



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 4, No. 66, Session 6

Meeting of the Parliament

Thursday 9 January 2025

Note: (DT) signifies a decision taken at Decision Time.

The meeting opened at 11.40 am.

- 1. General Questions:** Questions were answered by Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers.
- 2. First Minister's Questions:** Questions were answered by the First Minister (John Swinney).
- 3. Expanding Scotland's Connectivity from Edinburgh and Beyond:** The Parliament debated S6M-15883 in the name of Ash Regan—That the Parliament recognises what it sees as the importance of enhancing connectivity for communities, economic empowerment and Scotland's global competitiveness; welcomes the reported ambition of Edinburgh Airport in seeking US preclearance status to streamline international travel and support economic growth; notes the view that there is a pressing need to address reported current access congestion by creating a second entry via Gogar, to ensure that the airport remains accessible and fit for purpose; further notes the view that it is urgent to ensure that Glasgow, as a major city, is not left behind due to a lack of an integrated and efficient transport system; notes the calls for strategic investment in developing port infrastructure in Dundee, Aberdeen, Gourock and Leith to enhance maritime connectivity and economic opportunities; further notes the view that there is a need to upgrade major road routes, including addressing critical safety and capacity issues on the A9 in the Highlands, and notes the calls for the Scottish Government to prioritise sustainable and inclusive infrastructure development that connects Scotland internally and to the world, supporting growth and opportunity for all.

4. Portfolio Questions: Questions on Education and Skills were answered by a Cabinet Secretary and Ministers.

5. Building a Migration System that Supports Scotland's Economy, Public Services and Communities: The Minister for Equalities (Kaukab Stewart) moved S6M-16034—That the Parliament recognises the social, economic and cultural contribution made to Scotland by those who have chosen to live here; notes the establishment of Scotland's Migration Service at a cost of up to £1.5 million in the draft Budget 2025-26 to help employers, investors and individuals navigate the UK immigration system; further notes that the Parliament has previously endorsed a motion calling for the development of a differentiated, more flexible migration policy tailored to meet Scotland's specific needs, and calls on the UK Government to accept the Rural Visa Pilot proposal and to work directly and constructively with the Scottish Government to ensure that the needs of Scotland's employers, communities and public services are fully reflected within the immigration system.

Jeremy Balfour moved amendment S6M-16034.4—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16034 in the name of Kaukab Stewart (Building a Migration System that Supports Scotland's Economy, Public Services and Communities), leave out from first "notes" to end and insert "understands that Scotland receives 6% of net migration to the UK, which is lower than its 8.4% population share; notes that the Scottish Government has made Scotland an unattractive destination to move to through a combination of higher taxes on skilled professionals, a lack of investment in rural economies, a failure to provide adequate transport routes, an inability to provide enough homes in key areas, and a neglect of public services; further notes that the Scottish Government's failures have led to depopulation from some of Scotland's more rural parts, and asserts that immigration is a matter reserved to the UK Parliament and not in the jurisdiction of the Scottish Parliament."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 27, Against 90 (including 3 proxy votes), Abstentions 0).

Rhoda Grant moved amendment S6M-16034.3—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16034 in the name of Kaukab Stewart (Building a Migration System that Supports Scotland's Economy, Public Services and Communities), leave out from "the establishment" to end and insert "that there have previously been successful models of differentiated migration schemes, tailored to Scotland's specific needs, such as Fresh Talent; recognises the impact of rural depopulation on Scotland's communities and their sustainability, including the survival of the Gaelic language; calls on the Scottish Government to use its existing powers to encourage population retention and internal migration where it would benefit Scotland's communities and economy; understands that the conditions in Scotland's rural and island communities are challenging due to the centralisation of services and the degradation of infrastructure, and that migration alone will not fix these systemic problems, and calls on the Scottish Government to build homes,

provide high quality public services, provide local education and ensure sustainable transport links in rural and island communities in order to ensure that populations are sustainable in the long term."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 24, Against 93 (including 3 proxy votes), Abstentions 0).

Maggie Chapman moved amendment S6M-16034.1—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16034 in the name of Kaukab Stewart (Building a Migration System that Supports Scotland's Economy, Public Services and Communities), insert at end "; remains committed to ensuring that all migrants in Scotland have all of their rights fulfilled; recognises the pervasive and increasingly hostile anti-migrant rhetoric from some politicians and media sources; believes that further action is required by both the UK and Scottish governments to support people displaced due to the climate crisis, and calls on the UK Government to remove the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions that limit the support and services available to many, especially those seeking asylum."

After debate, the amendment was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 68 (including 3 proxy votes), Against 28, Abstentions 21).

The motion was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 67 (including 3 proxy votes), Against 27, Abstentions 22)

Accordingly, the Parliament resolved—

That the Parliament recognises the social, economic and cultural contribution made to Scotland by those who have chosen to live here; notes the establishment of Scotland's Migration Service at a cost of up to £1.5 million in the draft Budget 2025-26 to help employers, investors and individuals navigate the UK immigration system; further notes that the Parliament has previously endorsed a motion calling for the development of a differentiated, more flexible migration policy tailored to meet Scotland's specific needs; calls on the UK Government to accept the Rural Visa Pilot proposal and to work directly and constructively with the Scottish Government to ensure that the needs of Scotland's employers, communities and public services are fully reflected within the immigration system; remains committed to ensuring that all migrants in Scotland have all of their rights fulfilled; recognises the pervasive and increasingly hostile anti-migrant rhetoric from some politicians and media sources; believes that further action is required by both the UK and Scottish governments to support people displaced due to the climate crisis, and calls on the UK Government to remove the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) conditions that limit the support and services available to many, especially those seeking asylum.

6. Decision Time: The Parliament took a decision on item 5 as noted above.

The meeting closed at 5.17 pm.

David McGill

Clerk of the Parliament
9 January 2025

Appendix

(Note: this Appendix does not form part of the Minutes)

Subordinate Legislation

Affirmative Instruments

The following affirmative instrument was withdrawn and re-laid before the Parliament on 9 January 2025—

Rural Support (Improvement) (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2025 [draft]

laid under section 2(3) of the Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Act 2020

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