



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 4, No. 71, Session 6

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 22 January 2025

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

The meeting opened at 2.00 pm.

1. Portfolio Questions: Questions on Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, and then on Health and Social Care, were answered by Cabinet Secretaries.

2. Delivering School Environments Where it is Safe for Pupils to Learn and Teachers to Teach: Miles Briggs moved S6M-16170—That the Parliament notes the ongoing concern at reported cases of violence against pupils and staff, and disruption in schools, and the need for action to help restore positive learning environments in which all young people and teachers are safe to learn and teach in a respectful and supported setting; welcomes the publication of the joint national action plan with COSLA in August 2024, which set out a range of actions needed to be taken at both local and national levels to address violence in schools, alongside the Scottish Government's action plan on tackling violence and verbal abuse in schools; calls on ministers to bring forward an update to the Parliament on how these actions are being taken forward; further calls on ministers to review the reporting and publication of data on incidents relating to violence and harassment in schools; notes the disparity in the availability of early years provision across Scotland and the potential long-term impacts on children's development and educational outcomes; calls for a review to identify and mitigate negative influences on learning environments in primary schools, including factors affecting pupil behaviour and engagement; further calls on the Scottish Government to support children and young people impacted by violence and disruption in schools and to facilitate an environment in which all young people are safe to learn, develop and grow; notes the publication of the Scottish Government guidance on mobile phones in schools, and calls on ministers to take forward a national policy on a ban on mobile phones in

classrooms and the provision of single-sex toilets and accessible toilets in all schools; acknowledges the recent passing of a law banning children under 16 from using social media in Australia, and calls on ministers to undertake a review in Scotland of the negative impact of social media on young people and the growing body of evidence suggesting that “over-exposure” to mobile phones and social media can result in pupils experiencing limited concentration, isolation and poor mental health, as well as the potential for a similar ban in Scotland.

The Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise (Natalie Don-Innes) moved amendment S6M-16170.3—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16170 in the name of Miles Briggs (Delivering School Environments Where it is Safe for Pupils to Learn and Teachers to Teach), leave out from first “calls on ministers” to end and insert “recognises the importance of the Scottish Government and local authorities working together to facilitate an environment in which all young people are safe to learn, develop and grow; notes the Scottish Government national guidance on mobile phones in schools, which empowers headteachers to take decisions on banning mobile phone use in schools; agrees with the importance of ensuring that children are protected from online harms; notes the importance of ensuring that children and young people are able to share their perspective on their education, and calls on all partners to continue working closely with the Scottish Government to improve behaviour and relationships in schools.”

Pam Duncan-Glancy moved amendment S6M-16170.2—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16170 in the name of Miles Briggs (Delivering School Environments Where it is Safe for Pupils to Learn and Teachers to Teach), leave out from “the disparity” to end and insert “that the GMB union has described the environment in schools as a 'national emergency', and that reports from NASUWT state that teachers in Scotland 'fear for their safety'; further notes the concerns raised by teaching unions, such as EIS, that teachers are working, on average, 11 hours per week unpaid; is concerned about the evidence of the impact of violence, particularly on women and girls, in schools; believes that this situation is not sustainable; considers that adequate staffing is required to create a safe environment in schools, and calls on the Scottish Government to publish a comprehensive plan to address gaps in the teaching and school staff workforce, as voted for by the Parliament on 15 May 2024; believes that long waits and gaps in the provision of public services, such as child and adolescent mental health services, educational psychology and speech and language therapy, have a detrimental impact on the school environment, and particularly children with additional support needs; welcomes the Equally Safe delivery plan, which gives direction to the Equally Safe at School programme; supports the finding in the Education, Children and Young People Committee's report on additional support for learning that the Scottish Government and the Scottish Futures Trust should work with local authorities 'to ensure that schools are designed as accessible and welcoming environments for all', and believes that this should include classroom design as well as the availability of single-sex, accessible and Changing Places toilets, and calls on ministers to consider the

growing body of evidence suggesting that 'over-exposure' to social media can result in pupils experiencing limited concentration, isolation and poor mental health, and to bring forward a national policy on how best to address this in Scotland.”

After debate, the amendment was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 68 (including 4 proxy votes), Against 31, Abstentions 25). As a result amendment S6M-16170.2 was pre-empted.

The motion, as amended, was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 69 (including 4 proxy votes), Against 30, Abstentions 26).

Accordingly, the Parliament resolved—

That the Parliament notes the ongoing concern at reported cases of violence against pupils and staff, and disruption in schools, and the need for action to help restore positive learning environments in which all young people and teachers are safe to learn and teach in a respectful and supported setting; welcomes the publication of the joint national action plan with COSLA in August 2024, which set out a range of actions needed to be taken at both local and national levels to address violence in schools, alongside the Scottish Government's action plan on tackling violence and verbal abuse in schools; recognises the importance of the Scottish Government and local authorities working together to facilitate an environment in which all young people are safe to learn, develop and grow; notes the Scottish Government national guidance on mobile phones in schools, which empowers headteachers to take decisions on banning mobile phone use in schools; agrees with the importance of ensuring that children are protected from online harms; notes the importance of ensuring that children and young people are able to share their perspective on their education, and calls on all partners to continue working closely with the Scottish Government to improve behaviour and relationships in schools.

3. Ensuring that Communities are at the Heart of the Electricity Consenting Process: Douglas Lumsden moved S6M-16171—That the Parliament opposes the UK and Scottish governments' jointly proposed reforms to the consenting process under the Electricity Act 1989, which risk silencing the voices of communities by removing the right to a public inquiry on consent decisions; notes with concern that the Scottish Government has allowed pylons and other electricity infrastructure to be built without the consent of local communities; acknowledges that community groups often do not have the resources to oppose electricity infrastructure, and calls on the Scottish Government to consider how this could be addressed, and implores both governments to abandon these plans and to ensure that community voices are at the heart of the consenting process going forward.

The Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise (Natalie Don-Innes) moved amendment S6M-16170.3—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16170 in the name of Miles Briggs (Delivering School Environments Where it is Safe for Pupils to Learn and Teachers to Teach), leave out from first “calls on ministers” to end and insert “recognises the importance of the Scottish Government and local authorities

working together to facilitate an environment in which all young people are safe to learn, develop and grow; notes the Scottish Government national guidance on mobile phones in schools, which empowers headteachers to take decisions on banning mobile phone use in schools; agrees with the importance of ensuring that children are protected from online harms; notes the importance of ensuring that children and young people are able to share their perspective on their education, and calls on all partners to continue working closely with the Scottish Government to improve behaviour and relationships in schools.”

Sarah Boyack moved amendment S6M-16171.1—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16171 in the name of Douglas Lumsden (Ensuring that Communities are at the Heart of the Electricity Consenting Process), leave out from “opposes” to end and insert “agrees that the fastest and more secure way to deliver lower energy bills, create future energy jobs in Scotland and deliver energy security is to move to clean power; welcomes the UK Government’s mission to establish a net zero electricity system by 2030; acknowledges that this will require the development of new energy infrastructure; considers it crucial that communities close to energy generation benefit from that infrastructure; welcomes, therefore, the creation of GB Energy and the commitment that it will support communities to take a stake in local renewable energy projects through the Local Power Plan, and calls on the UK and Scottish governments to work together to support the development of renewable energy supply chains in Scotland to create long-term, sustainable jobs as part of the energy transition.”

Liam McArthur moved amendment S6M-16171.2—

As an amendment to motion S6M-16171 in the name of Douglas Lumsden (Ensuring that Communities are at the Heart of the Electricity Consenting Process), leave out from “opposes” to end and insert “understands that the UK and Scottish governments’ jointly proposed changes to the Electricity Act 1989 and the consenting process have recently been issued for consultation, and recognises the importance of listening to the views of communities and other stakeholders before any changes are made; believes that delays to the delivery of vital transmission infrastructure risk holding back essential investment to decarbonise all sectors of the economy and the opportunity to put areas, including the north east and Highlands and Islands, at the forefront of the UK’s renewables revolution, but that the grid changes required must give due respect to the environment, landscape, cultural history, wellbeing and property rights of local people; notes that the outcome of the consultation has yet to be published, and calls, therefore, on both of Scotland’s governments to ensure that any concerns raised through the consultation are appropriately addressed and that concerted action is taken to build community support, secure a consensus around the grid changes that need to be made, and provide greater clarity to the public about why upgrades to the electricity network are important for Scotland’s economy, energy security and climate obligations, whilst also ensuring that developers fulfil their obligations and duties.”

After debate, amendment S6M-16170.3 was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 63 (including 3 proxy votes), Against 55, Abstentions 7 (including 1 proxy vote)). As a result amendments S6M-16171.1 and S6M-16171.2 were pre-empted.

The motion, as amended, was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 83 (including 3 proxy votes), Against 35, Abstentions 7 (including 1 proxy vote)).

Accordingly, the Parliament resolved—

That the Parliament believes that communities must be at the heart of the renewable energy transition, and that it is vital that they share in the significant benefits that will be created, in contrast with how Scotland's communities have been failed for decades under successive UK administrations' energy policies; notes the ongoing representations by the Scottish Government to the UK Government around the need for energy market reform; further notes that Scotland has some of the most stringent environmental impact regulations anywhere in the world and that the planning and consenting system is designed to ensure that local communities have their say; notes that the proposed reforms have long been the established position in England, which the previous UK Conservative administration did not alter in its 14 years in office, and understands that the proposals would require developers to consult communities much earlier in the planning process, which will ensure that affected communities can more meaningfully influence the process of project development.

4. Urgent Question: An urgent question, to ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether Neil Gray corrected the Official Report of 14 November 2024 at the earliest opportunity, as required by the Scottish Ministerial Code, in light of its response to an FoI request, dated 13 December 2024, confirming that there were no recorded minutes or notes for some events attended by ministers, including one attended by Neil Gray, was answered by the Minister for Parliamentary Business (Jamie Hepburn).

5. Business Programme: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Jamie Hepburn), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-16185—That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 28 January 2025

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Investing in Public Services Through the Scottish Budget

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 29 January 2025

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, and Parliamentary Business; Justice and Home Affairs

followed by Scottish Labour Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.10 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 30 January 2025

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Education and Skills

followed by Ministerial Statement: Creative Scotland Multi-Year Funding

followed by Finance and Public Administration Committee Debate: Scottish Budget 2025-26

followed by Appointment of Board Members to Environmental Standards Scotland

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 4 February 2025

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Budget (Scotland) (No. 4) Bill

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 5 February 2025

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions: Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Economy and Gaelic; Finance and Local Government

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs (if required)

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 6 February 2025

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions: Net Zero and Energy, and Transport

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 27 January 2025, in rule 13.7.3, after the word “except” the words “to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or” are inserted.

The motion was agreed to.

6. Committee Membership: The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Jamie Hepburn), on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, moved S6M-16186—That the Parliament agrees that—

Keith Brown be appointed as a member of the Education, Children and Young People Committee; and

Evelyn Tweed be appointed to replace Colin Beattie as a member of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.

The motion was agreed to (DT).

7. Decision Time: The Parliament took decisions on items 2, 3 and 6 as noted above.

8. Celebrating the Continued Social, Cultural and Economic Importance of Robert Burns: The Parliament debated S6M-16078 in the name of Oliver Mundell— That the Parliament recognises what it sees as the lasting impact of Scotland’s national bard, Robert Burns, including the significant contribution that his works continue to make at home and around the world; notes with interest and admiration the efforts of many across Scotland and the world to ensure that his legacy is celebrated; acknowledges, in particular, a number of initiatives in Dumfries and Galloway that have progressed since Burns' Night 2024; congratulates the Ellisland Farm project, which is led by the former MSP, Joan McAlpine, on receiving an initial grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund of almost £500,000 towards developing and restoring the farm and museum; believes that the restoration scheme has the potential to be a gamechanger for the region and to redefine the Burns' visitor experience; acknowledges what it sees as the growing partnership between Annandale Distillery and the Globe Inn; notes the 10th anniversary of the distillery and its Man O' Words Whisky, which takes its inspiration from Burns, and welcomes the return of the Big Burns Supper in Dumfries.

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm.

David McGill
Clerk of the Parliament
22 January 2025

Appendix

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

Committee Reports

The following report was published on 22 January 2025—

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, 1st Report, 2025 (Session 6): A report by the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee on the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme (Amendment) Order 2025 (SP Paper 727)

Other Documents

The following document was laid before the Parliament on 22 January 2025 and is not subject to parliamentary procedure—

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman: Compendium of Case Reports for January 2025 (SPSO/2025/01) laid under Sections 15(1) and 15(1A) of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002

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