment to a

"Rural and Small Towns Bus Fund",

we automatically think of the more remote parts of Scotland. However, as a central belt MSP for a constituency that lies equidistant between Edinburgh and Glasgow, I stress that much of my constituency is semi-rural and suffers from the same challenges as rural areas.

I have met a number of third sector organisations that have cited transport as a major barrier to delivering services and reaching those who need them. Earlier this week, I visited Blackburn United Community Sports Club, which runs a support group for people suffering from dementia and for their carers. They explained the difficulties that people have in accessing the service, which is vital for keeping them engaged with society and as well as they can be for as long as possible when they are no longer able to drive.

We need a bus system that is designed around our communities' needs and focused on achieving the best outcomes. We have already seen huge investment in nationalising Scotland's rail system, the expansion of our subsidised bus provision and the introduction of a £2 cap over a vast area of Scotland—I hope that West Lothian will be the next area, as I think that many members will mention. In order to ensure that those investments provide more than the sum of their parts, the next logical step must be a fully integrated system in which routes and ticketing across different forms of transport can be co-ordinated seamlessly for affordable journeys.

In West Lothian, there are 12 train stations, which makes east-west travel fantastic, but for travel from north to south it is a completely different story. At the station that I use in Bathgate, there are 570 car parking spaces, all of which are often taken by 7.30 in the morning. Many of those cars come from just a mile or two away, so there is a big prize there. Our bus services need to work in lockstep to improve that situation.

I think that speakers in this debate are all going to compete to be the biggest transport nerds. I got into this area by default, via a route that involved living in the Netherlands for four years. I cannot overstate what a difference it made to my health and wellbeing to have access to an extensive, well-functioning and integrated transport system in which one journey by bike, bus, train and tram could be made with just one travel card: the OV-chipkaart.

I commend the Government for taking this bold step. We must move away from accepting our role as being only concerned with market fixing and patching up problems created by decades-old neoliberal policies and move towards being a market-shaping Government that sees investment in public transport as a public good in terms of our economy, our communities, our environment and our society.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): We have used up all the time that we had in hand, so I ask that members stick to the agreed time limits.

16:10

Jamie Langan (South Scotland) (Reform): I think that members from across the chamber will recognise that this is an important debate. Bus travel and access to public transport are crucial for our constituents, regardless of our region or constituency, and irrespective of whether people live in urban, suburban or rural settings.

I am happy to support the sensible and thoughtful amendment that was lodged by my colleague Graham Simpson, which rightly takes a pragmatic approach to the future of Scotland's bus network. I particularly welcome its emphasis on multimodal smart ticketing, which can make a real difference to passengers, and the recognition that we should remain open minded about different modes and models of bus service delivery.

We can see that here in Edinburgh and the Lothians, where the council-owned Lothian Buses provides what I think most of us would recognise as a good service—I say that as someone who has just about forgiven the company for the time a bus drove into the back of my car at the Meadowbank traffic lights in 2019. Despite that, I recognise that the service is actually quite good. It is a model that works for a specific area. As we have heard from a couple of speakers from across the chamber, we need to ensure that we have the right model for the right area and that it is not imposed on a top-down basis.

Bus travel is fundamental to connectivity and economic opportunity. Where services fail to deliver, the consequences are felt acutely. That is particularly true across rural Scotland and my South Scotland region. For many towns and villages, buses are an absolute lifeline, particularly for constituents without access to a car. They connect people to work, education and healthcare, yet, for too long, services across South Scotland have simply not been frequent enough or reliable enough. We have seen the withdrawal of the number 74 bus service between Dumfries and Moffat, the loss of the 512 bus service in Castle Douglas, and years of irregular and inadequate services for residents in Thornhill. In the Scottish Borders, the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership has identified limited connections between central Borders towns and Berwickshire, inadequate evening provision, and the need for better connections to the Borders general hospital and to rail connections in Reston, Galashiels and Tweedbank.

Those are not minor inconveniences; they are real barriers to opportunity. If someone cannot get a bus to work in the morning or get home again in the evening, that is a service that is simply not meeting their needs. That is why improving the frequency, reliability and quality of our bus network must be the first priority.

Of course, since the election, much has been made in the chamber around the delivery of the SNP's proposed £2 bus price cap. We all want affordable and reliable public transport for our constituents.

Max Bannerman (Highlands and Islands) (Reform): Further to Mr Langan's previous point, in my region, Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership has cited bus driver shortages as a reason for bus route reductions. Does he agree that it would be helpful if the Government were to set out what support it can give in relation to the retention, recruitment and training of drivers in rural areas?

Jamie Langan: I whole-heartedly agree with Mr Bannerman. That service delivery piece is the first and foremost question that we need to look at in this discussion.

On the topic of price caps—Mr Arthur will recognise this when we come to the food price cap—I have made no secret of the fact that I do not believe price controls necessarily work, and I feel that they can often be a political gimmick. However, the Government seems intent to press ahead with the policy, so I think that we need to engage with it constructively.

There are questions that I would like to put to the cabinet secretary on the issue. Once passengers become accustomed to paying £2, how does the Government intend to manage the inevitable political pressure to maintain that cap indefinitely? The cost of running a bus network will not stand still. Wages will go up. Vehicles will need replacing and services will require investment. My concern is that there will be political incentive for the income into the bus network not to move. I would like to know what mechanisms will ensure that investment matches the needs of the bus network. I do not know whether the minister can clarify that, or whether he will come to that later.

Tom Arthur: I will come to that later.

Jamie Langan: Fantastic—that is something for all members to look forward to.

Fundamentally, service delivery will be key. What use is a £2 bus fare to someone in rural Dumfries and Galloway or the Scottish Borders if no bus is available to get them to work or to a hospital appointment? Graham Simpson's amendment rightly calls for a pragmatic approach to improving Scotland's bus network. I hope that the Government will share that pragmatism. Affordability matters, but it cannot come at the expense of investment and service quality for the network.

16:15

Zen Ghani (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests. I am a sitting member of Glasgow City Council.

The Scottish bus network is the backbone of the Scottish transport system and is essential in my constituency of Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok. Buses connect my constituents to the whole of the city, whether it is the 57 connecting Silverburn shopping centre to the city centre and the north of the city; the 34 connecting Castlemilk to Shawlands and on to Govan; or the 6 that starts in East Kilbride and goes through my constituency, connecting to the city centre and Clydebank. Do not worry—I will not start listing all the bus routes in my constituency.

My Cathcart and Pollok constituency faces additional challenges. Areas such as Castlemilk lack a train station, so the increased reliance on the bus network means that there are no alternatives when something goes wrong. As buses are vital to everyday life in those communities, it is essential that the Government strengthens the network and ensures that the services that it provides meet the needs of the people it is designed to serve. Pollokshaws Road has been identified as Glasgow's worst bus pinch point. Overall congestion there means that commuters lose more than 350,000 hours of their time annually, which is worth more than £7.45 million to the economy.

The SNP has acted by introducing bus priority measures such as the artificial intelligence bus pilot to reduce congestion and speed up the commute. Free bus passes for under-22s have been used for more than 44 million journeys in Glasgow, allowing children to go to school without being charged and young people to begin work, university and college without the extra cost burden. In addition, the £2 bus fare cap has been introduced across Glasgow and the west coast and has been hugely welcomed by my constituents. Despite the progress that is being made, we must look forward to the next steps.

Paul Sweeney: Zen Ghani is making a potent point about the fragmentation of the system in Glasgow. Does he share my frustration that many of the inefficiencies are a result of the privatised structure? If we could understand which routes make and lose money and where buses are being pinched in real time, and if we had an integrated regional transport partnership with the relevant powers, we could more readily address those issues. Does he agree that franchising presents that opportunity?

Zen Ghani: I agree with Paul Sweeney about the need for an integrated system that can highlight and help to tackle the concerns that he has mentioned. To do that, we need to look at where buses work best, work for the people who use them, and are under public control. That is why I welcome the First Minister's announcement that all buses in Scotland will be brought under public control by 2031. That will mean ensuring that vital bus routes are maintained, services are more regular, and routes are planned with public need, rather than profit, in mind. Franchising will also give power back to smaller communities such as Carmunnock, Glasgow's only village, which is in my constituency, and will ensure that those communities are not left behind where rail cannot reach them.

To see the benefits of publicly controlled transport, we need not look much further than Edinburgh. The rate of car usage for people commuting to work in Edinburgh is only 27 per cent, in comparison with Glasgow's 38 per cent. A publicly owned and integrated transport system would mean fewer cars on the road, fewer emissions created, and less damage to our road infrastructure. Franchising would offer us not only the ability to improve Scotland's buses but the chance to build a more integrated travel system. We could link our rail and road public transport, modernise Scotland's infrastructure and offer a more seamless service. With integrated ticketing between publicly owned services, Scotland has the opportunity to use transport reform to grow the economy and improve accessibility across the country.

Alongside changes to transform Scotland's bus network, the policies must be accompanied by a full roll-out of bus priority measures. For example, the Government has increased its bus infrastructure fund to £55 million, which demonstrates its commitment to building better buses for Scotland. However, we need to go further. Only by empowering the regional transport authorities can we allow them to determine what actions are best suited to addressing their own transport challenges. By shifting control back into public hands and prioritising our buses on the road, this Government should continue to put the interests of the Scottish people at the centre of our public transport.

16:20

Patricia Gibson (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I wanted to participate in this debate for two main reasons. The first reason is that I wanted to celebrate the £2 bus fare cap, which is a huge boon to those who already travel by bus and those who are now persuaded to do so more regularly. In a context in which prices are increasing with alarming regularity, having the security, safety and reliability of much cheaper travel is worthy

of celebration. It is also a vital social inclusion measure. My constituents in Cunninghame South are very supportive of it.

The second reason that I wanted to participate is to highlight the fact that bus service provision does not currently meet the expectations and needs of many local communities. We have heard much about that today. It is appropriate that the roll-out of the £2 bus fare cap should bring a renewed focus on service provision. The current bar, which is to protect bus routes using the social benefit case, has not yielded the support that I would like to see in my constituency. I am keen to see the reintroduction of a direct Irvine-to-Glasgow bus service. Irvine is a town with around 39,000 people, who are keen to utilise a bus to Glasgow in order to access work and leisure opportunities more easily and cheaply. I am confident that, if that route is reintroduced, it will attract passengers with the £2 bus fare cap.

It is appropriate for me to give a shout out to the "MyBus" and dial-a-bus services. They are valuable initiatives, but it is clear that they cannot fill the gaps in provision. The Scottish Government acknowledges that there are gaps in bus provision. Cheap travel is very welcome, but the fact is that we need more and better buses and more frequent services if we are to realise the potential of cheap travel.

Willie Rennie: Patricia Gibson is right to highlight those two cases of community transport in her constituency. Community transport is really undervalued, and it could play a massive role in filling the gaps in provision, particularly in rural and remote areas. I would not pass over them as quickly as Patricia Gibson did—she is right to highlight their value.

Patricia Gibson: I did not mean to pass over them—I thought that it was important to give them a shout out. They are another aspect of the model that we want to see, which requires more investigation and deserves more credit than, perhaps, it gets.

Those of us who rely on public transport are excited by the Scottish Government's plans to bring Scotland's bus network under public control by 2031. That will be welcomed by my constituents who, as I have said, do not believe that the current model serves them as well as they ought to be served. I appreciate that the Scottish Government's plans are in the early stages and I look forward to the cabinet secretary putting more flesh on the bones of those plans at pace. My constituents are also keen to see that. Several members have mentioned integrated ticketing: that would be an important step forward. It is the norm in much of mainland Europe—perhaps we could investigate it and, in time, deliver it.

I understand that, as we have seen, there are strong views on this issue. As these plans have been formulated, I have been disappointed at some of the—frankly, offensive—language used by some bus bosses, which I will put no more specifically than that, and which was directed at the First Minister. That was reported widely in the press, with no comment made by any Opposition member about how inappropriate or dangerous the language used was. That is deeply unfortunate, given how fractious and heightened the temperature in politics can become. I appreciate that the Labour Party did not feel able to criticise the hysterical and over-the-top language used in a certain quarter. Let us just say that perhaps the Labour Party's loyalties are divided on that issue, given that a six-figure-sum donation will tend to produce that effect. I will leave that there for other people to consider.

The current private model leaves all our constituents vulnerable to route closures and is well overdue for reform. I appreciate that some bus operators are upset because they lost the opportunity, as they saw it, to decide Scotland's bus policy, which would have happened if Labour had won the election, but the SNP won the election, and the SNP bus policy will be decided on the criteria of what best serves the people of Scotland. The cabinet secretary is keen to engage with stakeholders, but I say to her that we are all urging her to work at pace to deliver the service that we want to see.

16:25

Katie Hagmann (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): I am fortunate to be in the position that I not only drive but have access to a car—an enormous privilege that, I admit, can be and at times is taken for granted. However, if I stop, take a moment and think, I can remember myself as a wee girl standing at the bus stop, out at the front of the queue, watching intently and waiting for the next bus. Why was I so vigilant? Well, my mum could not drive—not because she did not want to, but because her eyesight was so poor that she was not allowed to. The issue has affected her for her entire life. As her eyesight was so poor, she could not see the bus numbers, so I was put to good use. I would look out for the right bus and, as soon as I saw it, announce its imminent arrival.

When you have no choice but to rely on buses, they suddenly become very important. This week, at general question time, I was able to raise the issue of communities that are poorly served or lack adequate bus transport connections. It related to the small village of Sorn, in my constituency, but, with such a large and

rural constituency, I could have singled out any number of towns and villages, including the main town of Girvan, which, shockingly, has no direct bus service to Ayr. I was reassured that the cabinet secretary agreed with me that rural communities deserve a standard of bus service that many do not have, and I welcomed his commitment to work with me and others on the issue.

I know how valuable our rural economy is. Ensuring that people can get to work is vital, but, as others have said, so is access to education, leisure and, importantly, healthcare. On Tuesday, some of the brilliant students from Ayr College came to Parliament to host a dining night, showcasing the emerging talent in hospitality, and it was a fantastic event. However, in order to access the opportunities of college and have the opportunity to attend such events, people need to travel, and, for some who rely on our bus network, that is simply too hard. With that in mind, I fully endorse the Government's motion. I am excited to see how its proposal will be developed and I look forward to seeing what new opportunities it will open up in my communities.

As I draw my remarks to a close, it is important to acknowledge that, if it were not for the army of volunteers and community ventures, large numbers of my constituents would be bereft of services. There would be no access to life-saving healthcare, essential shopping would be made that bit harder and opportunities for leisure would be just out of reach. I therefore say thank you to the Girvan and South Carrick Community Action Network, Stinchar Connections, Carrick Community Transport Group, Coalfield Community Transport and, importantly, to all the individuals who help out neighbours, family and friends.

Last week, my mum celebrated her 80th birthday. She has spent her life reliant on buses, and she, too, will welcome the steps to strengthen our bus network. After all, she has friends to visit all over Scotland, and, with her free bus pass and better connections, she will want to take full advantage, although I am not sure that her 16-year-old Jack Russell terrier, Porridge, is going to be quite so keen.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): We now move to the closing speeches. We are running late, so I ask those speaking to stick to the times agreed.

16:29

Willie Rennie (Fife North East) (LD): There have been two revelations in this debate, the first of which was that Jamie Langan has been on a bus. The second was that Colin Beattie is brave and bold because he launched a broadside against the saintly Lothian Buses and revealed his Thatcherite tendencies with respect to public ownership.

That, in itself, shows us that this is not just about ownership but that it is what we do with ownership that really matters. We had a contribution from Lloyd Melville, who asked whether the national health service is consulted when there are cuts to bus services. Patricia Gibson talked about community transport, and Zen Ghani spoke about empowering regional transport partnerships.

All of that is incredibly important when we consider what to do next. However, when I speak to bus companies, the thing that they are most excited about is bus priority, because they want to be sure that buses are moving. Too often, when you get on a bus, it does not move—it gets stuck in traffic. That should get equally important consideration from the cabinet secretary.

I will also be intrigued to hear, in his summing up, whether we are going to have primary or secondary legislation for the removal of the independent panel and for the open data that he talked about. If we are going to meet the 2031 deadline, we will have to change the process that we have introduced and do that quickly, but there is no indication that we are going to have a better buses bill any time soon, which makes me wonder whether the cabinet secretary is going to introduce secondary legislation.

The other message of today has been that one size does not fit all and that we must consider what is right for different parts of the country. Dumfries and Galloway has taken an approach that is different to that in the Highlands, but I think that the critical areas we will have to consider will be Fife, Tayside and the north-east, because those are the areas where there will be debate about which model to introduce.

I want any change to be planned, because we have seen with Alexander Dennis that, when we do not have the ScotZEB process in line, with funding available for the purchase of buses from Scottish firms, workers end up being laid off. We need a planned and orderly process.

We must also consider the cost. The rushed introduction of the bus fare cap in the SPT area meant that we are having to pay an awful lot more than people in England. The cost is £500 million for the whole of England but £120 million for the small area of Strathclyde with its relatively small population. We must make changes in an orderly fashion, to ensure that we are getting value for money. Also, if we are going to buy the buses

and the depots, we need to budget for that, because I am told that the most effective way of franchising means buying those things, which will cost an awful lot of money. Paul Sweeney referred to that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): The member must wind up.

Willie Rennie: I want to say one final thing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): Wind up, please.

Willie Rennie: We should make Graham Simpson happy by having smart ticketing.

16:33

Tim Eagle (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I think that Willie Rennie missed the Highlands and Islands off his list.

I will be quick, because I know that we are pushed for time. Stephen Flynn mentioned lifeline services, and public transport in the Western Isles genuinely is a lifeline service. I hope that, during his time as transport secretary, he will genuinely ensure that our entire transport system works for people there, particularly those who need to get to health appointments.

Willie Rennie spoke about the number of bus journeys having plummeted and the need to do more about that. Paul Sweeney talked about the damage that can be caused by picking apart the system. Patricia Gibson and Katie Hagmann spoke about being excited. I would love to be excited, but I am quickly learning that the SNP does not deliver a lot of what it says it is going to do. Our constituents need an integrated transport system in which trains, ferries and buses connect well and on time and deliver seamlessly.

I repeat my main point, because it is the only point for the people in the Highlands and Islands, whom I speak to every day. What matters is where buses operate. That is the point about delivery, and that is what we must get right.

16:34

Laura Moodie (South Scotland) (Green): As a fully signed-up member of the transport nerd club, I welcome this debate, the cabinet secretary's announcement about scrapping the independent panel and, of course, the Scottish Green support measures that make bus travel more affordable. Reducing fares really matters in a cost of living crisis.

For someone travelling to work, to college, to a hospital appointment or to see family, every pound saved makes a difference. A return ticket to Dumfries from my nearby village costs £15, so the Green policy of free bus travel for under-22s has transformed family budgets in my area. However, my community has not yet benefited from the £2 cap, nor have constituents in the Borders or in Dumfries and Galloway been given any indication of when that might happen.

Of course, a cheap bus that never arrives is of no use to anyone. The true test of a transport system is not simply what passengers pay but whether people can depend on it. That is why I want to focus on reliability, particularly outside our biggest cities.

As Tim Eagle and Pauline Stafford said, for too many communities the greatest barrier to using public transport is the lack of a dependable service. Nowhere is that clearer than in the case of the X74 bus service between Dumfries and Glasgow, which is operated by Stagecoach West Scotland. That service, which connects Dumfries and Moffat to Lesmahagow, Hamilton and, of course, Glasgow, is the spine of South Scotland's bus system. It is precisely the sort of lifeline service that the cabinet secretary mentioned in his opening speech. As well as allowing a young person to get to college, a patient to reach hospital appointments and a worker to commute, it enables families to remain connected to opportunities. However, since being elected, I have heard serious concerns about persistent cancellations, late running and a complete lack of communication when things have gone wrong. Those were not isolated incidents—I am talking about repeated failures that have had a serious impact on people's lives.

Because of those concerns, I campaigned for independent monitoring of the route by Bus Users UK, and the findings from that exercise are nothing short of damning. During the monitoring period, punctuality on the X74 was recorded at below 50 per cent, and almost half of the services observed were late or failed to operate altogether. Communication with passengers was inadequate and, on some journeys, customer services fell below what passengers should reasonably expect. That is evidence not of a service that faces occasional difficulties but of real systemic failure. Indeed, the figures on the performance of the X74 are among the worst reliability figures ever identified, and they fall far below the standards expected by the traffic commissioner.

The failures of the X74 expose a wider problem. When communities in South Scotland are let down by bus services, there is often no credible rail alternative. When I recently raised the need for more ScotRail services to stations in South Scotland, the cabinet secretary's response was that passengers could use the services of cross-border operators instead. That was a case of the party of Scottish independence telling people in South Scotland that, if they want decent public transport connections, they should rely on services whose primary purpose is to take them to another country. Cross-border services have an important role to play, but they should complement Scotland's own public transport network, not compensate for its shortcomings.

In response to the points that Lloyd Melville and Paul Sweeney made about competition between rail and buses, I observe that we also need to invest in railways—for example, in dualling the Highland main line and reopening stations and routes in the south.

For decades, Scotland's bus services have been shaped by a model that gives private operators enormous influence while leaving communities with very little recourse. In August, Stagecoach West Scotland received almost £210,000 through the network support grant. That was the same month in which Bus Users UK's monitoring started.

When things go well, private companies collect the profits, but, when things go badly, it is passengers and communities who bear the costs. If we genuinely believe that buses are an essential service, we need to have a system that the public can have confidence in. That means having stronger regulation and real financial consequences for operators that consistently fail passengers, which could involve attaching specific reliability conditions to the network support grant. Although Willie Rennie's amendment mentions the network support grant, I am afraid that we cannot support it, because we believe that conditionality should be built into that grant.

We need to equip local authorities and transport authorities with the powers and resources that they need not just to intervene when services break down but to take back control of our bus system entirely. Councils such as Dumfries and Galloway Council, which is now the second-largest bus operator in the area, have had no option but to take on services. I am sorry to again take issue with Mr Rennie, but I must do so for his characterisation of what happened in that case as the collapse of a private operator. Stagecoach West Scotland made a business decision to withdraw from all but two services in its area, giving the council, the regional transport partnership and communities the least notice possible. That was a commercial decision driven by profit, not collapse.

In the Borders, annual passenger numbers on council-operated services increased from roughly 2,000 to nearly 12,000 after several key routes were brought in-house by the council. Public bodies must design networks around the needs of communities rather than the profitability of individual routes. The X74 shows what ultimately happens when essential transport links are created as commercial assets rather than public services.

Let us make bus travel more affordable and more dependable, but let us recognise that, if we are serious about improving public transport, public control, public accountability and public service must come before private profit.

16:40

Max Bannerman (Highlands and Islands) (Reform): This has been a very interesting debate not just for transport nerds such as Graham Simpson, Willie Rennie and Paul Sweeney, but for the rest of us who know too well from our constituents that transport services are really important in our local areas.

Last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport told the Parliament that bus provision across Scotland

"does not meet the expectations of the public."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 2026; c 11.]

Today, he said that those services were lifeline services in the Highlands and Moray. They certainly are. So, we agree on both of those points.

In February, Stagecoach withdrew services from Drakies, Milton of Leys, Culduthel, Milton Crescent and Dalneigh, in my home city of Inverness, blaming low use. Residents feared that older neighbours would be cut off. As Tim Eagle said, the X99 service ran for the last time last month. That was the bus that Caithness families used to reach Raigmore hospital. Stagecoach says that the impact will be minimal, but I would rather hear that from the patients themselves than take it at face value.

Lloyd Melville: The point that the member is making about patients and transport is apt. Does he agree that, as we approach legislation, the NHS should become a statutory consultee for any network changes?

Max Bannerman: I certainly agree with Mr Melville on that point.

In Moray, April's timetable cut the Elgin to Dufftown service to every two hours off peak and ended evening buses to Pinefield. Findhorn lost its Stagecoach link in 2024 and waited eight months for the council's replacement. A £2 fare is welcome, but a cheap ticket is worth nothing if the bus no longer comes.

We should look at who has filled the gaps. Highland Council, using powers that it already has, runs its own buses. It has just taken over Stagecoach's Thurso and Wick operation. As Tim Eagle said, Moray Council built its on-demand m.connect service. That is an example of local people getting on and making the best of it.

The next local answer is already on the table in the Highlands. Since 2021, Highland Council, the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership—HITRANS—and the operators have been building a bus service improvement partnership. In August, the council agreed to take the draft covering the inner Moray Firth and Lochaber area to a 12-week public consultation. That is what the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 intended: councils choosing franchising, their own buses or a binding partnership. As my thoughtful colleague Graham Simpson said, that is welcome. The cabinet secretary has said today in the chamber that he is removing the barriers, and we certainly welcome those comments.

The First Minister has promised to bring the bus network into public control by the end of the parliamentary session. However, as Graham Simpson noted, we are still none the wiser as to what that actually means. I hope that the cabinet secretary will give us some answers in his closing speech.

A partnership works only if operators sign binding commitments on fleets, frequencies and standards. Why would any operator do that in Elgin if its routes may be put out to tender before 2031? Why would a council spend scarce officer time on a scheme that Edinburgh may override? Uncertainty does not improve services—it freezes them. Even if the plan does not nationalise the buses in the end, it risks nationalising them via yet more centrally dictated decisions. Franchising may suit Strathclyde, with its more than 2 million people, but it is a far harder sell where a rural route carries a handful of passengers and there may be just one realistic bidder.

Our amendment calls on the Scottish Government to do three practical things. The first is to speed up franchising where it is wanted, and the second is to set a path to smart ticketing across every mode by 2031. Willie Rennie says that Graham Simpson is obsessed with smart ticketing, but I think that he is right to be obsessed with it. Thirdly, our amendment asks the Government to say how bus service improvement partnerships will progress. For the Highlands and Moray, that last question is not a technicality; it is actually the whole question. We must let communities choose what works for them.

I urge members to support our amendment.

16:45

Donald MacKinnon (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab): This afternoon's debate on buses has been a welcome and constructive one. We on the Labour benches are keen to work with the Scottish Government on what I believe are shared ambitions for the future of bus services in Scotland, and it has been helpful to get more clarity today from the cabinet secretary on the proposed legislation.

Although we are ready to support the Government on its ambitions and will support its motion today, we will of course scrutinise proposals as they emerge, as well as current policy.

The Labour amendment highlights the reduction in rural bus services. All rural MSPs and many urban ones will have had constituents get in touch with them about bus routes being cut and reductions in services. We have heard many references to that in the chamber this afternoon. In my constituency, where there are no unsupported commercial bus routes and the local authority both tenders and operates services, the starving of the core Na h-Eileanan an Iar budget is having an increasing impact on services.

Those of us who support the capping of bus fares must also recognise its shortcomings. Those are particularly stark for rural areas, where, if the bus is not there, there is no benefit to having a £2 bus cap. Without investment in and protection for rural bus services, that will not change. In fact, the cap could represent a transfer of bus funding from rural to urban areas. Understanding that and finding solutions must be at the forefront of the cabinet secretary's mind as he develops proposals for legislation.

I was concerned to hear the evidence that ScotRail offered at the Transport Committee yesterday. It reported that its analysis of the cap in the Highlands and Islands shows that it has cost ScotRail £750,000, which represents 12 per cent of its revenue in the region. If that was replicated in Strathclyde, it would cost £20 million, which represents some 5 per cent of ScotRail's overall revenue. The Government is investing

large amounts of money, much of which will go to private bus operators to deliver the £2 cap, but it now looks like the Government will also have to cover the reduction in revenue that is faced by state-owned ScotRail.

What worries me about that is the lack of joined-up thinking. As we move towards having a transport system with more public control, which I welcome and feel is long overdue, we must have joined-up thinking about how policy impacts modal shift. We must work towards a properly integrated public transport network. Jenni Minto made an excellent point about integration with ferry services.

I turn to some other contributions that we heard in the debate. The cabinet secretary made some reassuring opening remarks. He made an important point about what bus services are actually for, which is to serve the public, and not private interests. I am pleased that he acknowledged that there have been reductions in services across the country, and particularly in rural areas.

I was also pleased to hear the cabinet secretary reinforce the point that the purpose of the legislation is to deliver better services with more local control. Bus campaigners and members throughout the chamber will have been delighted to hear the commitments to removing the franchising panel and to taking a regional approach rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

My colleague Paul Sweeney set the historical context for the discussion, as he often does so well, taking us back to 1985 and deregulation. He discussed how that has led to the situation that we are in now, including the reductions in services that we continue to see. He then turned to the Labour amendment and the things that we have highlighted as being important in this debate, including municipalism, local control of bus services and control of the fare box, which is a crucial part of the discussion. That is about where the money ends up and who controls it.

Our amendment goes on to talk about our industrial strategy. In this discussion, we must not lose sight of how we can use the procurement of buses and where they are built to underpin our industrial strategy, and one way to do that is by attaching social value to grant funding and ensuring that that continues.

Bob Doris made a very useful intervention on Paul Sweeney, about empowering the communities that have been left behind. That is what franchising has to do. We need to make sure that the communities that have been excluded from the process so far are included in decisions on routes and on keeping their communities connected.

Turning to Graham Simpson's contribution, I think that he is right to be curious about the Government's plans and to ask questions about the details. I know that he is passionate about making our buses work better and about multimodal ticketing. We would like to support his amendment, but, as it would delete our own amendment, alas we cannot.

Patrick Harvie's point about the perceptions of bus travel—how it is viewed by the public as well as by people in Parliament—was very important. Encouraging more people to use our buses and dealing with any stigma that remains around bus travel is important to do as we move through this discussion.

Tim Eagle made an important contribution about the reduction of rural bus services. However, under the current system, we cannot tell which routes are profitable and which ones are not. I urge him to put his ideological opposition to greater public control to one side and embrace the opportunity in front of us.

Willie Rennie talked about the reduction in the number of journeys and, importantly, in the kilometres of bus journeys. He referenced the network support grant and noted how important that is in making sure that rural bus services in particular are protected. However, the crucial point in Willie Rennie's contribution was about the importance of delivery. As he said, there have been discussions like this before in the chamber—he was here and I was not—but this time the discussion has to deliver results.

Lastly, I turn to Lloyd Melville's contribution. He talked about the interaction between bus services and access to healthcare. He knows well how important it is that we integrate those.

I see that I am running out of time.

It is important that, when the Government develops legislation on buses, it does not take a one-size-fits-all approach. It must recognise the unique challenges of rural communities. I look forward to engaging collaboratively with the cabinet secretary to make that important legislation a success.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Katy Clark): I call Stephen Flynn, for up to 10 minutes.

16:53

Stephen Flynn: I have heard members be very self-deprecating by referring to themselves as transport neds—nerds, not neds. [*Laughter*.] Mr Langan clearly caught my eye with his bus activities. However, I do

not regard them as nerds, or neds. I see them as enthusiasts, and I see that Mr Sweeney agrees that we are all enthusiasts who want to see the public's expectations met when it comes to their transport network. That principle has cut through the entirety of the debate today.

If I may, I will start on what is perhaps a slightly negative note.

Graham Simpson: Oh no.

Stephen Flynn: I know, but I must.

I was listening to Mr Eagle's remarks in relation to his proposals, or lack thereof. Aside from suggesting the introduction of a fund, on which he offered no specific detail, he outlined little as to what it would cost or indeed where that funding would come from, considering that his party wants to cut the revenue that the Scottish Government raises. [*Interruption*.]

The Conservatives come to the chamber to say that the Scottish Government should not raise revenues but should cut them, but that is what would then happen—there would be less money to spend. I appreciate that that is sometimes difficult for the Conservatives to comprehend. Beyond that, I cannot gather whether or not the Tories want to see improvements in our bus services, or whether they support the efforts that the Government is making as I have outlined them today.

Mr Simpson appears to be broadly supportive of what we are seeking to do in relation to franchises—indeed, there appears to be a split on the right of Scottish politics and whether members are comfortable with that. I must go back to Mr Langan, because I could not gather from his comments whether he is supportive or otherwise of our desire to introduce a £2 bus fare cap and whether he wants people living in the middle of a cost of living crisis to be able to access cheaper public transport. I am unequivocal in that regard: I believe that it is a good thing that we reduce the costs that the public have to face when getting to hospital appointments, the shops and work—

Tim Eagle: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Stephen Flynn: I am sure that Mr Eagle is about to agree with my support for the £2 bus fare cap and to outline the fact that he disagrees with Reform in that regard.

Tim Eagle: Thank you for allowing the intervention. I was just hoping that, at some point, you would stop banging on and moaning about other parties and talk about the delivery of what we have been discussing—

Stephen Flynn: Oh!

Tim Eagle: I think that most people in the chamber agree that we want better buses, but what we need is for you to deliver them. At the moment—and since 2019—your party has not done that.

Stephen Flynn: Mr Eagle, I think that it is important when we are in a Parliament to address the amendments that come before that Parliament. It would be remiss of me to do otherwise, given that the member is seeking to amend our proposals to make progress with support—

Graham Simpson: [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Stephen Flynn: If I may, it has been suggested to me throughout the debate that the Reform members want to hear me speak, so I will make some progress. I am sure that I will come to address the points that Mr Simpson has made.

When I was highlighting Mr Langan's lack of clarity on the £2 bus fare cap, my thoughts were drawn to Mr MacKinnon's closing remarks. It is important to recognise the principle. I understand the point that was made in relation to ScotRail, which the Scottish Government has to look at in totality, but two things can be true at the same time—we can support our rail network, as we have sought to do through peak rail fares, while also implementing a £2 bus fare cap.

I hope that Mr MacKinnon agrees that we can do both those things—I see that he is giving me the thumbs up, so he does agree that that is a positive, just as it is a positive that 2.4 million people across Scotland are able to access a concessionary card.

Paul Sweeney *rose*—

Stephen Flynn: Mr Sweeney, I was coming to you, but I will let you come in.

Paul Sweeney: I will give you an hors d'oeuvre. [*Laughter*.]

The point that I hope to make to the cabinet secretary is that it is the lack of regulation and integration between rail and bus that is causing that vicious cycle of competition. We should integrate the services so that one ticket will cover both rail and bus.

Stephen Flynn: I absolutely agree, and I think that there is agreement across the chamber in that regard. As I made clear to Mr Rennie at his Transport Committee recently, it is my intention to move forward at pace in order to meet the expectations that the public rightly have and which I, too, have in that regard.

Lloyd Melville: [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Stephen Flynn: I will come to Mr Melville in a minute, because I was on the topic of Mr Sweeney's remarks. First, Mr Sweeney spoke earlier about inadequate resources. It is important that he reflects on his party's participation in the budget process. I am sure that the Deputy First Minister would be more than happy to engage with him.

Secondly, if I was listening correctly, Mr Sweeney made reference to what Transport for London has sought to do in relation to its procurement activities through the private operators with which it works. I did a quick Google search, which I hope is correct: in TfL, BYD—Build Your Dreams, which is a Chinese company, as I am sure that the member is aware—operates 61 per cent of the total electric fleet. Therefore, things are not all milk and honey in London, as Mr Sweeney has sought to demonstrate to the chamber—

Paul Sweeney: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Stephen Flynn: I will let Mr Sweeney come in to correct those numbers.

Paul Sweeney: Updating our public procurement legislation is a challenge across the UK. I invite the cabinet secretary to look at how we could strengthen the public procurement of buses in order for us to have a greater share of UK-manufactured buses in our fleets. That is something that we could do, as London is doing at present.

Stephen Flynn: With 61 per cent of the fleet coming from China, I understand why London wants to take that work forward. Of course, that endeavour is shared among all of us—

Patrick Harvie: [*Made a request to intervene*.]

Stephen Flynn: Mr Harvie, I was coming to you, but I will allow you to come in.

Patrick Harvie: I am glad. I would like to bring us back to the amendments that have been lodged, as the cabinet secretary said. A week ago, when I asked him whether he accepted that the Government would need to introduce an ambitious bill to the Parliament—and soon—if it was going to achieve what it had set out to do, the cabinet secretary simply said, "Yes". Will he vote for the Green amendment that calls for precisely that?

Stephen Flynn: Yes. Mr Harvie and I are creating a habit of agreeing in the chamber—it will disconcert us both.

On the detail of that legislation, I can answer Mr Rennie's earlier question: primary legislation will, indeed, be required to remove the franchising panel, and we will seek to introduce that at pace.

Lloyd Melville: Another option to bring forward this work at pace is under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005, as I mentioned in my initial intervention on the cabinet secretary. Is the Government keeping all options on the table to empower RTPs at pace, as he says he wants to do?

Stephen Flynn: I am certainly happy to engage fully with Mr Melville on that, as I sought to outline in my initial remarks.

Graham Simpson: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Stephen Flynn: Mr Simpson, my comments from earlier stand. You cannot both ask me to address the points of the debate and seek to intervene on me when I am doing so.

What has cut through the debate has been a sense and a reality that has been shared among all members, from all parts of our wonderful nation—

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): Graham Simpson is feeling very unloved, cabinet secretary.

Stephen Flynn: I do not quite know what to say to that, Presiding Officer. [*Laughter*.] I am unusually lost for words, I am afraid to say. I am sure that someone else will show him some love at another point. The train of thought that I had has certainly disappeared.

To bring us back to core principles—this is an important point on which to conclude—across the entirety of our nation, elected members in the Scottish Parliament, in council chambers and at Westminster will have constant communication with constituents who do not feel that the public service that they rely on through their bus network delivers for them. The message that they should hear loud and clear from parliamentarians in the chamber today is that we are not just listening but acting.

That is why we will introduce the primary legislation that is required to remove the panel process from franchising, to accelerate the ability for authorities to take that forward. It is why we will introduce legislation to ensure that we have minimum service requirements. It is why we are continuing to progress with the open data secondary legislation to ensure that we have full sight of how our bus network is operating. It is why we will build on the success that we have had in investing in the people of Scotland and allowing them to access our public transport network at an affordable rate.

Those are the principles that underpin our actions today and in the future. I look forward to engaging further with members as we seek to do that on behalf of the Scottish people.

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Kenneth Gibson): There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. We have some pre-emptions. If the amendment in the name of Graham Simpson is agreed to, the amendments in the name of Tim Eagle and Willie Rennie will fall. If the amendment in the name of Tim Eagle is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Willie Rennie will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S7M-01881.4, in the name of Paul Sweeney, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01881, in the name of Stephen Flynn, on strengthening Scotland's bus network, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. There will be a short suspension to allow members to access the digital voting system.

17:03

Meeting suspended.

17:06

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the vote on amendment S7M-01881.4, in the name of Paul Sweeney. Members should vote now.

Voting is closed.

Max Bannerman (Highlands and Islands) (Reform): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted no.

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

For

Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)

McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
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)
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) (Ind)
Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
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)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
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)
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)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01881.4, in the name of Paul Sweeney, is: For 31, Against 86, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01881.1, in the name of Graham Simpson, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01881, in the name of Stephen Flynn, on strengthening Scotland's bus network, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

Voting is closed.

Max Bannerman: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

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

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)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
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)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
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)
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)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Ind)
Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
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)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
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)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)

McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
Stafford, Pauline (Bathgate) (SNP)
Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Thewliss, Alison (Glasgow Central) (SNP)
Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01881.1, in the name of Graham Simpson, is: For 29, Against 89, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01881.2, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01881, in the name of Stephen Flynn, on strengthening Scotland's bus network, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Max Bannerman: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am voting no.

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

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)

Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
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)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Ind)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)

Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Con)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
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)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Schmulian, Kim (Glasgow) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01881.2, in the name of Patrick Harvie, is: For 84, Against 34, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01881.5, in the name of Tim Eagle, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01881, in the name of Stephen Flynn, on strengthening Scotland's bus network, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Max Bannerman: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am voting yes.

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

For

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Ind)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Con)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
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)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East 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)

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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)
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)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
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)
McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)

Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (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 division on amendment S7M-01881.5, in the name of Tim Eagle, is: For 24, Against 92, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S7M-01881.3, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S7M-01881, in the name of Stephen Flynn, on strengthening Scotland's bus network, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Max Bannerman: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am voting yes.

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

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I would have voted yes.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. Your vote has been recorded. Just in under the wire.

For

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Ind)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Con)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
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)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East 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)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S7M-01881.3, in the name of Willie Rennie, is: For 47, Against 69, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S7M-01881, in the name of Stephen Flynn, on strengthening Scotland's bus network, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

The vote is closed.

Max Bannerman: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am voting no.

The Presiding Officer: Your vote has been recorded.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
Ahmed, Irshad (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Anderson, Heather (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire West and Levern Valley) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Barratt, David (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Black, Dawn (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Bouse, Gary (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
Bruce, Holly (Glasgow Southside) (Green)
Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Campbell, Kate (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
Campbell, Michelle (Renfrewshire North and Cardonald) (SNP)
Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Day, Martyn (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow Kelvin and Maryhill) (SNP)
Duane, Iris (Glasgow) (Green)
Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Fagan, Joe (South Scotland) (Lab)
Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Flynn, Stephen (Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Gethins, Stephen (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Ghani, Zen (Glasgow Cathcart and Pollok) (SNP)
Gibson, Patricia (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
Goodlad, Hannah Mary (Shetland Islands) (SNP)
Gray, Neil (Airdrie) (SNP)
Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Lab)

Hagmann, Katie (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen and Cambuslang) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Kerr, Alex (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
Kerr, Calum (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Kinross-O'Neill, Kayleigh (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Kumar, Simita (Edinburgh South Western) (SNP)
Leask, Kristopher (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
Lennon, Monica (Glasgow) (Lab)
Linden, David (Glasgow Baillieston and Shettleston) (SNP)
Long, Joe (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
Mackay, Gillian (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Green)
MacKinnon, Donald (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (Lab)
Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith) (SNP)
Manivannan, Q (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
McKee, Cara (West Scotland) (Green)
McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Easterhouse and Springburn) (SNP)
McLennan, Paul (East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (Inverclyde) (SNP)
McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
Melville, Lloyd (Angus South) (SNP)
Merrick, Colm (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Middleton, Jack (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Mitchell, Laura (Moray) (SNP)
Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
Moodie, Laura (South Scotland) (Green)
Nevens, Kate (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Green)
Oswald, Kirsten (Eastwood) (SNP)
Roddick, Emma (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
Sangster, Katherine (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Lab)
Slater, Lorna (Edinburgh Central) (Green)
Smith, Alyn (Stirling) (SNP)
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)

Against

Adams, James (North East Scotland) (Con)
Bannerman, Max (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Baxter, Andrew (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (LD)
Beresford, Senga (South Scotland) (Reform)
Bland, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Ind)
Briggs, Miles (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Con)
Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Chou Turvey, Yi-pei (North East Scotland) (LD)
Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh North Western) (LD)
Currie, Victor (Highlands and Islands) (Reform)
Dijkstra-Downie, Sanne (Edinburgh Northern) (LD)
Dunlop, Duncan (South Scotland) (LD)
Eagle, Tim (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Con)
Green, David (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (LD)
Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Harley, Adam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (LD)
Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kerr, Stephen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Kirkwood, David (South Scotland) (Reform)
Langan, Jamie (South Scotland) (Reform)
Lindsay, Amanda (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)

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MacDougall, Julie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
Massey, Duncan (North East Scotland) (Reform)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McDade, Helen (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Reform)
Offord, Malcolm (West Scotland) (Reform)
Rennie, Willie (Fife North East) (LD)
Ross, Angela (Edinburgh and Lothians East) (Reform)
Simpson, Graham (Central Scot and Lothians West) (Reform)
Simpson, Mark (North East Scotland) (Reform)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S7M-01181, in the name of Stephen Flynn, as amended, is: For 84, Against 33, Abstentions 0.

The text of motion S7M-01181, as amended, will be published as soon as it is available.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

The rest of this Official Report will be published progressively as soon as the text is available.