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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 27 October 2021

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

Portfolio Question Time

Covid-19 Recovery and Parliamentary Business

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Good afternoon. I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place and that face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The first item of business is portfolio questions, and the first portfolio is Covid-19 recovery and parliamentary business. I remind members that questions 7 and 8 are grouped together, and that I will take any supplementaries on those questions after both have been answered. If a member wishes to request a supplementary question, they should please press their request-to-speak button or indicate so in the chat function by entering the letter R during the relevant question.

Covid-19 Recovery (Prioritisation)

1. Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how its policies and actions across Government will ensure that those hit hardest by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic are prioritised during the recovery. (S6O-00269)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): Our Covid recovery strategy, which was published earlier this month, sets out the next steps in Scotland's recovery, recognising that although the pandemic has affected every area of life, those who were already struggling have been hit hardest.

Building on lessons learned during the pandemic, the strategy addresses the systemic inequalities made worse by Covid, and aims to improve people's wellbeing and remobilise public services to be more focused on people's needs. Actions include upskilling and retraining opportunities, help for low-income families who are most at risk of poverty, and locally based mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people.

Although the strategy is focused on the next 18 months, it also includes actions over this parliamentary session to deliver substantial improvements on child poverty, make significant

progress towards net zero and secure an economic recovery that is fair and green.

Gordon MacDonald: Does the cabinet secretary agree that the United Kingdom Tory Government's paltry rise in the minimum wage of 59p per hour will not offset the national insurance rise that it has imposed or the £20 per week cut to universal credit, nor will it help people facing record petrol prices, energy and food price increases and the general rise in inflation, and that it highlights that the Tories are no friends of working-class Scots?

John Swinney: It is undeniable that citizens in our country face a significant cost of living crisis, which will become ever-more severe over the winter months due to the significant increases in fuel and food prices that are prevalent at the moment. Mr MacDonald is correct that the increase in the minimum wage, although welcome, does not in any shape or form offset the impact of those factors.

During the budget, changes have been announced to the decisions on universal credit. I have not had the opportunity yet to fully assess their implications, but, without a doubt, there are households in Scotland that are facing an acute cost of living crisis, and the Scottish Government is focusing its efforts on doing all that we can to support those in our society who face the challenge of poverty.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): There can be no doubt that our young people have been some of the hardest hit by the pandemic. Yesterday, I asked the First Minister what it would take for face masks to be removed from schools, particularly in the classroom, but an answer was not particularly forthcoming. Can the cabinet secretary set out specifically what we expect to see before that measure can be relaxed?

John Swinney: Mr Mundell will be familiar with the basis of the decision making that has to be undertaken in relation to any Covid restrictions, whether that is mask wearing by pupils in schools or any other measure. The Government has to be able to demonstrate that the decisions that it is taking are proportionate to the scale of the pandemic. We are facing a situation in which case rates in Scotland are averaging around 2,000 to 2,500 per day, which is a very high level compared with the levels in Scotland in the past, when we did not have restrictions such as face coverings in schools.

The Government will take proportionate decisions based on the prevalence of the pandemic, and the pandemic remains a serious threat to the health and wellbeing of all people in Scotland, particularly young people.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):

Young people have faced incredible disruption during the past 18 months. Active ventilation in classrooms is key to minimising further disruption to education and to securing young people's life chances. The Government's ventilation inspection programme concluded prior to the October break. Can the cabinet secretary confirm how many classrooms were inspected, how many failed inspection and what the Government's preferred method of mitigation is?

John Swinney: The Government has made resources available to local authorities to improve ventilation in schools. As the First Minister confirmed in her statement to Parliament yesterday, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills is writing to the Education, Children and Young People Committee. I am not sure whether that letter has been issued yet, but it will set out the progress that has been made in the ventilation assessment.

Mr Marra asks me to set out what the Government's preferred method of ventilation is. He will forgive me if I do not dictate from Parliament the ventilation arrangements for 2,500 school settings around the country, but the prevalence of CO₂ monitors and the monitoring information that they provide are essential parts of the arrangements that the Government has taken forward in partnership with local authorities.

For the record, I should state that the issue is a matter for local authority decision making as, by statute, responsibility for running the school estate rests entirely with local authorities.

Covid-19 Recovery (Cross-sector Labour Shortages)

2. Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its policies and actions across Government to support the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and how these have been impacted by the reported cross-sector labour shortages. (S6O-00270)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): Our Covid recovery strategy recognises that many critical sectors across the Scottish economy—from food and drink to transport and social care—are reporting issues with the supply of labour resulting from exiting the European Union.

The strategy therefore includes investment of an additional £500 million over this parliamentary session to support new, good, fair and green jobs and to equip people with the skills to enter and progress in those jobs. We are working with employers to help people into vacancies through

our employability programmes, one of which is, of course, the young person's guarantee.

The real solution, however, lies in an end to policies that are damaging to the prospects of the Scottish economy and which emanate from the United Kingdom Government. My ministerial colleagues and I have made repeated representations to the UK Government on putting in place emergency changes to the UK immigration system to combat acute post-Brexit skills and labour shortages. So far, the United Kingdom Government appears intent on ignoring the problems that it has itself created.

Neil Gray: Some large employers in Airdrie and Shotts, across all sectors, have expressed concern to me about labour supply. There is a particular concern about food production in the run-up to Christmas, and some employers are worried that they may not be able to honour contracts. Will the Deputy First Minister agree to meet me and the employers concerned to discuss potential areas in which to support them, including those where we need to push the UK Government to deliver, such as extending visas for migrant workers?

John Swinney: I would be delighted to meet Mr Gray and representatives of the business community in his constituency to hear at first hand about their experiences. I have listened to a range of businesses in my own constituency and in other parts of the country that have been expressing their concern about the availability of staff and the acute challenges that are being faced in a number of sectors, as I listed in my initial answer. In social care, hospitality, distribution, the health service and food processing, we are suffering as a consequence of the removal of the free movement of individuals. That has been a retrograde step. The Scottish Government warned that it would be damaging to the Scottish economy, and that warning was ignored by the United Kingdom Government as it pursued the hardest of Brexits and the removal of the free movement of individuals.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): We know that unemployment in Scotland is projected to rise to more than 5 per cent by the year end, which equates to nearly 200,000 people of working age who will be claiming benefits and who want to work. What more can the Scottish Government do through its skills agenda to ensure that those people can be retrained to fill the vacancies that Mr Gray refers to?

John Swinney: The Scottish Government is absolutely focused not just on that but on the fact that about 21 per cent of our population are economically inactive. Some of those people will be able, with the proper support in place, to gain access to employment. The Scottish Government

is absolutely focused, in all our employability interventions, on ensuring that that is achieved. I give Mr Fraser that assurance; immediately before coming into the chamber I had just got off a call that was focused on exactly that question.

I make the point to Mr Fraser that all the dispassionate information that is coming to us, from a range of sectors—he must be hearing this as much as I am hearing it from the business community—is that we simply do not have an adequate supply of individuals available in the economy. If unemployment rises in the fashion in which he suggests that it will, there might well be people who are currently active in the labour market who will be able to participate in other employment. However, we have historically low unemployment in Scotland today. That has been a feature of this SNP Government for many years and we are proud of the very low level of unemployment in Scotland under our stewardship.

We need to ensure that we have adequate numbers of people to contribute to Scotland's economic base. That has been made more difficult by the removal of free movement of individuals.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): There are acute labour shortages in the care sector, which have a direct impact on delayed discharge in our hospitals. They are caused by a variety of reasons, and it is undoubtedly the case that low wages are partly responsible.

Given that someone gets paid more to work in Lidl or a pub, when will the cabinet secretary value social care workers and agree that they should be paid £15 per hour?

John Swinney: The Government values social care workers and the contribution that they make, and I agree entirely with Jackie Baillie on how she positions the argument: the availability of social care workers is a material factor in reducing the pressure on our hospitals that is the result of delayed discharge. There is absolutely no dispute about that point.

Before the parliamentary recess in October, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care announced steps to increase remuneration for social care workers. The Government will work with our local authority partners to do as much as we can to support improvements in that direction. We will also work with local authorities and health boards to support recruitment of additional staff, to ensure that the care packages that Jackie Baillie wants in place for her constituents—the same packages that I want for my constituents—can be in place and can reduce some of the pressure on our hospitals and enable our health service to cope with the very challenging winter that lies ahead.

The Presiding Officer: Before I take question 3, I point out that we are half way through our time for this set of questions. I would be grateful if we could pick up the pace, please.

Young Citizens Assembly

3. Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it plans to introduce a young citizens assembly. (S6O-00271)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (George Adam): We have committed to establish annual citizens assemblies during this parliamentary session. We will begin work to design the young persons assembly with children and young people before the end of this year.

In the meantime, we have committed to put people at the heart of everything that we do, we are taking a person-centred approach to Covid recovery and we have convened a working group to set out how participation and deliberative democracy can be embedded. That group is due to report later this year.

Rona Mackay: I thank the minister for his pledge to establish an assembly for children and young people under 16, to ensure better representation. Does he agree that the Tory United Kingdom Government's recent challenge to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill makes that pledge even more necessary?

George Adam: Yes, I agree. The implications of the judgment are significant from a children's rights perspective. Given the aspirations of the Government and this Parliament when it comes to the country in which we want our children to grow up, it is regrettable that the bill has been delayed and will not become law in the form in which the Parliament agreed that it would do.

The Scottish Government remains absolutely committed to the incorporation into Scots law of the UNCRC, to the maximum extent possible, as soon as possible. Although the judgment means that the bill cannot receive royal assent in its current form, the majority of work on implementation of the UNCRC can continue and is continuing.

Post-Covid-19 Futures Commission

4. Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government how its policies and actions across Government will take account of the key findings and recommendations of the Royal Society of Edinburgh's post-Covid-19 futures commission published earlier this week. (S6O-00272)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney):

We welcome the post-Covid-19 futures commission's report and will consider the recommendations closely. The Covid recovery strategy sets out the need to work collaboratively and we look forward to further engagement with the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the issues that the commission raised in its report.

Maggie Chapman: I thank the Deputy First Minister for his response, and for his comments at the RSE's event on Monday morning. The commission's key findings and recommendations are far reaching and pretty challenging. They speak to issues of democracy; the importance of delivering on things such as the Christie commission principles and social prescribing; and the need for improved collection and understanding of data and evidence. However, I want to ask the Deputy First Minister specifically about the challenges around preparedness. Brexit and Covid have shown us the vital importance of planning for future challenges. Can he comment specifically on the commission's proposal for a foresighting centre to scope out and plan for potential risks and crises in future?

John Swinney: If Maggie Chapman will forgive me, I will not give her a definitive answer on that, because I wish to consider the specific proposal first. In general, the idea of looking ahead and preparing resilience planning to meet the challenges that we face—my goodness, we have faced challenges over the past 18 months—is very much at the heart of the Government's intentions. The Government is currently undertaking resilience planning, which involves looking at a variety of concurrent risks around the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—Covid, the implications of Brexit, and preparedness for winter. I completely accept the premise of the question, and I will consider the specifics and advise Parliament and the Royal Society of Edinburgh accordingly.

Covid Status App

5. Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the number of people who have downloaded the NHS Scotland Covid status app. (S6O-00273)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): Our Covid status app has been downloaded more than 1.1 million times and, separately, our vaccination status letter has been issued in either PDF or printed format more than 1.4 million times. As we go forward, we will ensure that those numbers are sustained. People can continue to either download or request a paper copy of their

vaccination status from NHS Inform or by calling the freephone helpline on 0808 196 8565.

Pam Gosal: The Scottish Government has failed to educate the public about the new passport rules, instead relying on businesses to do the work with no extra funding, no public awareness campaign and an unreliable app. Is it not time that the Scottish Government accepted that the app does not work and focused on helping businesses to recover?

John Swinney: The Government is absolutely focused on helping businesses to recover. We have supported businesses in a variety of ways to recover from the pandemic, and we continue to do so.

The app is working perfectly well. It is entirely operational, and it was able to be utilised at football grounds over the weekend, with many thousands of people in attendance; there were no reports of disorder or difficulty in the operation of the app. The app works perfectly well, and I suggest to the Conservatives that they move on from this argument. Countries around the world are using apps of the same type, and I do not see why anyone should think that Scotland should be an exception. The app is working perfectly well.

Siobhian Brown (Ayr) (SNP): Are those with a vaccine certificate from outside Scotland being allowed into venues and events?

John Swinney: It is our desire that visitors to Scotland from outside the United Kingdom are able to access events and venues. However, there is significant variation around the globe on what those look like and how they work, and not all are acceptable. We have published guidance and a toolkit for businesses and event organisers and customers on our website to help to explain the issues that have to be wrestled with in addressing that point.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): What does the Deputy First Minister have to say to many of my constituents who continue to experience, as they have done for some time, issues with incomplete vaccine records, which make it incredibly difficult for them to get access to the vaccine passport? Is that not just another example of the failed vaccine passport system? It is about time that he ditched it.

John Swinney: In a situation in which more than 7 million vaccinations have been undertaken, I think that the most reasonable person would accept that there are bound to be individual cases in which there are challenges and problems with the data. I would advise Mr Rennie's constituents, if they have an issue, to phone the NHS Inform number that I gave; the staff there will be very happy to try to address the issues that he raises. Mr Rennie will know that, on occasion, members

of Parliament have raised the fact that they had a particular problem, and they phoned the number and resolved it. The mechanism is there to address the issues that he talks about.

Covid-19 Recovery (Engagement)

6. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is ensuring engagement across Government with the public, private and third sectors to ensure that the experiences of people providing front-line support to the most vulnerable help shape the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00274)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): The Covid recovery strategy has been informed by public engagement and will deliver the recovery that people want and need to see. On behalf of the Scottish Government, I held a series of four open-dialogue events with stakeholders during the summer to hear about those aspirations. We listened to views and we worked with local government, business organisations, the third sector and organisations such as the citizens assembly of Scotland and the social renewal advisory board to formulate our thinking. As part of the collective national endeavour for recovery and the focus on delivery of actions over the next 18 months, we will continue to work in close partnership with others, including those providing front-line support, in establishing a collaboration for recovery.

Stuart McMillan: The cabinet secretary recently visited the Belville Community Garden Trust in my constituency, which provided over 4,500 isolation parcels to people in Inverclyde throughout the lockdown, offered a safe space when restrictions were eased for local people to meet others and continues to work with the local community for the good of our local environment. Will the cabinet secretary join me again in praising the Belville Community Garden Trust and can he inform me of what information about opportunities he took away from his visit that could be used to replicate those opportunities elsewhere in Scotland?

John Swinney: It was an absolute pleasure to visit the Belville Community Garden Trust in Mr McMillan's constituency. The trust is an example of a local organisation that had a core purpose of involvement in community activity pre-pandemic but adapted significantly and quickly during the pandemic to meet the needs of individuals in the Greenock area. As a consequence of that, the trust has established itself in a variety of different areas around connections among individuals. For example, there is a fantastic knitting gathering, which I met there and which is providing socialisation for individuals who have felt isolated during the pandemic; and there is a gardens

project and a skills project. The trust is a fantastic example. Such ventures exist in all communities in the country, but I compliment Belville Community Garden Trust on its outstanding work.

Covid-19 Recovery (Support for Local Authorities)

7. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on how its policies and actions across Government will help support local authorities to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00275)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): Delivering a strong recovery from Covid-19 is critical and will require collaboration and partnership working from all of us. To date, we have provided Scottish councils with an additional £1.5 billion in direct support through the local government finance settlement, which is over and above the regular grant payments. Furthermore, we published our Covid recovery strategy, which we will deliver in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. The strategy provides the overall principles that will guide our recovery over the next 18 months to meet the needs of people most disadvantaged by Covid-19.

John Mason: We all know that many councils, including Glasgow City Council, are struggling and cannot reopen all the facilities that they want to, whether those are run by the councils or by arm's-length organisations such as Glasgow Life. Clearly, the councils and the Scottish Government are short of money, so can the cabinet secretary give any advice as to how we can move the situation forward?

John Swinney: The Government engages in dialogue with a range of organisations, and we have engaged in dialogue with Glasgow Life on those questions. As I indicated in my original answer, we have provided local authorities with a significant amount of increased resources that are available to them to assist with the challenges. We will continue to have that dialogue but, fundamentally those decisions are for local authorities to take within the resources that are available to them. We will continue to have dialogue with Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life on the issues that Mr Mason raised with me.

Covid-19 Recovery (Support for Local Authorities)

8. Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what cross-Government support and funding it is providing to local authorities to aid the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. (S6O-00276)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney):

The Scottish Government has worked with our partners in local government to agree the shared vision and outcomes of Covid recovery and to recognise the critical role of local government in our national endeavour. We will support delivery of joint programmes of work with a recovery oversight board, allowing a strong focus on monitoring and performance towards outcomes. As I set out in my answer to Mr Mason, the Government has allocated an additional £1.5 billion in direct support through the local government finance settlement and councils have been granted additional financial flexibilities to address the financial pressures that they face.

Joe FitzPatrick: Leisure and Culture Dundee has suffered from a major drop in revenue as a result of the pandemic, resulting in a requirement for significant support from Dundee City Council amounting to almost £3 million. I recognise what the cabinet secretary has said, but that is a huge issue in Dundee. Would he or another minister be willing to meet me and Councillor John Alexander, leader of Dundee City Council, to discuss the issue further?

John Swinney: I am aware that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy met representatives from Dundee City Council on 21 September, and I am happy to meet Mr FitzPatrick and Councillor Alexander to discuss the issue further. I recognise the challenges that local authorities face, but part of my intention, in creating the joint approach with local government, is to ensure that we collaborate and use all the available resources to address the practical issues that Mr FitzPatrick puts to me.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): I can help John Mason and Joe FitzPatrick with their questions. How will the block grant increases that the UK Government announced today for this Parliament, which are the largest since the devolution settlement of 1998, be used to support local authorities to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic?

John Swinney: As Mr Kerr will not be surprised to hear, I will look very carefully at all the details of today's announcements. I shall look at the shiny, glossy announcements and pore over the detail to make sure that the United Kingdom Government is not pulling the wool over our eyes, as it has done on so many occasions. If ever there was a group of people adept at having the wool pulled over its eyes, it is the members of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party who are sitting right in front of me. In fact, the knitting group in Greenock that I talked about would have delivered the wool to pull over the eyes of Mr Kerr and his colleagues.

Net Zero, Energy and Transport

The Presiding Officer: Members who wish to ask a supplementary question should press their request-to-speak button or type R in the chat function during the relevant question.

Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance

1. **Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its discussions with the Danish Government regarding the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance. (S6O-00277)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): The First Minister and the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity met the Danish Minister of Climate, Energy and Utilities on 13 October. The Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance was briefly discussed, along with other matters and initiatives concerning Scottish-Danish co-operation. In line with the Scottish Government's evidence-based approach to policy development, we have committed to undertaking a programme of work and analysis to better understand Scotland's energy requirements as we transition to net zero, and how that aligns with our climate change targets. We will consider the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance further alongside that programme of work and analysis and other sources of evidence that are provided.

Mark Ruskell: I thank the cabinet secretary for that response. I am tempering my disappointment a little that the Scottish Government is not yet ready to join the alliance but, as the First Minister stated in a speech on Monday, transition from oil and gas

"is undoubtedly one of the most difficult issues we face"

and I agree with her. Can we maintain that dialogue, not just during but beyond the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—with the members of the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance, particularly countries such as Denmark, which has had a challenging progression in transitioning its gas sector? There is much that we can learn from and contribute to the discussion with countries that are drawing a line in the sand and moving beyond oil and gas, while continuing to take their workers with them.

Michael Matheson: As I mentioned, any consideration of joining the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance would have to be consistent with our energy policy and our approach to energy policy. That will be informed by the work that we are taking forward to assess the need for oil and gas in the years ahead, as we transition to being a net zero nation by 2045. I also assure Mark Ruskell of our continued engagement with other nations,

including the Danish Government, on energy matters, and we have planned engagements during the course of COP26, where we will look to explore further collaboration between Scotland and Denmark on areas of energy policy where there is a shared priority, particularly in the renewable sector. We are looking to build on the engagement that we have had with Denmark in recent years and make that a more formal arrangement in the years ahead.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): The transition that has been referred to must be fair and managed for those workers. Answers to my written parliamentary questions show that the much-vaunted just transition fund and plan will not have any detail until a draft is produced in spring 2022.

Given the urgency with which the Green members want to shut down the North Sea and the impact of that on almost 100,000 jobs, how long will it be before the fund and the plan are finalised and the organisations receive funding?

Michael Matheson: As we have set out, in taking forward the north-east and Moray transition deal, we wanted to ensure that we shaped it in a way that reflects the needs of the community and the organisations that could benefit from it, and we are undertaking an engagement process in order to achieve that. However, given that the Scottish Government has committed more than £500 million as part of the deal, I am sure that the member will join me in calling on the United Kingdom Government to match that investment to ensure that a just and fair transition is achieved in the north-east. Going by the track record of his colleagues in Westminster last week in relation to the Scottish cluster, I am not holding my breath when it comes to their support of north-east Scotland in the years ahead.

COP26 (Young People)

2. Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is involving young people in the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties. (S6O-00278)

The Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan): It is extremely important that children and young people are listened to at COP26, and that their views are taken on board. We are facilitating that by funding the conference of youth, which is the UN's official youth event for COP26, and supporting, for the first time, five young people from Scotland to attend and help to shape the statement to world leaders.

We are also supporting the Young Scot-led youth summit, at which young people will agree recommendations on climate action, and have the

opportunity to meet leaders and activists to share their ideas on tackling the climate crisis.

Bill Kidd: Children and young people have been pushing for climate action, and it is very important that their views are listened to, so I thank the minister for her response.

Will the minister further outline how Scotland will do what it can to contribute to a successful outcome at the Glasgow summit, including how it will engage with activists both in the developed world and from the global south?

Màiri McAllan: The member is absolutely right. Young people have played a critical role in bringing climate and nature crises issues on to the international agenda. They have challenged Governments, and they have done so from the grass roots.

We also need to accept that young people have the most to lose due to any inaction now. That is why we are supporting activists on the front line to participate at COP26. For example, throughout COP, the First Minister will meet regularly with Vanessa Nakate, the founder of Youth for Future Africa.

We are also establishing a COP hub in Malawi and are supporting events by the global assembly. We have facilitated the Glasgow climate dialogues and the Women's Environment & Development Organization. That is all about driving gender equality in climate action in the global south.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Will the minister join me in congratulating all the schools that are taking part in the moment, which is an initiative in conjunction with the Children's Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament? Will she say what support is in place for children across Scotland who want to attend events, whether in Glasgow or elsewhere, that might fall on school days? Will they be encouraged and supported to be there?

Will the minister also say something about the cost of school transport for trips, because schools are saying that they cannot afford to get out and about with their young people?

Màiri McAllan: I absolutely congratulate the organisers of the moment. In my constituency capacity, I am taking part in it on Friday along with schools across Clydesdale. There has been an excellent uptake of the offer to be involved.

It is important that children are involved in COP, as it can feel remote and elitist. Through our themes of people and just transition, we have been trying to bring it alive. One of the events in which I was able to take part was My Climate Path, which is delivered with Young Scot. It is all about showing young people the path that they can take now to a career in some of the green

industries of the future. With those structures, and by working with Young Scot and YOUNGO, a plethora of events is available, and I would be more than happy to share more detail of them with the member.

Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries (Final Cost and Delivery Date of New Vessels)

3. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the anticipated final cost and delivery date of vessels 801 and 802 for the CalMac fleet. (S6O-00279)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): The turnaround director of Ferguson Marine updated the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee on the delivery timetable and budget for the MV Glen Sannox and vessel 802 on 30 September. The cost to complete the vessels, which remains the same as was reported in the turnaround director's December 2019 report to the Parliament, is between £110.3 million and £114.3 million.

Jamie Greene: The answer is that the vessels will be five years late and will cost more than double the original budget.

There was once a time when one could not keep Scottish National Party ministers away from Ferguson Marine in Port Glasgow—mostly for a photo call. Since the new transport minister took office, how many times has he been to the yard in Port Glasgow, and how many times has he met Tim Hair, the turnaround director? Is it not about time that he apologised to the people of Arran for the shambolic way in which his Government has handled the replacement ferries to the islands?

Graeme Dey: As Mr Greene knows full well—I recall that he was a member of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee during the previous parliamentary session—oversight of Ferguson Marine and the contracts lies with Kate Forbes. *[Interruption.]* I can assure him that she has visited the yard and meets Tim Hair.

Jamie Greene: How many times?

Graeme Dey: I will repeat that, because the member is clearly not listening. The ministerial responsibility for the issue sits with Kate Forbes. She visited the yard recently and met Tim Hair, who she speaks to regularly.

I, perhaps unlike Mr Greene, have been to Arran recently and met the Arran ferry committee. I am focused on engaging with the communities that are waiting on the vessels and working on the issue of Ardrossan harbour. That is where my responsibility lies.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Islanders look forward to the MV Glen

Sannox joining the Ardrossan to Brodick route. Can the minister advise what progress is being made with the Ardrossan harbour redevelopment, which he has just mentioned, in order that the MV Glen Sannox can sail to and from Ardrossan at the earliest possible opportunity?

Graeme Dey: As I have just alluded to, we are engaged in finding a long-term solution to secure the best use of Ardrossan for connections to Arran. Discussions continue with P&O Ports on the project delivery options and the related commercial agreements. Those are challenging discussions, but a resolution must be found to deliver improvements in a practical and cost-effective way that reflect the needs of all the partners involved.

I intend to convene a further task force meeting later this year to update stakeholders on progress. However, I can advise Mr Gibson that, in keeping with the united front and approach that this Government and North Lanarkshire Council are taking, Joe Cullinane, the leader of the council, will co-chair the task force.

ScotRail (Discussions with Trade Unions)

4. **Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its discussions with trade unions representing ScotRail staff. (S6O-00280)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): ScotRail has held numerous discussions with all the trade unions. Two unions consulted their members and overwhelmingly accepted the offer. The third union has also accepted the very fair offer. Only the leaders of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers have formally rejected the offer and two revised offers without consulting its Scottish members.

The final offer remains open to the RMT until 5 pm this evening. The deadline tonight is essential so that ScotRail, with Network Rail, has enough time to implement contingency plans in time for the 26th UN climate change conference of the parties—COP26.

Jeremy Balfour: The eyes of the world will be on Glasgow next month. Some thousands of visitors from around the world could use Scotland's trains, but many will be unable to do so if the strike goes ahead. Has the Scottish Government assessed the cost to the Scottish economy of a rail strike during COP26?

Graeme Dey: The impact of any industrial action during COP26 would be significant. We are focused on trying to mitigate that—if, indeed, the strike happens.

I make the point that—this gets lost in the argument—this is not just about COP26. The

actions of the RMT's leadership will impact everyone during the two-week conference period. We find ourselves in a deeply regrettable situation, but that is not for the want of effort on the part of ScotRail and this Government to resolve it.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): When I last asked him about industrial action on the railways, the transport minister said that that was nothing to do with him. Will he confirm today that he has rejected a counter proposal from the RMT that would resolve the dispute?

Graeme Dey: First, the member's first statement is completely untrue. Secondly, on numerous occasions in recent weeks we have been led to believe by the RMT—*[Interruption.]* If Mr Bibby stops chirping, he might hear the answer. Multiple times in recent weeks, we have been led—directly and publicly—to believe that there was a possible resolution to the dispute. This Government and ScotRail reached out on all occasions only to find that the goalposts had moved. It has been very difficult to establish trust in the process.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): If I heard the minister correctly, he said that RMT members were not consulted on the offer. Can he confirm that and say why the RMT is not consulting its members?

Graeme Dey: I absolutely can confirm it, but I would have to direct to the RMT leadership in Scotland Mr Mason's question about why the RMT's members, unlike those of the Transport Salaried Staffs Association or Unite, will not be afforded that opportunity.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): I am not sure that the minister's increasingly aggressive language towards the RMT will resolve the issue. Could he answer Mr Bibby's question? Was there a counter offer, and was it accepted or rejected by the minister?

Graeme Dey: On a number of occasions during the process, a proposal appeared to have been put forward by the RMT and then it changed. In essence, there have been a number of occasions during discussions when it has appeared that there has been progress to be made but then the goalposts have moved. That is the reality.

A77 Upgrade (Funding)

5. Sharon Doney (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how much funding it has allocated for the upgrade of the A77 in its infrastructure investment plan 2021-22 to 2025-2026. (S6O-00281)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): Phase 1 of strategic transport projects review 2 confirmed the importance of investing in

Scotland's trunk road network, supported by £1.5 billion of capital allocated to the infrastructure investment plan in the spending review. On the A77, to date, funding has been allocated to enable the completion of the £46 million Maybole bypass. We have a statutory obligation to maintain the safe condition of trunk road assets. Decisions on allocating the funding for the A77 will be based on our road asset management plan. That will augment the £88 million already spent since 2007 on managing and maintaining the route.

Sharon Doney: Time and time again, in successive transport reviews, the Scottish Government has forgotten Ayrshire, and especially the A77. We heard a lot of numbers there, but I have here the official Scottish Government figures. A mere £5 million was allocated to that road, whereas other road projects have received hundreds of millions of pounds. With no sign of a full upgrade in the programme for government and little sign of one appearing in the strategic transport projects review, people in Ayrshire are left with few options. The message from the Scottish Government to motorists in the south-west of Scotland is clear, and, once again, we are being left behind. Can the cabinet secretary promise my constituents today that work to dual the A77 will be commenced within this parliamentary session? If so, will it appear in the STPR2 report?

Graeme Dey: As the member well knows, the review of the road recommended against dualling all of the route. There are two related items in STPR2. Recommendation 17 is about the development of capacity enhancement measures on the route, such as partial dualling, town and village bypasses—I have just mentioned Maybole—and improved overtaking opportunities. Recommendation 18 is on the implementation of targeted measures such as improvements to road geometry, bends and junctions, along with safety camera deployment measures. Those two proposals, among others, are currently going through detailed final appraisal, and I hope that we will be able to advise Parliament of the outcome of that process in the next few months.

Elena Whitham (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): Can the minister detail the impact that the Scottish Government's A77 Maybole bypass improvement scheme, in my constituency, will have on the levels of traffic in Maybole high street when the bypass is soon opened?

Graeme Dey: The opening of the new bypass is predicted to reduce traffic on Maybole high street by approximately 50 per cent, with the number of heavy goods vehicles reducing by approximately 90 per cent. I know that that will be extremely welcome to residents.

Following the opening of the bypass, Transport Scotland will undertake an evaluation of the project, in line with Scottish trunk road infrastructure project evaluation guidance. That evaluation will be carried out to assess the impact of the bypass by comparing conditions one year and then three years after opening with forecasts made during the scheme's design and development. However, I think that we all know that the bypass will make a very substantial difference.

Sheriffhall Roundabout

6. Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when work will commence to address congestion at the Sheriffhall roundabout. (S6O-00282)

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): The Scottish Government is committed to delivering the grade separation of Sheriffhall roundabout as part of our £300 million commitment to the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland city region deal. Following publication of draft orders, a significant number of objections were received, which Transport Scotland is currently trying to resolve. However, a public local inquiry may be required if objections cannot be resolved. As with all trunk road projects, that is the appropriate forum for consideration of outstanding objections. Delivery of the scheme can commence only following statutory approval. Thereafter, a timetable for progress can be set. I will be happy to share that detail with Parliament in due course.

Miles Briggs: Transport Scotland has suggested that an inquiry could result in a six-year wait for a potential solution, which would end in 2027. That has caused disappointment. The project is of strategic importance to Edinburgh and the south-east of Scotland. Will the minister therefore consider making it a national strategic transport project? Will he agree to visit the junction with me to see the real need for investment in it as soon as possible?

Graeme Dey: As Miles Briggs knows, there is due process to be followed. He represents a region and many people, and there will be different views on the issue. It is absolutely appropriate that all the due processes are followed. I would like the objections to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction as soon as possible so that the work can commence, and I will take him up on the invitation.

Wind Farm Developers

7. Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the net zero secretary has had with ministerial colleagues regarding reports that wind farm developers are offering payments to local

residents in return for signing non-disclosure agreements and not objecting to planning applications. (S6O-00283)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): I can advise the member that no such discussions have taken place.

Oliver Mundell: Does the cabinet secretary agree that that practice is unacceptable, that it distorts the planning system and that it has the potential to turn local communities against the very green energy projects that we will need in the future? Will he commit to carrying out a review of what is happening in practice with many of those large-scale applications?

Michael Matheson: I recognise the point that the member has raised on behalf of his constituents. However, he will be aware that it is a live planning matter that was subject to a public local inquiry, and the issues that he has raised were aired during the course of the inquiry. The Scottish ministers have not, as yet, received the report from the reporter. I am sure that the member will appreciate that, under the ministerial code, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on a live planning matter when the reporter has not yet published their report. However, I assure the member that the reporter will consider those matters, and I expect to see consideration of that in the report once it is received by the Scottish ministers.

Acorn Project

8. Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what role the Acorn project could play in achieving Scotland's net zero and just transition ambitions. (S6O-00284)

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): Advice from the Climate Change Committee described carbon capture, use and storage—CCUS—as

“a necessity not an option”.

There is simply no realistic route to net zero without CCUS, and, what is more, the Scottish cluster is vital for a just transition. That is why the United Kingdom Government's decision is so astonishing. It shows a lack of ambition, leadership and commitment to tackling climate change. As I outlined in Parliament yesterday, we remain committed to the Scottish cluster and to reaching net zero by 2045. We are urgently engaging with the sector and the UK Government. Quite simply, the decision is a serious mistake and one that needs to be reversed.

Gillian Martin: The north-east of Scotland is an obvious location for carbon capture projects. I

agree that the UK Government's decision not to invest in the Acorn project at this stage is a devastating blow to our net zero obligations and to the economy of the north-east. Does the cabinet secretary agree that, if the UK Government is in any way serious about a just transition, it should not only match the Scottish Government's £500 million investment in a just transition for the north-east of Scotland but urgently reconsider its nonsensical decision on Acorn? Is it not incumbent on all north-east MSPs and their MP colleagues, regardless of party, to demand that that happens?

Michael Matheson: I am sure that everyone in the chamber is signed up and committed to delivering a just transition. However, in order to achieve that, it is important that words are followed by action. We committed to providing £500 million for the just transition fund for the north-east and Moray to support the transition away from oil and gas into low-carbon and zero-carbon industries, and we have called on the UK Government to match that funding in order to support the transition. The UK Government has been able to lean on the natural resources of the north-east of Scotland for many decades, so it is only right that it provides the necessary financial support to allow for a just transition in the north-east.

I hope that members across the chamber will apply as much pressure as possible on the UK Government to match our ambition of delivering a just and fair transition for the north-east of Scotland. At the same time, members should press the UK Government to reverse its astonishing decision not to progress with the Scottish cluster, given its importance to delivering net zero targets not only here in Scotland but across the whole of the UK. That decision is a serious betrayal of the north-east of Scotland, and it cannot be allowed to stand.

Education (Organisation for Economic Co- operation and Development Report)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a statement by Shirley-Anne Somerville on next steps in education, following the OECD report. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:52

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Following publication of the OECD independent review of the implementation of curriculum for excellence, and Professor Stobart's paper on options for Scotland's future approach to qualifications and assessment in the senior phase, I signalled my intention to consider a reform process that is underpinned by those findings and recommendations. Today, I will provide Parliament with an update.

It remains a key priority of the Government to ensure that our approaches to curriculum and assessment are fit for purpose and, therefore, guarantee the best possible educational experience for children and young people—not least as we emerge from the pandemic.

It is 10 years since curriculum for excellence was introduced, so it was appropriate to review its implementation. Furthermore, the exceptionally challenging circumstances that were created by the pandemic have led to innovation and creativity in the education system, from which we can also learn lessons.

I am proud to note that the OECD found wide support for CFE, and stated that Scotland's curriculum

"continues to be a bold and widely supported initiative, and its design offers the flexibility needed to improve student learning further".

In his paper, Professor Stobart describes CFE as a

"pioneering example of 21st-century curriculum reform"

and highlights that Scotland's curriculum continues to be viewed internationally as

"an inspiring example equated with good curriculum practice".

Those findings show that Scottish education remains on the right track. There is no suggestion that any significant overhaul of the curriculum is needed. Instead, the OECD report sets out

recommendations for us to build on our current approach and ensure that our curriculum continues to inspire learners now and in the future.

Every education system must be open to further improvement, and I have previously made clear my intention to work with all those who are involved in education to consider the recommendations and deliver the reform that is required in order to improve outcomes. That work should be seen as a supportive process and as part of our continuous improvement to retain Scotland's pioneering status in the field.

Crucially, the work must be informed by children and young people. I am committed to respecting children's rights and to ensuring that their voices can be heard clearly and will genuinely inform the direction of travel. That is why I announced the intention to establish a children and young people's education council, and have ensured that there are representatives of young people and children's rights experts on the Scottish education council.

It is also important to gain the views of teachers, as the people who are closest to children and young people, and the people who are best placed to take decisions about their education, health and wellbeing. Therefore, we will engage further with front-line teachers through the national teacher panel, and we will seek ways in which the role of the panel can be strengthened and expanded. We will also engage through other routes, including the professional associations.

That engagement is essential if we are to build on the work that began in 2019 to enhance and develop an empowered education system. Although that work was paused during the pandemic, our commitment continues; we must build on the good pre-pandemic work that resulted in effective developments in teacher agency through delivery of bespoke remote learning, community activity and responses to the local needs of families and communities.

I have already taken action on the OECD's recommendations about structural change and support for education. I announced the intention to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority and to consider a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment, while also taking forward reform of Education Scotland, including removal of the inspection function from the agency.

I invited Professor Ken Muir to act as an independent advisor to the Scottish Government to consider and advise on implementation of those reforms. Professor Muir is currently gathering views from stakeholders and will submit his recommendations to the Scottish Government in early 2022. That work will play a crucial role in

delivering the foundational infrastructure to support delivery of the curriculum and assessment process, as well as helping to inform the wider reform process.

Today, I am pleased to publish a framework for implementation, which sets out our approach to engagement and priorities, and sequences the initial phase of that work. I chair the Scottish Education Council and have already started a dialogue on that process through that role, but it is clear that we need wider discussions for that approach to reform to be truly co-produced, which is what the framework sets out to facilitate. The implementation framework sets out our initial priorities. They are to re-assess the vision of CFE, to agree a measurement and evaluation approach, to align assessment and qualifications, to clarify roles and responsibilities, and to increase curriculum development capacity.

We will convene and facilitate dialogue to revisit and assess the 2019 "Refreshed Narrative on Scotland's Curriculum", which user feedback, Professor Muir's consultation and learning from the pandemic will inform. That work will support initial considerations for development of a curriculum review cycle, as the OECD recommended, and will underpin the work on the alignment of assessment and qualifications.

We will explore the data and research that are required to inform an evaluation system and to support the systematic approach to curriculum review. Specifically, I will ask the curriculum and assessment board to set up a short-life sub-group to explore options for a sample-based survey that will look across the capacities of curriculum for excellence. The sub-group will specifically consider the workload implications for staff of such a survey. It will be the first time that we have information that looks across the four capacities in such a form, but the process has to be done in a proportionate and manageable way.

We remain committed to teacher professional judgement being the primary means of assessing progress in the broad general education, and we will consider how to better support that process and the achievement of CFE levels data in the future. National standardised assessments will continue to play an important role in that work, the outcome of which will be reflected in the national improvement framework from 2022 onwards.

In addition, we will refresh communications and stakeholder involvement strategies, and we will develop and agree with teachers, practitioners and other stakeholders the next steps towards further school empowerment. I will also continue to work with the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers on the commitment to reduce by 90 minutes per week class-contact time for teachers. We will also work with local government to deliver

the commitment to recruit 3,500 additional teachers over this parliamentary session.

Furthermore, we will evaluate current support and access for teachers and practitioners to professional development in curriculum design and development. That package underlines our commitment to the profession and our support for its on-going role in curriculum design, development and improvement.

To enable a coherent and effective response to the OECD's recommendations, we will ensure that appropriate programme and governance arrangements are in place, which will build on our current structures and put the voices of teachers, practitioners, pupils, parents and carers at the heart of everything that we do.

Alongside publishing a framework for implementation of the OECD's recommendations, I also want to set out my position on the future of assessment and qualifications, which is distinct from the on-going arrangements for 2022, on which a series of announcements that detail the approach and potential use of contingencies has already been made.

Professor Stobart's working paper "Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland" makes an important contribution to the debate about the future of qualifications and assessment, which is a debate that has intensified in the light of experiences during the pandemic. Professor Stobart does not set out specific recommendations, but suggests options that are based on best practice from around the world. We must explore those as we seek the best way of recognising our learners' achievements in the 21st century. Professor Stobart's findings, alongside the lessons that have been learned during the pandemic, create a case for reform.

The issue of assessment and qualifications generates strong and sometimes conflicting opinions. However, given the experience and views that have been expressed during the past two years, I am convinced that the time is right to signal that the Scottish Government supports reform of national qualifications and assessment.

Just as was the case with the work on responding to the OECD's recommendations, when we consider reform it will be vital that we work with all stakeholders to build as much consensus as possible. To that end, I announce that the Scottish Government will consult on the purpose and principles that should underpin reform of national qualifications and assessment. That will be the first step in a process that must be carried out with careful thought and consideration, while recognising the importance to learners of national qualifications.

I am pleased to announce that Professor Louise Hayward of the University of Glasgow has agreed to lead a reference group, members of which will be drawn principally from the curriculum and assessment board. That group will provide advice to Scottish ministers about how agreed principles can be translated into a design for delivering assessment and qualifications, while ensuring that externally assessed examinations will remain part of the new system. Professor Hayward will begin that work in the new year.

Although I expect the process to lead to reform of our approach to national assessment and qualifications, time must be taken to get it right. I am acutely aware of the impact of the pandemic, so a dialogue leading to a planned and achievable reform programme will be essential.

As I have stressed throughout my statement, the reform process will be collaborative and actions will be co-created with stakeholders wherever possible. I am mindful of our children's rights requirement, and I hope that all children and young people can feel a sense of ownership of the changes that we will make through the process and its outcomes. Those actions reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that every child and young person in Scotland can benefit fully from an education and can access qualifications that allow them to realise their potential and step confidently into their future choices.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business. It will be helpful if members who wish to ask a question press their request-to-speak buttons now.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement.

Far from restoring standards in our education system and seeking to reverse the 14 years of damage that the Scottish National Party has done to our once-proud education traditions, the statement has confirmed that the only plan that the SNP has is to double down on radical and ill-thought-out reforms that will end exams as we know them. On top of that, we hear continuation of the very denial that got us into this mess in the first place. The Government is glossing over the identified weaknesses in curriculum for excellence, particularly in relation to knowledge.

Will the cabinet secretary tell parents, pupils and teachers why they should trust the SNP to fix Scotland's schools when it is this Government that got us into this mess?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I can genuinely say that I am still not quite sure that Oliver Mundell has read the OECD report, despite its having come out many months ago. In my statement, I mentioned

some of its points, such as how it has endorsed curriculum for excellence and said that it is the right approach for Scotland, and how it does not see the need for fundamental reform. I am not asking parents, young people and teachers to believe any political party; we should listen to the international independent experts who were brought in and the messages that they have given.

I also think that Oliver Mundell did not read the advance copy of my statement or listen to what I said. I specifically said that we are not talking about ending exams; we are talking about having a discussion about the best way of looking at and recognising what learners achieve.

That discussion being held has—the Conservatives aside—been largely welcomed by stakeholders, including people who will get the qualifications and people who will look at those qualifications, whether they are in other parts of the education sector or on the employment side.

Therefore, I say genuinely to Oliver Mundell that it is not too late to drop the soundbite and the press release that he will undoubtedly already have put out, and to take part in a genuine discussion about what the qualifications and assessment process will look like in the future. As a Government, we will look at what the principles will be. I genuinely hope that the Scottish Conservatives will raise their game and take part in that process with me.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):

We are now, in the cabinet secretary's own words, "many months" on from the announcement that the Scottish Qualifications Authority was to be scrapped. Far from taking urgent action to begin the much-needed reforms, the cabinet secretary is content to leave the SQA—which she agrees is unfit in its current form—presiding over this year's assessment process and, potentially, assessment processes beyond that, and Education Scotland presiding over curriculum development and inspections.

More than five months ago, I lodged a motion in Parliament that set out a timetable of ambition for reform that would, by now, have resulted in the establishment, by executive action, of an independent inspectorate and of an interim body for assessment and curriculum while the current consultation proceeds, and the commencement of negotiations regarding a new deal for teachers, the need for which stems from the OECD review. That would have shown real urgency and ambition for young people.

For how many more months does the minister plan to talk about reform, instead of implementing it? By what date does she expect a new assessment and curriculum organisation to be operational? By what date does she expect to take

forward proposals to reform qualifications? By what date does she expect class contact time to be reduced for teachers? Alternatively, is this session set to be another wasted parliamentary session for education in Scotland?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I listened very carefully to the proposals in this area that Michael Marra set out earlier in the year. I did so because I hope that, between Scottish Labour and the Government, we can have discussions about how progress can be made.

Michael Marra will know that Professor Ken Muir is undertaking the work on reform. The work that he is undertaking and the way in which he is undertaking it are crucial. While I appreciate some of the demands to move more quickly, I stressed in my statement, and I will continue to do so, that I want to work collaboratively with stakeholders. It is very easy for Government to make statements about a way forward and then try to work out the detail, or to make statements on the way forward and then work out what stakeholders are thinking about. With Professor Muir's work, we have a process that is well respected by stakeholders and in which very significant numbers of practitioners, parents and young people have taken part. That means that, at the end of January, Professor Muir will come back with considered recommendations that are based on a highly collaborative approach. That is the way that I want to work, and it is also the way that I have encouraged Professor Muir to work on the issue.

Once Professor Muir reports back, I will, of course, look at that very carefully and quickly, and will make further arrangements; I will also make further announcements to Parliament. In the meantime, there is absolutely no doubt that the 2022 assessments and qualifications will continue. The SQA will lead on that process, and it will do so very effectively, as the chamber would undoubtedly expect.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Kaukab Stewart, who joins us remotely.

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):

How will the Scottish Government ensure that teachers and staff are central to the process of reform?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I laid out some of the details of that in my statement. I am very keen to look at the role of children and young people and at the role of teachers and practitioners to ensure that they have a central role in the reform process. One of the ways in which we are doing that is through the national teachers panel, which I am looking to strengthen. I am also very keen for Education Scotland to work directly with teachers and schools to build local, regional and national

communities of practitioners to lead the shaping and design of the reform work as it proceeds.

I mentioned in my answer to Michael Marra the stakeholder engagement work that Professor Muir is already undertaking, which has been exceptionally well attended by teachers. Nonetheless, I would certainly welcome—from Ms Stewart as, indeed, from other members across the chamber—any further suggestions or proposals about how we can further strengthen the role of teachers and front-line practitioners on this issue.

Meghan Gallacher (Central Scotland) (Con): Beatriz Pont from the OECD education directorate stated in June that curriculum for excellence has

“too many owners, while lacking clarity about their responsibilities.”

She also said that curriculum for excellence is “just moving forward”, and that it has

“no structured approach to look forward, plan and communicate ... with a long-term perspective.”

The statement provided to Parliament today adds more levels of bureaucracy without clear direction. Why has so little progress been made since June?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Progress has been made since June. To give one example of what has been happening since then, the discussions that we have had within the Scottish Education Council on how we take this work forward have been very important. To give—again—just one example, one aspect of those discussions has been around how we look at the refreshed narrative. The framework sets out early timetables for movement on that, which is the first step to the review process that the OECD recommended.

The OECD recommended a way that we could implement the report. It said itself that a long-term approach was required. We have accepted the OECD’s recommendations and the suggestions about how we should implement the report, and not just the actual recommendations in the report per se. That is exactly what we have been doing. I hope that some of the examples that I have given reassure Meghan Gallacher that we are making good progress.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): What steps is the Scottish Government taking to ensure that any sample-based system of measurement and evaluation complements data that has already been collected and protects the professional judgment of our teachers?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: It is important that we ensure that teacher professional judgment and the achievement of curriculum for excellence levels—ACEL—data remain the primary means of assessing progress in broad general education.

As I mentioned in my statement, a short-life sub-group will explore options for sample-based surveys for assessing progress across the four capacities. That will include, for example, consideration of how we can provide better support for teacher professional judgment. The consideration of that short-life sub-group will sit alongside the upcoming consultation on proposed changes to national improvement framework measures of progress.

Martin Whitfield (South Scotland) (Lab): The Scottish Government has promised 3,500 more teachers by the end of this parliamentary session. However, we know that the teaching profession is struggling with both recruitment and retention. Will the cabinet secretary tell us specifically what the Scottish Government is doing to encourage new teachers into the profession and, perhaps more importantly, to encourage existing teachers to stay?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Martin Whitfield raised a very important issue: how we can achieve that target of 3,500 extra teachers? We are undertaking work on recruitment as the usual recruitment campaigns continue. We are working very closely with local authority colleagues to ensure that we are doing everything that we can at a national level to take away impediments such as temporary funding. That is why I was pleased to announce further baseline funding for local authorities that will assist in recruitment to permanent contracts, which may make it more attractive for some people to come into or stay in the teaching profession.

It is also important to add that I will remain committed—as I have been since becoming Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills—to very close dialogue with the professional associations to ensure that I am listening closely to what they have to say on both recruitment and retention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Stuart McMillan joins us remotely.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): What steps will the cabinet secretary take to reduce class contact time for teachers, giving them more time to plan their lessons?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As we said in our manifesto, the Government is committed to reducing class contact time for teachers by 90 per minutes per week, with the aim of ensuring that they have more time to develop the curriculum and have the time that they need to teach their classes effectively. Of course, the terms and conditions of service for teachers are not the responsibility solely of the Scottish Government. They are the responsibility of the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers, and it will be for the

SNCT to agree the implementation of the reduction in contact time. That work and the discussions are on-going, and I look forward to seeing the progress that we can make on that.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The cabinet secretary has been left to clean up John Swinney's blunder over national testing. Having scrapped the national survey just a few years ago, the Government, this time with its tail between its legs, is now bringing it back. Why on earth is the cabinet secretary still clinging on to a national collection of local testing data, even though that leads to damaging school league tables?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I will be very clear about what we have said about the data proposals, particularly those for sample-based surveys. We will ask a sub-group of the curriculum and assessment board to explore sample-based surveys. That does not mean that it will bring back the Scottish survey of literacy and numeracy. There are reasons why that was taken away and why we moved to a different approach. One of the reasons was that, as I think I said to Willie Rennie in a committee appearance, OECD recommendations in 2015 said that the SSLN did not give national agencies enough evidence. That is why the moves were made.

I appreciate that there are different views on standardised assessments in some parts of the chamber but, as we move forward, we are seeing a greater use of them by teachers themselves. There is a real understanding, as shown in staff feedback surveys in each of the past three years, that reports are providing practitioners with valuable insights into the learning needs of individuals.

I have explained the reasons why we need the change, the reasons for and advantages of standardised assessments and the process that we have in place to look at what we can do to improve the data that we have.

Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP): I warmly welcome the proposed children and young people's education council. Can the cabinet secretary tell us anything more about plans to ensure that students' legitimate and constructive views on assessment will continue to be valued and respected, and can she provide reassurance that young people's voices will not be lost in the midst of expert public and political deliberation?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: As we move forward with education policy as a whole, it is important that we have a very strong voice for children and young people, which is why I took the decision to establish the children and young people's education council. It will have parity of esteem with the Scottish Education Council, and I will chair

both of them. Children and young people will play an important part in those two bodies, but it is important that we look to encompass children and young people in all the work that we are doing. As I said in my statement, I appreciate that there are differing views on how we can move forward on assessment and qualifications, but I hope that all of us, regardless of our views at the moment, will take a step back and listen to what children and young people want from their future. It is important that we all do that.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Although I do not share the cabinet secretary's enthusiasm for standardised testing, I welcome the fact that the implementation plan includes a number of Green manifesto commitments, including the reintroduction of a sample-based measurement system and a review of the role of indicators and measures with a view to reducing teacher workloads. How and by whom will that review of indicators and measures be taken forward?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I appreciate that we still have a difference of opinion on some education issues, and robust discussions on those continue. I want to work carefully with all colleagues across the chamber, and particularly my colleagues in the Scottish Greens, to ensure that we can have those robust but constructive conversations.

On the particular issues that Ross Greer mentioned in his question, I would like us to work collaboratively. The Scottish Education Council will play an important part in our discussions. We will also ensure that whatever way we determine to move forward with particular working groups, the voices of children and young people and practising teachers will play an important part in that. Of course, I am happy to continue to have dialogue with Mr Greer on those particular issues, if he should so wish.

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): As we emerge from the pandemic, it is clear that far more must be done to guarantee the best possible education for Scotland's children. Today's statement has rightly recognised the need to involve pupils and teachers. What engagement will the Scottish Government have with parents and carers as key partners in educational attainment?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: That is a very important point, on which I hope I can reassure Ms Gosal. I share her opinion on the need for us to speak very directly with parents and to listen to their views. To take one example, I was speaking just yesterday to Professor Muir on the work that he is undertaking on reform. He spoke about the number of parents who are coming forward to take part in the webinars that he has organised as part of the reform process.

I can also point to the fact that parent representatives are members of the education recovery group, as we look to Covid, and that—particularly as we move forward with some of the packages that we have been speaking about today—they are also represented on the Scottish Education Council.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): Focusing on our young learners, prior to the newly reformed system of national qualifications and assessment coming into place, will the Scottish Government assure the current cohort of learners that they can have absolute confidence in their hard-won qualifications and achievements?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: If this is the last question—which is of course entirely up to you and not me, Presiding Officer—we are ending on a very important point: reassuring young people, their parents, teachers and those who will be looking at the qualifications that, while we are undertaking reform of qualifications and assessments, our national qualifications remain highly regarded in their current form, as has been demonstrated by the credibility that has been attached to them over the past 100 years, including over the past two years, despite the efforts of the pandemic.

The current cohort of learners can have every confidence in the value of their qualifications and achievements. That is not necessarily just the view of the Scottish Government and the SQA. I would point, for example, to a letter from many employers, led by Sandy Begbie. They recognise the value of this year's qualifications

“as much as any other year.”

They also said how every young person should be proud of their qualifications and of their achievements at school and in education.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we move to the next item of business, I remind members of the Covid-related measures in place. Face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

COP26 Global Ambitions

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-01769, in the name of Michael Matheson, on global ambitions for the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26.

15:23

The Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport (Michael Matheson): I welcome the opportunity to debate the imminent COP26 summit in Glasgow and to outline the Scottish Government's plans and ambitions for what is a historic event.

I assure members that a key priority of this Administration is the successful delivery of COP26, along with our net zero and climate commitments in the years beyond the event itself. COP26 is our best—indeed, possibly our last—chance to deliver the goals of the 2015 Paris agreement, to match the science and to respond to the climate emergency that we see all around us.

To achieve our global goals, delegates must arrive with enhanced nationally determined contributions that keep the prospects of 1.5°C alive. However, the First Minister said plainly on Monday that

“their pledges must be backed by action”—

and not just from the point of view of “keeping 1.5 alive”.

The issues of fairness and justice are at the heart of the climate crisis, and we have a responsibility to take decisive, meaningful action to support us all.

We are rightly proud of the significant progress that Scotland has made in decarbonising our economy—our 2019 greenhouse gas emissions were 51.5 per cent lower than 1990 levels—while increasing economic growth. Indeed, the United Kingdom's independent statutory adviser, the Climate Change Committee, commended us for having

“decarbonised ... faster than any G20”

country since 2008.

Our updated climate change plan provides a clear and credible pathway for continuing that trend to beyond 2032. Last year, the equivalent of 96 per cent of gross electricity consumption came from renewable sources, and by the end of this year we will have allocated £1 billion since 2019 to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency.

That approach is underpinned by the Scottish Government's issuing of consents for almost 1 gigawatt of renewable energy in the past two years alone. Over this parliamentary session we will invest at least £1.8 billion to decarbonise heating in homes and buildings, which will reduce emissions while creating green jobs.

We are also building in £1.7 billion for sustainable public transport in this financial year, and we introduced legislation to provide for free bus travel for people aged under 22.

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): I think that the cost of the heat and buildings strategy is about £33 billion. The cabinet secretary talked about £1.8 billion. Where will the balance come from, and from whom?

Michael Matheson: The member will recognise that this is an ambitious target. Funding will come from a number of sources—partly public sector and partly private sector—and there will be changes in how we deliver heat in buildings, as my colleague Patrick Harvie set out during his statement.

Scotland can point to successes. This Government has prioritised the climate emergency and introduced a rigorous legislative framework that underpins our climate emissions journey. After all, a crisis of this scale warrants a collective and unified political response. The Scottish Parliament has, rightly, set highly ambitious and legally binding targets to reduce emissions by 75 per cent by 2030 and to net zero by 2045, all of which are to be met without relying on offsetting credits.

Scotland's ambitious and global leadership goes beyond what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report says is required to deliver the aims of the Paris agreement, as is set out in our indicative nationally determined contribution for COP26.

Although I am proud of the progress that we have made so far, I have no doubt that our aim to decarbonise emissions through a just transition over the next 10 years will be challenging. In line with the requirements of Scotland's climate change legislation, today we laid in the Parliament an emissions reduction catch-up report, which sets out the additional emissions reductions that are required to make up for missing the annual target in 2019. The policies and proposals in the report will supplement our ambitious and transformational commitments in the updated climate change plan and advance and strengthen Scotland's emissions reduction pathway to 2032. We are proud of Scotland's world-leading targets and we are proud that we are accountable for any missed annual goals in that way, to ensure that the promises that we make are underpinned by urgent and ambitious action.

Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): The minister speaks of a collective, unified political response. How many times has he, personally, met the UK Government in support of the Acorn project for carbon capture in Aberdeenshire?

Michael Matheson: In the course of the past month alone, I have probably raised the matter with it specifically on at least two, if not three, occasions.

I turn to COP26. We will deliver an ambitious programme of events, which will support the global objectives of COP26, advance our climate agenda, strengthen collaboration and showcase Scottish activity.

As the First Minister said earlier this week, climate

"loss and damage ... is ... suffered already by communities around the world, due to drought, floods, desertification, loss of life and population displacement."

Scotland is, therefore, committed to doubling our climate justice fund over the next four years, leading the way, even as a small nation, on this issue.

We make the best use of our international role, and our networks and influence, to achieve global change. That includes launching the net zero futures initiative, with the Climate Group and Bloomberg Philanthropies, to galvanise state and regional governments. Our aim is to act as a bridge between those outside the formal negotiations and those inside the room, and—true to our responsibilities as hosts—we will look to amplify a diversity of voices from less-heard nations and people.

We are working alongside children and young people—those who face the greatest impact of the climate crisis—so that they have meaningful opportunities to participate and can powerfully advocate for their future. We want children and young people, regardless of their background and location, to have the opportunity to act as climate ambassadors with peers in their communities and on a global stage. That is why we are providing opportunities for children and young people from Scotland and around the world to work together on climate action to support the conference of youth. We have launched a series of initiatives to engage wider communities across Scotland, empowering them to take action, while we support the international implementation of global citizens assemblies as a means to ensure that the views of people worldwide are heard.

We have worked in solidarity alongside our colleagues in the global south, ensuring that their voices are heard and that they can participate in shaping the ambition of COP26 through initiatives including the Glasgow climate dialogues, the Women's Environment & Development

Organization and the Malawi climate leaders project. We have created multiple opportunities for Scotland, at COP26, to showcase and raise the profile of our renewable energy sector and our transportation sector's decarbonisation, positioning Scotland in the vanguard of action internationally and as an accelerator for system change. We are working in partnership with Scottish businesses to accelerate their journey towards net zero and to support a just transition, enabling them to adapt and leverage new, fairer and greener opportunities for all.

In that way, we will lay the groundwork for more and easier ways by which to get to net zero and to create climate resilience in our economy by 2045, while at the same time retaining a focus on tackling inequality and injustice in our country. I am proud of Scotland's world-leading targets and the responsibility and accountability that we are taking on. We wish to ensure that the promises that we make are underpinned by urgent and ambitious action, even if the terms of the devolution settlement do not allow us to access fully many of the levers of control that decarbonisation requires. It will be absolutely fundamental to action on emissions reductions for the UK Government to match Scotland's level of ambition and act with us in areas such as electricity policy and regulation, and on rebalancing energy prices. We have been calling for a review of fuel duty as a mechanism for demand management for car travel. While the United Kingdom Government's "Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener" document emphasises technological advances, it does not go far enough in tackling that issue.

Regardless, Scotland is acting decisively, focusing on the transition to clean technology, reducing demand for high-emission products and encouraging behaviour shift. To that end, we look forward to sharing our approach with international partners at COP26 as an example of world-leading best practice. Underpinning that, we have set stretching delivery targets—for example, to reduce car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030. Those are the measures that will help us to achieve our targets.

I once again welcome the world to Scotland for the COP26 summit in Glasgow, and I thank all those who have contributed to enabling it to take place. I echo the First Minister's call for world leaders who are gathering in Glasgow to take the necessary action in their own countries to keep the target of 1.5°C and beyond very much alive. I look forward to hearing contributions from members this afternoon, and to engaging with delegates and stakeholders over the coming weeks as we take part in COP26.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the world to Glasgow for the COP26 summit and thanks all those who have contributed to enabling the summit to take place; considers this to be humanity's last opportunity to limit global warming and deliver on the ambitions set at the Paris Climate summit in 2015 and calls on world leaders gathering in Glasgow to make the necessary changes in their own countries to keep the target of 1.5 degrees alive and ensure it is achieved, and also deliver on the funding commitments made in Paris to support countries in the Global South in tackling climate change and its impacts; further calls on world leaders to take immediate and rapid action on emissions reduction and investment in low-emission and zero-carbon technology on a global scale, and to recognise the loss and damage already occurring as a result of climate change, recognising that those suffering most from these changes are those least responsible for it, and to support those countries already living with such loss; notes the commitments recently set out through the Programme for Government, the Cooperation Agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party Parliamentary Group, and other documents that build upon the updated Climate Change Plan and increase the steps being taken in Scotland to address the climate crisis; looks forward to the publication, starting from next year, of sectoral just transition plans, and welcomes the undertaking, in support of this, of further analysis of Scotland's North Sea oil and gas production to assess the compatibility of current and future field development with the Paris Agreement, and to Scotland's economy, security and wellbeing.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Liam Kerr to speak to and move amendment S6M-01769.4.

15:34

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): We, too, welcome the world to Glasgow next week as the UK takes over the presidency of COP26. It will be an extraordinary event and one whose importance cannot be downplayed. I have lodged an amendment to the motion, but I acknowledge that the part of the motion that we do not want to amend picks up on the fact that many commentators suggest that this is our last opportunity

"to limit global warming and deliver on"

the Paris agreement and that

"immediate and rapid action on emissions reduction and investment in low-emission and zero-carbon technology"

must be made. That is why I am pleased that the United Kingdom has the opportunity to showcase its track record on combating climate change and seeking to lead by example. That example is clear.

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): Rishi Sunak spoke today for an hour on the budget without even mentioning the climate. He has lowered tax on beer and wine while polluting the rivers. Maybe we should be grateful for that lowered tax, because it sounds like we will not be able to drink the water. He has also incentivised internal flights within the UK by lowering taxes on

flights that are already cheaper than train travel. How can Liam Kerr say that the UK is leading on climate change when those are its policies?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give you a bit of time back, Mr Kerr.

Liam Kerr: I am grateful to the minister for the invitation to say how the UK is leading. Britain has cut emissions by about 44 per cent since 1990, the fastest decline in the G7, while increasing the size of the economy by about 78 per cent. Denmark is the only other OECD country to have achieved a similar level of reductions. The UK is the second-highest performing country in the climate change performance index. The Yale University ranking of the greenest countries in the world across 32 performance indicators places the UK fourth, but second if only climate change and CO₂ emissions are measured.

What of the leadership role? The UK was the first major economy to put into law targets to reach net zero by 2050 and it updated them just this year. The UK is the largest producer of offshore wind energy in the world. The UK is doubling its international climate finance to help developing nations to £11.6 billion a year by 2025. Now, the UK Government has produced a net zero strategy in which it sets out how it plans to deliver its net zero targets for 2050, which the cabinet secretary was a little down on. That is surprising, because the UK Climate Change Committee described the strategy as “ambitious and comprehensive” and an “achievable and affordable” vision that sets

“a globally deliverable benchmark to take to COP26.”

The committee also pointed out that the strategy is the most comprehensive in the G20.

I listened earlier this week to Nicola Sturgeon calling on world leaders to take credible action, not issue face-saving slogans, to achieve net zero. However, I listened just now to the cabinet secretary’s relentless self-congratulation, so perhaps he did not get the memo. From data with which we are all too familiar, we know that the Scottish Government missed five of seven climate targets set out in its 2018 plan, missed its own legal emissions target for three years in a row and that its commitment to ban biodegradable landfill waste in Scotland by 2021 has been pushed back to 2025. The Scottish Government has also slashed the budget for agri-environmental measures this year by nearly £10 million and, four days before COP26 begins, the new Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants’ Rights, Patrick Harvie, is forced to admit to the Scottish Government’s latest failure on its renewable heat target.

The cabinet secretary referred to world-leading targets, a catch-up plan and matching ambition, but some might say that all that is just a face-

saving slogan. We have not even talked about transport, the largest source of greenhouse gases, which has been reduced in Scotland only by about 0.5 per cent since 1990 in a context in which car journeys in Scotland have increased by about 8 per cent since 2016. I pointed out in August that to meet the required target of 30,000 electric vehicle chargers, we need roughly 4,000 extra charging points a year. I asked where the plan was to do that, and yesterday got the answer to a parliamentary question: there is no plan. In addition, we have learned that there are apparently too few chargers in Glasgow to charge the EVs ordered for the summit.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): With Glasgow on the eve of hosting COP26, Britain’s largest ever summit, the Scottish National Party-led Glasgow City Council is being an utter disgrace by allowing rancid conditions in Glasgow’s streets to multiply, leading to a cleansing crisis that was entirely preventable. To be clear, the SNP in Glasgow has cut the number of staff in our city’s cleansing services, introduced a bulk uplift charge—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Dr Gulhane, are you putting a question to Mr Kerr?

Sandesh Gulhane: Yes. The council has hiked council tax by 4 per cent every year and reduced green bin collections—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Instead of making another speech, could you put the question, please, Dr Gulhane?

Sandesh Gulhane: Does Liam Kerr agree that Glasgow is miles worse off with the incompetent SNP city council?

Liam Kerr: I am grateful to Dr Gulhane for the intervention and I agree with him. He makes a very important point in the context of this debate about COP26, during which, as the cabinet secretary said, the eyes of the world will be on Glasgow. An SNP council is doing the bidding of an SNP Government, and what are delegates coming to? There will be road closures across the city and ScotRail is going on strike because the Scottish Government shamefully refuses to get involved and the Minister for Transport has “no idea” why it is happening. Refuse and recycling workers, school cleaners, janitors, catering staff and lawyers are on strike, thanks to the legacy of nearly £1 billion of SNP cuts to local authority budgets in the past six years, which, I suspect, is what Dr Gulhane was referring to. An accommodation crisis means that as many as 3,000 people who are coming to Glasgow do not yet have anywhere to stay.

COP26 is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the UK and drive real global change. We must do that together, as one United Kingdom. The UK

Government is providing almost £100 million for Scotland to ensure that COP26 happens. I am delighted with that and I am sure that the cabinet secretary will be, too.

Michael Matheson: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is about to conclude.

Liam Kerr: Together, let us show that leadership. The Scottish Government must finally start taking credible action to show an example to the rest of the world and recognise that, working together, we must seize this last opportunity before it is too late.

I move amendment S6M-01769.4, to leave out from “the commitments” to end and insert:

“that the Scottish Government has missed its legal emissions target three times and that, according to the Climate Emergency Response Group, over two thirds of key climate policies are not on track; considers that the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council have failed to properly prepare Glasgow and Scotland’s national transport infrastructure for hosting this global event, and calls upon the Scottish Government to urgently step up its support for making homes more energy efficient, bring forward a Circular Economy Bill, accelerate the roll-out of Scotland’s electric vehicle charging network, and invest as a full partner in the North Sea Transition Deal.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Monica Lennon to speak to and move amendment S6M-01769.1.

15:42

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): There are just four days to go until COP26 kicks off in Glasgow and, on behalf of Scottish Labour, I am pleased to speak in today’s debate on the global ambitions for that momentous climate summit.

We need to be honest about the challenges that lie ahead. We should take heart that there are solutions and keep a sharp focus on the bold actions that we must take to limit global warming and keep 1.5°C alive. As the cabinet secretary said, COP26 is regarded as the last, best chance to avert climate catastrophe; that is how important this summit is. Although COP26 is focused on securing international agreement, Friends of the Earth Scotland is right to say that the real action to tackle the climate crisis takes place at national and local levels. Therefore, although we welcome and support the Scottish Government motion, we should be using this time in the chamber—as I am sure that the Government will welcome—to scrutinise and challenge the Scottish Government and its partners across Scotland to do more and work with the entire Scottish Parliament to collaborate with local authorities, businesses and citizens in order to achieve more.

In the debate, we will hear some of the precise actions that need to be given priority by the Scottish Government, but I will take a moment to comment on the unique opportunity that we have in Scotland during the 12 days of the summit. The great city of Glasgow is providing the stage for COP26, and that should fill us with pride. We should embrace the unique opportunity to show the best of Scotland and provide leadership at home and internationally. However, it is also important that we get our own house in order and that is why the on-going organisation of workers, through their trade unions, is a strength that we should welcome, because climate justice and social justice or justice for workers are two sides of the same coin. Empowering and valuing workers is key to securing a just transition so, today, the Labour members send a message of solidarity to workers who are taking industrial action and to all those who are fighting for fair work and climate justice.

In its briefing, Close the Gap says,

“We cannot have a ‘just transition’ without enabling women and men to equally benefit from”

the shift in the labour market towards green jobs and a new future. That is something that we must reflect on today.

We will hear a lot about ambition. I see Scotland as an ambitious nation, and the Scottish Government has rightly been working towards ambitious climate targets. However, we should all take stock and listen to Greta Thunberg, who said that Scotland is not a world leader on climate change. I say to Greta, perhaps we are not yet, but we can be. I hope that many of us will be out on the streets of Glasgow with Greta Thunberg, the workers and the people of Scotland who want to see urgent change.

For our part, Scottish Labour has consistently called on the Scottish Government to be bolder and take quicker action to tackle climate change. We believe that Scotland has the potential to lead Europe’s green energy revolution by putting green jobs at the heart of new employment, training and manufacturing opportunities across Scotland.

The people of Scotland were promised 100,000 green jobs and a renewables revolution, but only a fraction of the jobs have been delivered. Therefore, we understand why people across Scotland, particularly in the north-east, feel a little bit cynical about the prospect of a just transition. We must get on and deliver it.

Liam Kerr touched on a couple of the statistics that came out today. We learned that the Scottish Government target of 11 per cent of non-electrical heat demand coming from renewable sources by 2020 was missed—only 6.4 per cent was

achieved, which is a decrease on 2019. We are not quite getting there with some of the targets.

In the interests of time, I will speed up my speech. I come back to the ambition for a public energy company, which we do not want to be kicked down the road. It is a real opportunity to be a game changer. The market-led energy model continues to fail customers and workers, and our transition will simply be too slow if we leave that work in the hands of the market.

I am sure that Maurice Golden will cover the issue of the circular economy in his speech, but I was disappointed with the Scottish Government's recent announcement on waste incineration. Friends of the Earth Scotland called it "a burners' charter", and I hope that the cabinet secretary will reflect on that.

Decarbonising transport must be the urgent priority. ScotRail proposes to cut 300 rail services a day. Today, we learned that the daytripper concessionary travel scheme is being axed, just as COP26 delegates are getting free transport. Bus routes in my region, such as the X1, have disappeared. We are getting a bit muddled here.

I will briefly mention Cambo. More than 60 charities, unions and community groups have urged Nicola Sturgeon to explicitly condemn the Cambo oil field proposal. There is an article in *The National* today, so perhaps my colleagues on the SNP benches can read it.

We need to speak up. The children of Scotland are saying that this is the moment. We need to take that moment and put our ambitions into action.

I move amendment S6M-01769.1 to insert at end:

“; notes that the Scottish Government has not met the annual target for emissions in 2017, 2018 and 2019; agrees that it is important for Scotland to provide leadership through action and delivery; understands that having better, regular, interconnected and affordable public transport run in the interest of passengers will be essential to achieving the modal shift from cars that will be necessary to meet Scotland's climate ambitions, and calls on the Scottish Government to use all the powers available to it to realise Scotland's full potential in the renewable energy sector, create local green jobs in communities across Scotland, implement a bold industrial strategy to invest in and grow domestic supply chains, and take all necessary steps to secure a just transition to net zero in Scotland, ensuring that no individual, family or community is left behind.”

15:48

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I add my welcome and that of the Scottish Liberal Democrats to delegates and others arriving in Scotland for COP26. As the motion rightly recognises, and as others have already said, this may well be humanity's last opportunity to limit

global warming and deliver on the ambitions that were set at the Paris summit in 2015. It is a weighty responsibility, but one that we cannot afford to shirk.

Often, ministers talk of the Parliament having passed world-leading climate legislation. I agree that the legislation, which was passed unanimously by the Parliament, is indeed stretching. I am certainly proud of the role that my party played in forcing the Government to be more ambitious in setting an interim target of a 75 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. However, Greta Thunberg is right to question the extent to which ministers have followed through on the commitments made and the targets set.

From the figures that were published back in June, we know that, once again, the Government missed its overall targets. Earlier today, Patrick Harvie revealed that, on renewable heat, far from hitting the targets, the Government is going backwards. In short, we are nowhere near where we need to be in reducing Scotland's emissions.

If the picture is worrying on heat, it is little better when it comes to transport. Domestic transport, which accounts for around one third of emissions in Scotland, is the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions, with rates scarcely budging from 1990 levels. Addressing that should be a priority and will need a multifaceted approach. That must include a step change in, for example, the scale of ambition on electric vehicle roll-out, with charging infrastructure incentives and the faster phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles.

The Government will need to reverse cuts to rail services and expand provision, as well as improve accessibility. We also need—as we will hear in the debate that follows this one—a strategic approach to ferry replacement.

However, we absolutely do not need the SNP Government's continued support for a third runway at Heathrow. Let us be clear about what that would deliver: 75,000 extra flights and 600,000 extra tonnes of carbon pollution to Scotland. On the eve of COP26, to retain any credibility on climate, the First Minister should rip up the Government's contract with Heathrow to support a third runway. Lorna Slater and Patrick Harvie should be standing by with a recycling bin in which to dump that.

I want to briefly highlight what is happening in Orkney, as I believe that it offers an insight into what can be done to meet the climate challenges that we face. As we heard at the Scottish Parliament renewable energy and energy efficiency cross-party group last night, Orkney, with its world firsts and world-leading innovation, really is the energy islands. Those innovations

include the first turbine on Burgar Hill in the 1970s, the establishment of the European Marine Energy Centre in 2003 and, as the minister will know better than most, the connection of the world's most powerful tidal turbine, which was made by Orbital Marine Power, earlier this year.

More recent news is the plan to transform the Flotta oil terminal into a hydrogen production facility, which will use offshore wind produced west of Orkney. Tied in with innovative projects to develop hydrogen ferries, low-emission aircraft and the decarbonisation of heat across the islands, that shows how Orkney is playing a pioneering role in the transition to net zero and in the creation of green jobs. That should be backed by the UK and Scottish Governments through funding and a supportive regulatory environment. It represents the bold, innovative action that we will need to see from Scottish and UK ministers if we are to rise to the challenge of being a global leader in tackling climate change.

I move amendment S6M-01769.3, to insert at end:

“; notes the Scottish Government's commitment to develop an aviation strategy, and believes that, as part of this work, the Scottish Government should withdraw from its written agreement with Heathrow Airport to support the building of a third runway.”

15:52

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): We must raise our eyes beyond the horizon of our own interest and COP must work in leadership as the engine of a global attack on climate emissions and of mitigation and adaptation, bringing together the global north and south. There is only one world and there is only this one last chance.

A just transition means ensuring that nobody is left behind globally as well as nationally. It is vital that world leaders listen, engage and understand those who are experiencing climate change now, and listen to the countries and people who did the least to cause the climate emergency. Global south countries are bearing the brunt of climate change, with warming temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns driving economic hardship, food insecurity and migration, leading to the mass displacement of people.

In September, the Glasgow climate dialogues took place, which were co-convened by the Stop Climate Chaos alliance and the Scottish Government and in which global south leadership provided detailed recommendations to inform discussions at COP26.

Recommendations from the dialogues include the need for industrialised polluting countries to significantly increase the financial support that is available to help impacted communities adapt to

spiralling climate impacts and the need to ensure a global just transition based on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's principles of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Liam Kerr: I am enjoying the member's contribution so far. Presumably, she also welcomes the doubling of the UK Government's international climate finance to £11.6 billion a year by 2025.

Fiona Hyslop: It is important that we all increase our climate funding, but we cannot use that to mask cuts in international development aid, which the UK Government has done, as, indeed, have others. It is important that we welcome that funding, but we must be mindful of how that might be presented.

Yesterday, I heard from Dr Asha from Kenya Red Cross about the need to provide funding for loss and for mitigation and adaptation. Those priorities must be placed at the heart of COP26 by participants. The editors of more than 100 respected medical journals across the world have published a common editorial calling for emergency action to limit global temperature increases, restore biodiversity and protect health. The joint article points to the chilling fact that, in the past 20 years, heat-related deaths among those over 65 increased by more than 50 per cent.

A decade ago, in my previous role as a minister, I remember calling on the European Union to prepare for environmental refugees fleeing northern Africa. The displacement of millions of people because of the climate emergency will be a consequence of actions by the polluting global north. People, businesses and organisations across the country are active and ready to work towards the drive to net zero. Just last week, at the Parliament's festival of politics, we heard from David Farquhar, chief executive officer of Intelligent Growth Solutions, who shared the global opportunities of vertical farming to support the exponential global demand for food at a time when we need to reduce farming emissions. That is a great global innovation, driven from Scotland. Innovation has to be global and it has to be shared.

The climate emergency presents us with one big challenge, but there are many solutions, and we must be conscious of and non-judgmental about how other countries with different experiences strive for change. Scotland and the wider UK, which contributed to and led the industrial revolution, must listen and embrace. Instead of judging too swiftly those who are following our past path, we should help and share experience in transitioning to greener energy and technologies.

It is true that we have one of the most ambitious pieces of climate change legislation in the world and, because of that, we have more responsibility. People around the world will be watching how we turn our goals into actions, and we must lead by example. We are going to have to move faster, quicker and over more areas, with more solutions than we thought. We are going to have to stretch our capabilities. Yes, this is a global challenge, but there is not one global solution. Justice and fairness at home and abroad must be at the heart of our ambitions. We succeed only when we all succeed. East, west, north and most definitely south—we have one world; we have one chance.

15:57

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): COP26 is being held against a backdrop of a worsening climate crisis. Over the past year, we have seen severe weather events tear across the planet: soaring temperatures in the United States, dust storms and cyclones in the far east, and flash floods across Europe, including here in the UK. Property has been damaged, businesses have been ruined and, worst of all, lives have been lost. There is, therefore, no doubting the warning from COP26 president Alok Sharma that

“the cost of inaction on climate change is most definitely greater than the cost of action.”—[*Official Report, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee*, 16 September; c 11.]

However, we can be proud that Britain is taking action. Among the world’s major economies, Britain was the first to establish legal targets to reach net zero by 2050 and is decarbonising fastest. In fact, Britain is now the second highest performing country in the Climate Change Performance Index. Britain is also committed to helping the rest of the world to take climate action, too, committing £11.6 billion a year by 2025 to help developing nations. That combination of action at home and a helping hand overseas gives Britain enormous climate credibility. We lead by example, which is vital if we are to convince others to take the action that is needed to limit warming to 1.5 degrees. COP26 gives Scotland a platform to aid that effort—what WWF Scotland describes as a

“historic opportunity to help create a ‘race to the top’ on climate action.”

I have always welcomed the Scottish Government’s setting of ambitious climate targets—ambition that can encourage others, especially other devolved Governments around the world, to set their own bar higher. Welcome as that ambition is, there is simply no getting around the fact that emissions targets have been missed for three years in a row. Where the Conservative UK Government is building credibility, the SNP-Green coalition is running out of it.

Presiding Officer,

“to be credible, the Scottish Government must, at a minimum, deliver Scotland’s emissions targets ... we can afford no more excuses.”

Those are not my words but a damning assessment from Oxfam. That is the SNP’s problem on the environment. It is quick to tell everyone what it wants to do and just not very good at doing it.

The Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform (Màiri McAllan): It is enlightening to hear the member discuss Britain’s credentials in tackling the climate emergency. Will he reflect on how much Scotland’s renewable potential and the ample scope of our natural environment, including in peatland restoration and tree planting—given that we are planting 80 per cent of the trees that are being planted in the UK—have contributed to Britain’s credentials on emissions?

Maurice Golden: Let us look at the SNP’s track record. Air quality standards have not been met for 10 years in a row. Of 20 international biodiversity targets, more than half have been missed. The renewable heat target has been missed, along with the target for locally generated renewables. Recycling is going backwards, with a rate worse than that in 2016. Incineration capacity is skyrocketing, and the SNP and Greens could end up having to import waste to burn. In Glasgow, which is the COP26 host city, the SNP-run council has plunged the city into a growing crisis of rubbish and rats.

That is not all. The SNP failed to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016, broke its promise to deliver 28,000 green jobs and failed to meet its cycling target—at the current rate, it will take 290 years to meet it. The use of public transport and active travel by commuters is down. Of the plastic waste that is collected in Scotland, 2 per cent is recycled here, with 3 tonnes of waste leaving Scotland every minute. The SNP has failed to introduce a landfill ban on biodegradable waste. The deposit return scheme is a shambles, with businesses in the dark even though the SNP has been working on it for a decade. The SNP cancelled Zero Waste Scotland’s textiles programme.

I genuinely hope that Scotland can set an example for the rest of the world but, with the SNP and the Greens in government, I fear for it.

16:01

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): In 1869, a poem was collected by the folklorist Alexander Carmichael in Ìochdar in South Uist and published in the second volume of “*Carmina Gadelica*”. The poem predicts this for one fertile coastal area of Uist:

“Torrana is of the barley, with the great sea around its middle. The walls of the churches shall be the fishing-rocks of the people, while the resting-place of the dead shall be a forest of tangles, among whose mazes the pale-faced mermaid, the marled seal, and the brown otter shall race and run and leap—Like the children of men at play.”

Members might find the poem to be unnervingly prophetic of the coming disasters that sea-level rises will bring to coastal regions across the world. Lest the reference to mermaids makes members inclined to dismiss the poem, I should say that it is far from the only unsettling and very specific prophecy of its kind in Gaelic folklore. It mirrors many of the fears that are now being voiced in contemporary scientific debate.

In the past decade, global sea levels rose by 3cm, but the situation is predicted to get worse. The most recent UN report on climate change, which was published in August 2021, warned that we could see the ocean ascend by nearly 1m or more by the end of the century. Such outcomes threaten many societies existentially. Under that scenario, island nations such as the Maldives and Tuvalu will simply disappear. Cities including New York, Shanghai and Kolkata will be exposed to coastal flooding by 2070. Bangladesh could lose up to a fifth of its land mass, displacing 15 million to 20 million people.

Scotland will not be immune. Among the places that will be particularly vulnerable are low-lying areas with soft coasts of machair, including Uist, Islay and Tiree, as well as Sanday in Orkney. Large tracts of arable land in Uist were created through centuries of drainage programmes. However, that means that land is often below the mean high-water mark. If a storm large enough broke through the machair dunes, the land could become inundated, and possibly permanently so. In the aftermath of the deadly 2005 storm, the primary school close to the shore in Balivanich was abandoned and a new one was built further away from the sea. If we multiply that up, we can see the kind of threat that now faces human infrastructure across much of the planet and the cost of dealing with that.

The climate crisis will also undermine intangible cultural heritage—many of the things that make it worth being human—so it is important that the debates on climate change take notice of indigenous voices in addition to science and that they reflect on the cumulative experience and knowledge of such societies, whether they be in Greenland, Tuvalu or Uist.

The Gaelic word for a person, “duine”, literally means “one who is from the land”. They inhabit a homeland, or “dùthaich”. The social and ecological bond that ties the two together is “dùthchas”, which is an untranslatable concept comprising heritage, culture, ancestry and identity, concentrated in a place made sacred. We should

be in no doubt that rising sea levels represent a threat to all that, as well as to everything else.

We should listen to the breadth and depth of information that exists in endangered and indigenous languages across the globe. That information is not only relevant to fully understanding the crises that we face; it might just point to a way out of them.

16:06

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Earlier this week, the First Minister said that COP26 must produce

“credible action, not face-saving slogans”.

I certainly agree, but, unfortunately, “face-saving” is the default setting of the Government all too often. No platitudes to world leaders, no gestures at the conference and no greenwashing of the Government benches in Holyrood can change that. On so many issues, there is a gulf between rhetoric and reality under the SNP, and it has been exposed by COP26. This is no time for self-congratulation in Scottish politics; it is time for some self-awareness. The Scottish Government must confront its record.

The Government’s motion specifically refers to the co-operation agreement between the Scottish Greens and the SNP. I want to address what that agreement means for transport, which, as other members have said, is a major emitter. The Labour amendment in the name of Monica Lennon makes it clear that delivering

“better, regular, interconnected and affordable public transport”

in the interest of Scotland’s passengers is one of the principal ways in which we can make a difference.

As Monica Lennon said, on the day that the SNP and the Greens announced their coalition, ScotRail unveiled a consultation on a new timetable that will cut 300 services per day compared with pre-pandemic levels. That means drastic reductions in the number of rail services to and from Glasgow, the COP26 host city. The Minister for Transport has defended that consultation. He refused to accept calls to restore services to pre-pandemic levels. He ignored those cautioning against reducing rail capacity when we are facing a climate emergency. I will be interested to hear the thoughts of the Green minister on that in her summing up.

Car travel has already returned to pre-pandemic levels, but the use of public transport has not. A modal shift to our railways is essential, but we cannot achieve the modal shift that Scotland needs if the Government makes it harder for

people to leave the car at home. That is a critical challenge for us.

I want to acknowledge the rail workers who kept Scotland moving throughout the pandemic. Even if there is a resolution to the outstanding dispute with the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, which could continue during COP26, the past few months have still been immensely difficult for industrial relations on the railways. The Scottish Government must take its share of the responsibility for that.

The new publicly owned ScotRail must provide proper representation for trade unions in its governance structures. Passengers must be represented, too. They deserve improving and affordable services. There is no reason to hike passenger fares in the coming year, which is what is set to happen, and it will again chase people away from using public transport.

The most common form of public transport is not the train, but the bus. However, as Monica Lennon said, bus services are also in decline in Scotland. Under the SNP, the total number of bus passenger journeys in Strathclyde and the south-west—home of the Glasgow city region and the host city of COP26—has fallen by 79 million. In the greater Glasgow and Strathclyde area, 48 million vehicle kilometres have been lost from the bus network and fares are up by a fifth.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Neil Bibby: I will.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You will need to be very brief, Mr Kerr, because Mr Bibby is just about to conclude.

Liam Kerr: Will the member address the fact of the £640 million black hole in the SNP's attempt to decarbonise our buses, which Graham Simpson mentioned?

Neil Bibby: We clearly need investment in our bus network if we are serious about tackling climate change, and the Government needs to ensure, again, that the rhetoric matches the reality and that it gets the resources that it needs.

The bus market is broken in Glasgow and in the west of Scotland. Labour fought for improvements to the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to make local control a reality through public ownership, but the Scottish Government's bus partnership fund is directed at operator-friendly improvements. There is no strategy to intervene in the market in Glasgow or anywhere else in Scotland to put the interests of passengers first.

If public control is good enough for Edinburgh and London buses, and for the modern, thriving cities of Europe, why is it not good enough for

Glasgow and the west of Scotland? Public transport should be a public service again if we are serious about tackling the climate emergency.

16:10

Collette Stevenson (East Kilbride) (SNP): The IPCC's "code red" report shows the clear threat that the world faces, but there is still time, if we act now, to take collective action and limit the temperature rise to 1.5°C. As Scotland is the birthplace of the industrial revolution, it is right that we should be at the forefront of the green revolution.

Action is required at the local, national and international levels. A lot of important work has been done at the local level to position East Kilbride as a smart and sustainable town. I recently visited an award-winning East Kilbride business—Re-Tek UK Ltd—which focuses on sustainable information technology asset disposal, and it was great to see how its operations make a positive impact in the fight against climate change. I hope that companies such as that one will continue to grow at home and abroad.

The Scottish Government is committed to raising global climate ambition and action at all levels and from all sections of society. Having launched the world's first climate justice fund almost a decade ago, the SNP Government recognises that those who suffer most from climate change are those who have done little to cause it.

Recently, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and the Scottish Government co-convened the Glasgow climate dialogues, which enabled citizens from the global south to publish their COP26 demands. As the First Minister said earlier this week, Scotland

"will help those around the negotiating table listen to activists",

including

"from the global south."

Monica Lennon: To return briefly to East Kilbride, the dualling of the East Kilbride railway has been axed. Does the member agree that that is the wrong decision? Will she ask the ministers to get back around the table to ensure that we get that project back on track?

Collette Stevenson: I have written to the Minister for Transport to outline some of the local issues that have been raised in East Kilbride.

Another important voice in the debate is that of young people, many of whom are so engaged in the fight against global warming. Greta Thunberg will be in Glasgow, and I am sure that she will inspire even more young people to stand up for their future.

It is important that children and young people are able to speak out and encourage leaders to go further, which is why the Scottish Government's investments of £450,000 in support of the COP26 youth climate programme and £350,000 for the conference of youth are so welcome.

I really look forward to taking part in the moment on Friday. It will be great to chat with pupils from St Vincent's primary school in East Kilbride, as well as with a group of secondary school pupils, to discuss the climate and hear about the actions that they want to be taken. The legacy of COP26 must be rooted in actions. It is our best, and possibly last, chance to achieve what is required to safeguard our planet.

Following the Paris agreement in 2015, the Scottish Government set a legally binding 2030 target of reducing emissions of all major greenhouse gases by at least 75 per cent compared to baseline levels. Furthermore, we will end Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2045. We must, however, deliver a just transition to net zero to people in all parts of Scotland and in all corners of the globe.

Scotland is the right place for a COP that is focused on delivery and action. We are ready to play our part in delivering successful outcomes, and, importantly, the Scottish Government will ensure that the voices of everyone, including our young people and the citizens of the global south, are heard.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call Mark Ruskell, I remind members that speeches are to be up to four minutes long. We have no extra time. If you wish to take an intervention, by all means do so, but it will be part of the time that is allocated to your speech.

16:15

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): COP26 is finally here and I am sure that many of us in the chamber will have mixed emotions. Perhaps we feel a sense of relief that it is finally happening, or a sense of hope and belief that we can deliver better agreements through the Glasgow talks. However, I hope that there is also a sense of collective guilt that no Government around the world has taken sufficient action to tackle the crisis.

The Paris agreement provided a skeleton of the framework that is needed to keep the increase to within 1.5°C. The Glasgow COP must now flesh that out with ambition from all nations acting in solidarity with those who have contributed the least to the crisis but who will inevitably suffer the most.

The pledges that states have made so far simply do not add up. We are heading towards an increase of nearly 3°C in global heating, which would be a huge climate injustice—a crisis that is based on the idea that some people are worth more than others, as Greta Thunberg described it.

The voice of the marginalised and colonised global south needs to be heard loud and clear at COP26. I look forward to the Scottish Government amplifying that voice using the Glasgow dialogues communiqué.

The focus on how we cut emissions is critical, but it cannot crowd out discussion and agreement on how to compensate for the vast amount of loss and damage to life and the economy that is already happening in the global south.

The annual \$100 billion-dollar pledge that was made in Paris to help countries to adapt is just the starting point and it must be delivered in full. That is just the first bill from the cleaner half of the world to the developed nations such as ours for using our shared atmosphere as a waste dump for generations. It must be paid in full.

I suspect that many different COPs will take place in Glasgow, in the blue and green zones, on the streets, and in private lobbying spaces. For many of the businesses that will be providing the products, services and, I hope, fair work of the future, COP is a great opportunity to build confidence that rapid change is possible now. There is a first-mover advantage for Governments to drive recovery through investment in innovation supply chains while creating entirely new markets. However, we must also recognise that, for many fossil fuel corporations, COP26 is a further opportunity to steal the narrative around just transition, just as it tried for years to control the narrative about whether climate change was real.

Many corporations continue to spin the myth that maximising the economic recovery of every last drop of fossil fuel reserves is totally compatible with climate objectives, while parading false solutions, such as negative emissions technologies, as being capable of allowing their business models to continue largely unchanged. The time has come for all Governments to stop copying and pasting drivel from fossil fuel corporations into their energy strategies. For example, the concept of a net zero basin in the North Sea is utterly meaningless when the industry wants to scale up from 6 billion to 20 billion barrels of oil and gas extraction.

Last week, the UN production gap report showed how states are planning to allow the extraction of double the amount of fossil fuels that we can afford to burn if the heating increase is to stay under 1.5°C. Then we wonder why young

people are so angry about the failure of Governments to address that basic fact of physics.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his final 30 seconds.

Mark Ruskell: The politics and the action have to be in line with the science, and so far, they are nowhere close.

The Scottish Parliament's post-COP legacy to the young climate strikers, the global south, and the world will be to double down on our climate plans, take responsibility, drive a real just transition, and deliver the system change that is needed to tackle climate change. The hard work has barely begun.

16:19

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): I have been dipping into the Radio 4 series "39 Ways to Save the Planet". The episode called "Local Wisdom" caught my attention. The programme suggested that indigenous knowledge and direct historical experience had lots to offer the world in the journey to net zero. Whether that wisdom is the knowledge that has been passed down through the generations by the Inuit or the astute observations in a 100-year-old Islay farmer's diary, those are insightful glimpses into how our forebears lived their lives in tune with nature.

How do we get back to that? Well, COP26 in Glasgow is a great opportunity to do so. Rather than being a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, it is perhaps a once-in-a-species opportunity for our species.

We should not only demand that our leaders hammer out solutions; we need to inspire them to do so. I get my inspiration—and my optimism for the future—from the local wisdom that I find in abundance in my community. I suggest that world leaders do the same, to keep 1.5°C alive.

Across Argyll and Bute, people are engaging in finding solutions for climate change and a just transition. Time for Change Argyll is one such group. It is mobilising for a better world by joining in the school strikes at Lochgilphead joint campus, creating a great blue wave of people along the seafront at Oban to represent the rising sea levels and flooding that have been caused by climate change, and celebrating our fantastic coastal communities that we must protect.

The Dynamic Coast project has been providing strategic evidence on the extent of coastal erosion across Scotland since 2012. As Alasdair Allan mentioned, Tiree's natural beaches and sand dunes have in the past provided important

protection to the low-lying land behind. Those natural features must continue to be valued and managed so that they can continue to provide such protection.

As part of COP26, the former slate-producing island of Luing has been chosen as one of the six sites across Scotland to have a Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland marker, made from traditional materials, to highlight places that could be affected by rising water levels. Like the neighbouring island of Easdale, Luing is suffering from serious coastal erosion. Its community is investigating different ways to reduce the erosion and is working with Dynamic Coast to give it a framework for doing so.

Separately, the community is exploring with Historic Environment Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise the possibility of mining slate again, which would involve starting a community enterprise to provide local material for local use and creating local jobs. In seeking to bring back traditional skills to work with a local resource, that initiative represents local wisdom combining with science to find workable solutions.

There are many more projects happening across Argyll and Bute. Seawilding is returning to Loch Craignish native oysters, which create complex reefs where young fish thrive and biodiversity increases, thereby restoring the health of the local marine environment. Local people are working with the scientists at the Scottish Association for Marine Science. Fyne Futures on Bute is aiming for a carbon zero island. It has a myriad of projects, from electric bikes to upcycling furniture. This year's project encourages activities around growing and sharing food, and making use of local resources while learning new skills. Work is also being done with farmers across Argyll and Bute who are committed to sustainability but who need to be involved in decisions that will affect them, as they know what works for their land.

COP26 in Glasgow will bring together senior politicians and scientists from all over the world, but as well as talking, they need to listen. They need to listen to the women and men of their own communities—people who already possess the local will and wisdom to combat climate change. Of course, I think that Argyll and Bute is special, but it is not alone in being home to people with the local wisdom to find the solutions for climate change. The great and the good at COP26 in Glasgow need to listen to them.

16:23

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): The debated is titled "COP26: Action and Ambition". I fear that we will see little of the former and only warm words about the latter, because

that is what we get in SNP Scotland. Just today, we learned that the SNP's target to meet 11 per cent of non-electrical heat demand from renewable sources by 2020 has been missed by a mile.

Most of the people of Glasgow and the surrounding area will be unaffected by COP26—unless, of course, they want to get into and across the city centre. In that respect, it will cause a big amount of hassle and inconvenience. Delegates will get the five-star treatment and be kept away from the rubbish in the streets and the creaking public transport system, while locals are told to keep their distance for the fortnight.

If anyone wanted to get into Glasgow, there would be little point in driving. They might think that turning to public transport was an option, but not if the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers has anything to do with it. The barons of that particular union have decided that the latest pay offer should not be put to its members and are hell bent on causing chaos—unless they have changed their minds in the past couple of hours.

To strike for the entire period of the conference is irresponsible. They should do the right thing and ditch the strikes. Perhaps if the transport minister did what I have been urging him to do for weeks and got round the table with the RMT, they could be persuaded to tone down the posturing—for that is what it is. They know that nationalisation is coming and they smell blood. We can see through it, so they need to grow up.

After the conference, we need a transport system that is greener. Transport is the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. We all know that we need to decarbonise the way that we travel. It is therefore ironic that delegates to the conference will be ferried around in electric cars charged up at electric vehicle charging points powered by diesel generators. Who are we trying to kid here? Or, if they are lucky, they may get to go on an electric bus.

Michael Matheson: Will the member give way?

Graham Simpson: No.

The coalition of chaos's programme for government announced plans to remove the remaining 4,400 diesel buses that are currently on the road by 2023. That is a noble and lofty ambition—which they will get nowhere near achieving at current rates. There is £50 million in the pot from the Scottish zero emission bus challenge fund when it will take £640 million to replace those 4,400 buses.

I will be taking part in a mass cycle ride to Glasgow a week on Saturday. People from all

parts of the UK are wheeling their way to the city, which leads me on to action and ambition.

If we want to get people out of cars and on to bikes or public transport, that needs to be funded. We do not achieve that by cutting rail services and cutting projects such as the dualling of the East Kilbride line—the member for East Kilbride did not give an opinion on that. That is not how to do it.

A Cycling Scotland survey showed that people would be motivated to cycle if there were more cycle lanes, traffic-free routes and off-road cycle paths, because the main barrier to cycling is feeling unsafe on the roads. Cities such as Glasgow and Edinburgh need to show the ambition of, say, Paris and make themselves bike and pedestrian friendly. We also need properly organised and integrated public transport systems, such as those in London or Manchester.

I am afraid that Glasgow is not miles better on this or anything—rats apart—but the COP26 delegates will not get to see any of that.

16:28

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): Parliament needs to be very clear that we need ambitious outcomes from COP26, and I do not think that party-political point-scoring is necessarily the way to do that. I hope that we can unite around a clear message on behalf of the people of Scotland that we want to see ambitious outcomes, and that we amplify some of the more radical voices that we will hear during the coming days and raise our game.

I say that because we all need to be humble and recognise the challenge that we face. Greenhouse gas concentrations are at their highest levels in two million years. In 2018, the UN said that, based on the work of scientists and Government reviewers, it was necessary that global temperatures rose no more than 1.5°C to help us to avoid the worst climate impacts and maintain a liveable climate.

According to Al Gore's climate reality project, however, even 1.5°C of warming will lead to wildfires, dwindling biodiversity, storms growing even more powerful, and oceans becoming more acidic, killing off our seas and, indeed, many parts of the planet that we have become so aware of.

The first thing that Parliament should be saying is that we have a duty to speak on behalf of the people of Scotland. We recognise that Scotland does not necessarily have that status in the negotiations, but our role as the host means that we are uniquely placed to give a clear message and work with those from all parts of the world who will be campaigning on our streets and arguing

that a far more ambitious approach to the challenge that we face is necessary.

We are not one of the 10 countries with the highest emissions. As has been said, however, we have the history of the industrial revolution and we have contributed to the situation that we are in. Between 1988 and 2015, 100 companies producing fossil fuels were responsible for 71 per cent of all global emissions. As a major country in the energy sector, our message needs to be very clear and distinct. Oil and gas make up 75 per cent of Scotland's energy consumption, 90 per cent of our heat demand and 6.6 per cent of our gross domestic product, and the sector supports more than 100,000 jobs as well as being a massive exporter—82 per cent of Scotland's oil and gas is exported—so its role is a key issue in the discussions. The voices of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government need to be heard.

A lot has been said about transport in the debate. Of course, Scotland no longer has the domestic capacity to build and maintain its own trains, and it has been said that a massive cut to train services is coming, which is far from the message that we want to send when we welcome delegates in a few days' time.

We need to send a clear message. I hope that the party-political bickering is not mainstreamed in that message and that we unite in the coming days to say that we stand with young people in this country, with those in the streets and with the trade unions, and that we will fight and argue for a more ambitious proposal to come out of COP26. As politicians, we will be fighting for that.

16:32

Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I am pleased to be able to contribute to the debate. The impact of COP26 is being felt right across Glasgow, but it is into the former industrial communities of Anderston, Finnieston and Yorkhill that global leaders, delegates, and activists will descend to discuss and debate the best ways forward for our environment and, ultimately, our planet.

Scotland's impact on the world has been significant, and central to that has always been our greatest resource: our people. The excellence of our thinkers and the institutions that educate them continues to be pivotal and will undoubtedly impact the conversations that take place at COP26.

We know that the work to develop critical thought must start early, and I warmly welcome the Caledonian club, a Glasgow Caledonian University initiative that works with schools in Glasgow to equip primary 5 and 6 pupils to answer

questions such as "What is climate change and its effects?" and "What can I do to raise awareness about climate change?" Glasgow Caledonian University is also supporting a series of talks focusing on the climate emergency that will involve local and international experts in conversation with girls from Glasgow.

The focus on young people and providing them with an environment and platform to flourish is shared by the University of Strathclyde, which is hosting the UN climate change conference of youth. That event is designed to prepare young people for their participation in COP26, and to ensure that the voice of youth is heard.

Against the backdrop of Brexit and the United Kingdom's hostile immigration policies, I welcome those demonstrations of international co-operation that reinforce that Scotland does not share in an isolationist dogma but instead embraces an outward and collaborative approach to solving truly global problems.

Indeed, COP26 is a unique opportunity to showcase Scotland to the world, including what we are doing to meet our world-leading climate targets. A perfect example of that is a Glasgow Kelvin business, Katrick Technologies. Its CEO moved from India to Scotland to attend the nautical college, before eventually graduating from the University of Strathclyde with a master's degree and an idea. That idea developed into a technology to capture, converge and convert energy from waste heat, wind and waves into mechanical vibrations, producing profitable zero-carbon electricity. That truly revolutionary work was done in Glasgow and it could power our homes and electric cars for many years to come. Once again, the excellence of Scottish education, which has been safeguarded by successive SNP Governments, has attracted and developed the best and brightest, and we are delighted to call Katrick Technologies a local success.

With the Scottish Government committed to delivering the ambitious target of net zero emissions by 2045 and an interim target of a 75 per cent reduction by 2030, I am proud of the world-leading research and development that is currently under way in Kelvin and in Scotland. That work could provide the solutions to the global challenges that are being addressed at COP26.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): We now move to the winding-up speeches.

16:36

Liam McArthur: As we have heard today, tackling the climate emergency must be a shared national and global endeavour. The IPCC has made it clear that we do not have the luxury of time, and that everything that we do needs to be

seen through the prism of the climate emergency. It was therefore right that Fiona Hyslop urged us to raise our horizons, particularly in the interests of those who will be affected most by but are least responsible for and least able to cope with, the effects of climate change.

Even in our own self-interest, the need to act is obvious. Alasdair Allan made an excellent speech, pointing to the impacts of rising sea levels in the community that he represents. He even alluded to the island where I was brought up, which I have long known as low lying and at risk from rising sea levels. Therefore, in that spirit of our own self-interest, we need to act.

Maurice Golden graphically outlined the worsening picture of severe weather patterns and the costs that they are incurring. That reminds us that the costs of inaction are considerably greater than any costs that we will face in taking the required action, and it reminds us of the fatal consequences that we are seeing more and more.

Katy Clark made a reasonable point about the predictable back-and-forth between SNP and Tory colleagues about who should shoulder more blame, with accusations and counter-accusations over missed targets, counterproductive actions and the need to do more. Frankly, the UK Government and the Scottish Government—all Governments, as Mark Ruskell fairly said—clearly need to do more.

Earlier, I set out some of the actions that Scottish Liberal Democrats have proposed, such as a climate emergency community fund and a Highlands and Islands just transition commission.

Transport was the focus of many colleagues' speeches. Neil Bibby particularly focused on the need for a modal shift in transport, and on the need to make it easier for people to get out of their cars. If people remain in their cars, we need to reduce their carbon impact. We need to expand the charging infrastructure for EVs, and we need Government-backed rental schemes and loan schemes to increase take-up.

We also need to decarbonise other areas of transport. In my speech, I pointed to what is happening in Orkney with ferries and air services. That matters. As Graham Simpson reminded us, transport is Scotland's largest source of emissions. Heathrow is the single biggest producer of emissions, yet the Scottish Government holds a contract with that single biggest polluter that is aimed at adding around 75,000 flights between Scotland and London by 2040. That is not tenable, credible or sustainable, and her Green colleagues and party members should encourage the First Minister to bin the contract ahead of COP26.

We have heard a great deal today about this being our last and best chance, but if we are to take advantage of what Jenny Minto described as a "once-in-a-species opportunity", we need to move from talk of world-leading legislation to world-leading action. The world is watching, and COP26 must see the Scottish Government, the UK Government and all Governments walk the talk. I commend the amendment in my name.

16:40

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): The motion recognises the disproportionate impact of climate change on the people who are the least responsible for it. As members across the Parliament said, we see that across the world, from coastal erosion in Bangladesh to erratic rainfall and droughts in Malawi. We need to work together.

I was delighted to see the dear green place project launch in *The Scotsman* today. It is a Glasgow-inspired partnership story-telling project, which links young people from the countries that are most acutely affected by the climate emergency with journalism students in Scotland and across the UK. The aim is to raise awareness among the public and add to the voices that are calling for climate justice as world leaders arrive in our dear green place for the world's biggest climate change conference.

This is a vital moment, because we need the leaders who are gathering in Glasgow to make the necessary changes in their countries to keep the target of 1.5°C alive, ensure that it is achieved, and—vitaly—deliver on the funding commitments that were made in Paris to support countries in the global south in tackling climate change and its impacts.

In his opening speech, the cabinet secretary talked about the importance of action on a global scale, but he did not really reflect the fact that the annual emissions targets have been missed for three years in a row under the SNP Government.

That is why we are calling on the coalition SNP-Green Government to use the powers that it has, such as planning powers, to realise Scotland's full potential in the renewable energy sector, create local green jobs in communities throughout Scotland, implement a bold industrial strategy, grow domestic supply chains and take the necessary steps to secure a just transition for Scotland, so that no individual, family or community is left behind as we transition to net zero.

That needs political leadership, as Monica Lennon said. We need bold action on our homes—how they are insulated and heated—and we need to use that action to eradicate fuel

poverty. One in four of our households was experiencing fuel poverty in 2019—and that was before this year's rising costs. We need the community and co-operatively owned heat networks that we know work, and our councils need support and finance from the Scottish Government if they are to deliver them.

There is a huge opportunity to create jobs and provide training, right across society, reaching every community. However, as members said, that requires our Governments to work together, which is something that we do not see happening. The SNP minister will not work with his colleagues in local government in Glasgow to find a solution for the workers who are vital to maintaining a healthy environment in the city. The Conservatives in the UK Parliament have not convened a joint ministerial committee meeting, to bring national and devolved Governments around the table, since 2018. Why has no JMC on the environment and climate issues been set up?

The posturing of members across the chamber will not solve the climate emergency, as several members said. Where is the work on cross border high-speed rail? Where is the new capacity in long-distance freight?

We have called for better, interconnected and affordable public transport and investment in active travel. There is support across the Parliament in that regard. If we are to get modal shift from cars, we need better alternatives. We need to entice people to use different options by making that possible for them.

Discussions with the rail unions have been going down to the wire. It has been embarrassing to watch the Government drag its feet for months when it comes to giving key workers a fair pay deal—and that is against a backdrop of cut services, as Neil Bibby said. We need action. We need more public transport, not less, especially after a pandemic that has led to people using their cars more. Train use is 50 per cent lower than pre-pandemic levels and research shows that many people are deterred from using trains because they are worried about enforcement of the face covering requirements and about the ability to distance from other passengers.

Looking forward, passengers could also face hikes of up to 200 quid extra for a season ticket on key commuter routes, when such tickets are already expensive. We need to encourage people to travel by train, and we need to make it possible, with more attractive and affordable services. As a start, let us go for a rail fare freeze. Will the Scottish Government sign up to that?

We also need, as Neil Bibby said, to make bus services more reliable, usable and affordable. In Lothian, we have an example of municipal

ownership, which works—the service is award winning. Could we have the same system across the country, and let our councils work together using the powers that were included in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 when we amended it? Let us get the action that we need.

I hope that ministers will reflect on today's speeches from members on all sides of the chamber, because there is political agreement on the core issues where we can act, on which this Parliament and Government can use the powers that we already have. I hope that we will have the political support to get moving.

In conclusion, I go back to my opening comment about the importance of fairness and a just transition in Scotland, and of our support for the global south next week. We need to act and get the change that is needed.

As people arrive in Glasgow, let us look at the distribution of vaccines as well. Oxfam, Christian Aid and Gavi—the global vaccine alliance—have done a brilliant job in raising awareness of that issue. However, of the 1.8 billion doses that were promised by rich countries, only 14 per cent have been delivered, and at a UK level the delivery has been less than 10 per cent of what was promised.

It is in our collective interest that we work together on that—we need to act. The spirit of COP26 means that we stand together and, as with tackling the climate emergency, getting the virus under control means working together. I hope that the minister, in her closing speech, will commit to act. We need to work together on a climate emergency and Covid recovery—it is in our global collective interest. Let us get the political commitment to work across the chamber to make the change that we need now, not in 20 years' time when it is too late.

16:46

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am delighted to close the debate on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. As members have said, COP26 is a hugely significant event. It cannot be understated that it is—as has been said—the best, and probably the last, opportunity to reverse the global climate emergency. It is a global crisis and will require global solutions, so—despite the absence of some significant global players—as the UK takes over the presidency of COP, the eyes of the world will look expectantly and hopefully towards Glasgow. Warm words will not cut it, and targets without deliverable outcomes can no longer be acceptable.

The debate has been a bit predictable. The Scottish Government has been keen to avoid talking about its consistent record of failure on climate change targets—a point that was

hammered home by that guru of the circular economy, Maurice Golden, in a speech that laid bare those failures. We have heard from members on all sides of the chamber about the degradation of Glasgow under the stewardship of an SNP-led council. The council leader has declared that a wee “spruce up” is all that is required, but anyone who frequents Glasgow cannot fail to be shocked at the speed at which this great city has been allowed to become dirty, litter strewn and rat infested.

However, in a spirit of collaboration, I agree with the Scottish Government minister, Lorna Slater, who, pre-election, declared:

“We have ... practical, costed policies for a fair and green recovery, nearly all of which we can implement under the current constitutional arrangement. We don't need to wait for independence”.

She is, of course, right. However, if we roll forward to post-election, and a ministerial car later, we see the same Scottish Government minister do a screeching U-turn and say:

“I don't see how I can realistically talk about tackling the climate crisis when I don't have all the powers to do all those things”.

Which is it? Perhaps the minister will enlighten us in closing the debate.

The Scottish Conservatives say that, with COP26 on our doorstep, the time to take definitive action has to be now. We are a small country, so, given the global nature of the crisis, what can we be expected to do? We can lead by example—we can weave climate change and the green economy learnings and qualifications throughout the education system, and immerse them in it, in order to deliver the skills that will be required for the jobs of the future.

Innovation is the key; Fiona Hyslop made that point in her very balanced speech. Education is completely devolved to the Scottish Government, but—as I have said before—we import too much of the technology for wind power and import much of the servicing expertise. The Scottish Government has had years to think about that and sort it out. It was Alex Salmond—I do not know whether members remember him—who declared that Scotland would become the Saudi Arabia of wind. However, the Scottish Government has failed to recognise and act on the economic and environmental opportunities, preferring instead to blame Westminster.

We can demonstrate that transitioning to a green economy does not mean abandoning a growing economy. Progress has been made. Liam Kerr rightly pointed out that Britain has cut emissions by about 44 per cent since 1990, the fastest decline in the G7, while increasing the size of the economy by 78 per cent. The UK is the

second-highest performing country in the climate change performance index and the UK is measured as the fourth-greenest country in the world. That is not enough, of course—I have a rare point of agreement with Mark Ruskell on that—and we need to accelerate that transition significantly. However, it does show us that the road that we must travel can support a robust economy.

The change at the scale and pace required will also require significant funding, but Governments will not be able to foot all of that bill. We need a collaboration with the public and private sectors. In so many potential projects, seed funding from the Government will lead to significant private investment. However, the Scottish Government's record on that is abysmal, but little wonder, given that the Government's partners in crime, the Greens, are against growth and that the Scottish Government has neglected the private sector for too long. How on earth can we expect the private sector to be an enthusiastic partner of a Government that is so hostile to and distant from private enterprise?

We need to help the transition from an oil and gas economy, especially in transport and heating, which is a step that the oil and gas sector acknowledges and is already taking place. The sector is investing in wind, tidal and hydrogen renewables, among others. We need that sector's research and development budgets and its innovation; instead, we have a Government minister hell-bent on vilifying the sector at every opportunity. Patrick Harvie's heat and building strategy requires input from the private sector, a point that was conceded by the cabinet secretary. I look forward to Mr Harvie reporting on his negotiations with the private sector. I asked him a couple of weeks ago when the Scottish Government would be able to give consumers the date for replacing gas boilers with hydrogen boilers and he inadvertently gave away the Scottish Government's built-in excuse for not hitting the target. He will blame Westminster when the target that he set in a paper that he produced is missed.

Moving transport away from fossil fuels is an essential element of transition. As Graham Simpson pointed out, the Scottish Government has announced a plan to remove by 2023 the 4,400 diesel buses that remain on the road, but it knows that it will not meet that target. Leaving aside the considerable financial investment required, the charging infrastructure and the network capability is not there. At some point, the Scottish Government has to realise that it is outcomes that will tackle the climate emergency, not targets designed to create headlines.

COP26 will come and go, and our hopes are that the world will finally collaborate to get a global grasp of the climate emergency and put significant policies in place—anything less has to be too little. For Scotland’s part, we demand that the Scottish Government does its part and stops setting targets without strategy, which is what has led to it continually failing to meet targets. There are so many people in Glasgow and the rest of the country who COP26 will bypass and the delegates will not see, but they are the very people who we need to take on this journey. Where is the Scottish Government’s consideration of their needs? The smoke and mirrors approach of the Scottish Government will no longer be tolerated. I ask members to agree to the amendment in the name of Liam Kerr.

The Presiding Officer: I call Lorna Slater to wind up. You have nine minutes, minister.

16:53

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): I thank my parliamentary colleagues for their contributions to the debate. It always warms my Green heart to hear so much passion for and commitment to caring for our planet and being good global citizens. I, too, welcome the world to Glasgow for the COP26 summit and thank those who have contributed to enabling this vital summit to take place. As the motion notes, Glasgow will be

“humanity’s last opportunity to ... deliver on the ambitions set at the Paris Climate summit in 2015”

and to limit climate change to within 1.5°C, beyond which the impacts for people, wildlife and our planet would become intolerable.

The climate crisis is intensifying with every day that passes, and we are now witnessing impacts, suffering and loss at a frequent and devastating scale around the world. This is no longer about targets; it is action that we need, because inaction is costing lives. Our response to this crisis and emergency has to be—

Maurice Golden: Will the member take an intervention?

Lorna Slater: I am going to try to get through all my responses to the debate, so I will not take interventions.

Our response to the crisis and emergency has to be commensurate to its size, scale and urgency. Today, I have heard—and will reflect on—many suggestions from across the chamber about how we can do more. I look forward to the chamber’s support as we strive to bring about transformative action at the scale at which we know it is needed.

The cabinet secretary has spoken to the progress that Scotland is now making. I am proud to see Green policies being taken forward in the programme for government and the co-operation agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Greens. Those policies include warmer, more efficient homes; free bus travel for young people; a massive increase in funding for cycling, walking and wheeling; record investments in marine renewables; and plans to double the size of the onshore wind sector. Those changes are a good start, but I have no doubt that they are not enough.

Monica Lennon is right to note in her amendment that the Scottish Government has not met its climate targets. It is right that we show some humility here, because we have not been getting it completely right and we have not done enough.

I welcome Monica Lennon’s amendment because it talks about “modal shift” in transportation, achieving “Scotland’s full potential” in renewable energy and creating “local green jobs”. I am glad that we share a vision for investing in and growing domestic supply chains and securing a just transition that leaves no individual, family or community behind.

The Scottish Greens will also support Liam McArthur’s amendment, because it covers an area of policy—aviation—that is excluded from the co-operation agreement with the Scottish Government. It is also the Scottish Government’s position that demand for aviation must decline in order that we reach our climate targets.

With respect to Maurice Golden, the UK is not credible on climate. The International Energy Agency says that on-going oil and gas extraction is not compatible with keeping global heating to 1.5°C. Therefore, as long as the UK does not commit to ending oil and gas extraction, it cannot be credible on climate.

Maurice Golden: Will the member take an intervention?

Lorna Slater: I will go through my responses to the other members.

Alasdair Allan and Jenni Minto were right to highlight the very real dangers of sea level rises in Scotland, the cost and damage of which are immense. Every time anyone asks who will pay for preventing climate change, I wonder who will pay the cost of not preventing it.

I welcome Neil Bibby’s comments on public transport, which, along with an increase in active travel, is the key to meeting our target of a 20 per cent reduction in car miles.

Liam Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Lorna Slater: I have to keep cracking on.

The co-operation agreement provides funds for councils around Scotland to look at setting up their own bus services.

It might come as a shock to Graham Simpson that councillors and some MSPs from his party have been voting against cycle lanes being installed and, where they have been built, campaigning to get them removed.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Lorna Slater: No, I will keep going.

Katy Clark was right to highlight that 1.5°C of warming is not safe. It is pretty bad, but it will not bring quite the apocalyptic levels of disruption that we will see at the 3°C of warming that Mark Ruskell described.

Sarah Boyack's support for community and co-operative heat networks is very welcome, as is her recognition of the jobs that the decarbonisation of our heating will create.

If Brian Whittle is not clear on which powers are reserved to Westminster, I am happy to elaborate, and there is an excellent Wikipedia article on the subject. [*Laughter.*] It is clear both that we can do more in Scotland and that we could do even more if those powers were devolved.

We have reached a critical moment in time. I sincerely hope that the UK Government can lead the talks to a constructive and productive conclusion in a way that allows all Governments to reconsider their priorities and secure our survival.

I also call on world leaders to take immediate and rapid action on emissions reduction and investment in low-emission and zero carbon technology on a global scale, lest the losses and impact of climate change intensify and become more destructive.

As a global citizen, I am proud of the positive start that we have made with Scotland's climate justice fund—highlighted by Fiona Hyslop and Collette Stevenson—which will help those in the global south tackle the climate crisis. We recognise the loss and damage that are already occurring as a result of climate change and that those who are suffering most from the changes are those who are least responsible for them.

At home, I look forward to the analysis that will be conducted of Scotland's North Sea oil and gas production, with a view to assessing the compatibility of current and future field development with the parameters of the Paris agreement.

The impact of climate change will reach every area of our country and culture, so we must act

now and prepare ourselves and all aspects of our way of life. Otherwise, the consequences of our inaction will be too awful to bear.

I thank members for today's debate and for all the points that they raised.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes the debate on global ambitions for COP26.

Graham Simpson: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I seek your guidance. During the debate, Sandesh Gulhane intervened on Liam Kerr. He was interrupted by the Deputy Presiding Officer, who told him to hurry up and ask a question. Mr Kerr was untroubled by the intervention, which seemed perfectly normal to me. Can you advise whether there is now a time limit on interventions and whether they need to end in a question?

The Presiding Officer: It is a matter for the Presiding Officer who is in the chair at any point to make a ruling on any question that is put to them. I will certainly look into the matter that Mr Simpson has raised, but I have no doubt at all that my Deputy Presiding Officer will have handled it in a manner that they saw fit.

Urgent Question

17:01

NHS Lothian

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the statement that NHS Lothian's services are under extreme pressure and that patients should not attend the emergency department unless it is life threatening.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): Our health and care system is under extreme pressure due to the pandemic, and NHS Lothian, like all health boards, is experiencing significant pressure, including workforce challenges and a high level of delayed discharges, which are, inevitably, affecting waiting times in accident and emergency departments.

We recognise that some people are not getting the service that they or we expect, so I apologise to anyone who has suffered as a result. It is our ambition to ensure that more patients receive person-centred care in the right place at the right time, and in a way that helps staff to deliver high-quality care and treatment. That is why we invested £23 million this year to support development of the redesign of urgent care.

Recently, I announced a £300 million package of winter measures, which includes a focus on bolstering the caring workforce by increasing its numbers and providing additional support.

This morning, along with my senior officials, I met the executive team at NHS Lothian, and we have agreed a set of immediate actions that will support improvements and minimise delays for patients.

Sue Webber: The figures that were released yesterday confirm that we have the worst A and E waiting times on record. Since the cabinet secretary's "NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026" was published in August, more than 55,000 people have waited more than four hours to be seen in A and E, more than 11,000 of whom were in NHS Lothian.

After last night's advice from NHS Lothian, there is rightly a lot of concern among people about having to self-diagnose whether something is life threatening. Some injuries are not life threatening, but are serious—for example, a broken ankle might not kill, and a stroke that is left untreated can have life-changing consequences.

Does the cabinet secretary now accept that the Government's recovery plan was not sufficient, and does he endorse the advice from NHS

Lothian? If so, how can people access the treatment that they need?

Humza Yousaf: I thank Sue Webber for her important question.

All health boards and clinicians would say that if a person thinks that their condition is critical or life threatening, they should not hesitate for a second to call 999 or get themselves to the A and E department. If they do not think that their condition is critical or life threatening, there are alternative pathways, such as calling NHS 24. People should err on the side of caution if they feel that their injury or condition, or that of a family member or friend, is critical or life threatening.

It is important that people listen to the advice of clinicians and their health board. I think that we would all accept and understand that the people who are working in hospitals across our national health service only want the best for the people whom they treat. However, I say to Sue Webber that when there is a time of extreme pressure, this Government will continue to invest.

We are facing the most significantly challenging winter that the NHS has ever suffered. Our performance is not where I want it to be; however, it is the case—this will be cold comfort to people who are waiting in A and E departments—that our A and E departments are the best performing A and E departments in the United Kingdom. I mention that just to highlight that, across the UK, we are facing common challenges.

We will continue to invest, and I have previously announced a £300 million winter package. I know that health boards are working round the clock to maximise capacity by safely discharging those for whom discharge back into community settings is clinically safe.

Sue Webber: This morning, a constituent of mine texted me. She was too scared and upset to go to work at the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh because she knew that people have been waiting more than 30 hours in A and E due to lack of beds.

In NHS Lothian's announcement, Calum Campbell, the chief executive, admitted that NHS Lothian hospitals are close to capacity and that the "hospital system is under extreme duress."

NHS Lothian has asked for mutual aid to help to ease the sustained pressures on its teams and patients. Will the Government provide that aid? What is the cabinet secretary's message to hard-working NHS front-line staff who have fears that are similar to those of my constituent?

Humza Yousaf: First and foremost, I thank Sue Webber's constituent for all that she has done

during the pandemic—in particular, during this significant period of challenge.

This morning, I spoke to a clinician who works at one of the Edinburgh hospital sites who reiterated how challenging and pressured the system is. This morning, I also spoke to Calum Campbell and to John Connaghan, who is the chair of NHS Lothian. They have had urgent and rapid discussions with their local authority partners and the health and social care partnerships in the region. They feel that they can make exceptionally good progress in order to discharge safely from hospitals into communities people for whom that is clinically safe. That will free up capacity, which will also help with the flow in hospitals. That is what the winter package is there to help with.

I will not pretend that, even with that increased investment, the winter will be anything but challenging. Performance will continue to be difficult. Where boards ask for aid, and that aid can be provided, we will leave no stone unturned in helping our health boards at this difficult time.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The cabinet secretary asked people to think twice before calling an ambulance. Now patients in Lothian are being told to hold off completely unless their condition is “life threatening”.

This winter, the NHS is reaching the crux of years of underresourcing and mismanagement; it is in genuine jeopardy. I do not have a medical degree, so I would be grateful for some advice from the cabinet secretary. What exactly does “life threatening” mean? Does he accept that asking people to judge for themselves whether their condition is life threatening will possibly prove to be deadly?

Humza Yousaf: As I have already said to Sue Webber, if people feel that their condition is critical or life threatening they should, of course, pick up the phone to call 999 and get an ambulance or, if they are able to do so, get someone to transport them to an A and E department.

Other pathways are available if a person’s condition is not critical or life threatening. For example, they can call NHS 24, which is a 24/7 helpline, for assistance. We know that every health board in the country is under pressure. If a person’s condition is not critical or life threatening and we are able to assist by using alternative pathways, we should do so. That advice is being given across the board.

Fiona Hyslop (Linlithgow) (SNP): NHS Lothian made it absolutely clear in its most recent briefings to Lothians MSPs that one of the major pressures that its hard-working staff are facing in the enduring pandemic, alongside high levels of staff illness and self-isolation, is acute staff shortages in social care, which is impacting on the

whole health and social care system. There are vacancies elsewhere and shortages of European Union workers. What can the recently produced “Adult Social Care Winter Preparedness Plan 2020-21” do to help with the pressures?

Humza Yousaf: I thank Fiona Hyslop for that incredibly important question.

The adult social care winter plan and the winter plan that was produced to progress the £300 million winter package really focus on social care. We know that if we can bolster the social care workforce, we can help at the front and back doors of our acute services. We can, I hope, prevent people from going to hospital if they have the care at home and care home packages that they need, but we can also help at the delayed discharge end by safely discharging people to community settings when, I say again, it is clinically safe to do so.

Of the £300 million that I announced, £48 million is being made available to increase the hourly pay of social care staff. That will match NHS band 2 staff pay and will help in the recruitment of 1,000 additional NHS staff to support multidisciplinary teams. More than £60 million of the investment is to maximise the capacity of care at home services. Significant investment is being made. Although the workforce recruitment that I mentioned will take some time, I know that every single health board is looking to recruit as a matter of urgency.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): People urgently need front-line health support, and many are going to A and E because they or members of their family are having health crises and cannot get support locally. For example, I have been inundated with patients from the Riverside medical practice’s area in Musselburgh who have told me heartbreaking stories, pre-dating the pandemic, about not being able to access general practitioner services. The issue has been raised by other constituents across the region, too. Can the cabinet secretary say what he is doing now to ensure that patients have the local medical services that they need, as well as the support that they need when they attempt to access accident and emergency services?

Humza Yousaf: I recently met Colin Beattie MSP, who raised with me the issue of Riverside medical practice. I offered to continue to discuss with him what assistance we can provide, and I extend that offer to Sarah Boyack. Of course, it is for the local health board to deal with such issues.

On local services, I recently wrote a joint letter with the British Medical Association to every general practice in the country, including in the NHS Lothian region, in which I laid out quite explicitly my expectation that, given the changes in guidance, there would be an increase in face-to-

face GP appointments, which we know might well help in this regard. I thank GPs for the incredible hard work that they are doing at this time.

The investment that I mentioned will help to bolster other local services and, I hope, take pressure off acute settings.

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): NHS Lothian's chief executive has said that the board has requested mutual aid, but I am concerned about the capacity of other health boards to fulfil that request. As we know, the issues facing NHS Lothian are impacting health boards across the country. Just a few days ago, NHS Lanarkshire moved to its highest risk level. What assurance can the cabinet secretary provide that requests for mutual aid can be met, and that health boards that are struggling will be provided with the assistance that they need?

Humza Yousaf: Gillian Mackay is correct: every single health board is under pressure and strain. They can, potentially, get mutual aid by reaching out to the Golden Jubilee national hospital, which can, for example, help with planned care. We know how important it is to address issues with planned care, particularly where there has been postponement of priority level 2, P3 and P4 groups of surgeries. If those backlogs continue to increase, we will just store up problems for the future.

It is for each health board to discuss with other health boards what mutual aid might be available. When a request comes in for other support, such as military support, we will give it serious consideration and will, where it is appropriate and necessary, pass such requests on to the armed forces.

Business Motion

17:14

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-01797, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme. I call George Adam to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 2 November 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by First Minister's Statement: COVID-19 Update

followed by Scottish Government Debate: A Progressive approach to Sustainable Procurement and Fair Work Practices

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 3 November 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Health and Social Care;
Social Justice, Housing and Local
Government

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Early Learning and Childcare-1140 Hours and Beyond

followed by Legislative Consent Motion: UK Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Approval of SSIs

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 4 November 2021

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:

Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Accessing
Scottish Social Security Benefits

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 9 November 2021

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by First Minister's Statement: COVID-19
Update

followed by Scottish Government Debate

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 10 November 2021

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Justice and Veterans;
Finance and Economy

followed by Scottish Government Debate

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 11 November 2021

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:
Education and Skills

followed by Scottish Government Debate

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 1 November 2021, 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.—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:14

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S6M-01798, on code of conduct for councillors; S6M-01799, on model code of conduct for members of devolved public bodies; S6M-01800, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument; and S6M-01801, on designation of a lead committee.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Code of Conduct for Councillors (SG/2021/229) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies (SG/2021/230) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Forestry (Exemptions) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.—[George Adam]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:15

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone):

There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-01769.4, in the name of Liam Kerr, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01769, in the name of Michael Matheson, on global ambitions for the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties, 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.

17:15

Meeting suspended.

17:21

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the division on Liam Kerr's amendment S6M-01769.4. Members should cast their votes now.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on Liam Kerr's amendment S6M-01769.4 is: For 32, Against 87, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-01769.1, in the name of Monica Lennon, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01769, in the name of Michael Matheson, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-01769.3, in the name of Liam McArthur, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01769, in the name of Michael Matheson, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Doney, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)

Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01769.3 is: For 12, Against 85, Abstentions 22.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-01769, in the name of Michael Matheson, as amended, on global ambitions for COP26, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adam, Karen (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Brown, Siobhian (Ayr) (SNP)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Choudhury, Foyso (Lothian) (Lab)
 Clark, Katy (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dunbar, Jackie (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Duncan-Glancy, Pam (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Fairlie, Jim (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)

FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAllan, Màiri (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Angus (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)

Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Dowey, Sharon (South Scotland) (Con)
 Findlay, Russell (West Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallacher, Meghan (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Gosal, Pam (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Stephen (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Lumsden, Douglas (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Webber, Sue (Lothian) (Con)
 White, Tess (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-01769, in the name of Michael Matheson, as amended, on global ambitions for COP26, is: For 91, Against 27, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the world to Glasgow for the COP26 summit and thanks all those who have contributed to enabling the summit to take place; considers this to be humanity's last opportunity to limit global warming and deliver on the ambitions set at the Paris Climate summit in 2015 and calls on world leaders gathering in Glasgow to make the necessary changes in their own countries to keep the target of 1.5 degrees alive and ensure it is achieved, and also deliver on the funding commitments made in Paris to support countries in the Global South in tackling climate change and its impacts; further calls on world leaders to take immediate and rapid action on emissions reduction and investment in low-emission and zero-carbon technology on a global scale, and to recognise the loss and damage already occurring as a result of climate change, recognising that those suffering most from these changes are those least responsible for it, and to support those countries already living with such loss; notes the commitments recently set out through the Programme for Government, the Cooperation Agreement between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Green Party Parliamentary Group, and other documents that build upon the updated Climate Change Plan and increase the steps being taken in Scotland to address the climate crisis; looks forward to the publication, starting from next year, of sectoral just transition plans, and welcomes the undertaking, in support of this, of further analysis of Scotland's North Sea oil and gas production to assess the compatibility of current and future field development with the Paris Agreement, and to Scotland's economy, security and wellbeing; notes that the Scottish Government has not met the annual target for emissions in 2017, 2018 and 2019; agrees that it is important for Scotland to provide leadership through action and delivery; understands that having better, regular, interconnected and affordable public transport run in the interest of passengers will be essential to achieving the modal shift from cars that will be necessary to meet Scotland's climate ambitions, and calls on the

Scottish Government to use all the powers available to it to realise Scotland's full potential in the renewable energy sector, create local green jobs in communities across Scotland, implement a bold industrial strategy to invest in and grow domestic supply chains, and take all necessary steps to secure a just transition to net zero in Scotland, ensuring that no individual, family or community is left behind.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on the four Parliamentary Bureau motions unless any member objects.

As there are no objections, the question is, that motions S6M-01798 to S6M-01801, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Code of Conduct for Councillors (SG/2021/229) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies (SG/2021/230) be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Forestry (Exemptions) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill at stage 1.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Ferry Services

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Annabelle Ewing): Before we begin the final item of business, I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place, and that face coverings should be worn when moving around the chamber and across the Holyrood campus.

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-01137, in the name of Jamie Halcro Johnston, on recognising the importance of Scotland's ferry services. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request to speak buttons.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the vital importance of lifeline ferry links to Scotland's island communities; acknowledges what it sees as the severe problems that have affected Clyde and Hebridean routes, particularly in the Highlands and Islands region, over the summer of 2021; notes the impact on residents, potential visitors, businesses and public services of a service that is unreliable; recalls the conclusions of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee in its inquiry into the construction and procurement of ferry vessels in Scotland, and notes the view that there is an urgent need for a Scotland-wide ferries strategy that ensures the resilience of the network into the future.

17:32

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I apologise for being unable to attend in person. I thank all members who supported my motion and made the debate possible. I also thank all the crews, engineers, mechanics, catering and shoreside staff, and others, who have worked so hard during the past few years, often in extremely difficult circumstances, to keep ferry services running where they have been able to, despite growing challenges.

I am an islander. My home is one of 90 inhabited islands in Scotland, each with its own rich cultural heritage. Those communities are valued parts of our nation. They remind us of Scotland's internal diversity: we are a place of many traditions. They are also living communities of people who depend on transport links, just as anyone on the mainland would, to find sustainable work, reach a hospital appointment or visit friends and family. We also depend on those links to bring people, services and supplies to our islands. No island is fully self-sufficient or exists in isolation.

Many characteristics of the islands are shared by remote mainland communities such as Knoydart, dubbed Britain's last wilderness, or the Kintyre peninsula, divided in its own way by the

sea. The importance of our transport links to one another, to the rest of Scotland and the United Kingdom, and to the wider world cannot be overstated. They are our lifelines.

That communities depend on our ferries also reminds us of our fragility. For much of our history, in common with other parts of remote and rural Scotland, the rural Highlands and Islands have faced the threat of depopulation. Some have not survived. On islands such as St Kilda and Stroma, we can see the echoes of societies that have been lost and the abrupt end of human stories that had endured for centuries, often against the odds.

I say that as a reminder of how important it is to get the operation of our lifeline links right and because, regrettably, things are going very wrong. We see a ferry crisis that has been unprecedented in its impact rumbling on with little sign of abating. Communities have been cut off at a time when economic recovery is most needed after the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

If Glasgow or Edinburgh faced such challenges, that would be considered a national emergency or even a national scandal. However, even at the height of the crisis in the summer, our calls for a statement from the Scottish Government were rejected because the transport minister was on holiday. The minister is entitled to a holiday, but surely his boss, the cabinet secretary, could have stepped in.

Such a dismissive response from the Scottish Government suggests that Edinburgh was not taking the growing issues seriously. That was disappointing, given that, in the previous parliamentary session, there were some signs that the Scottish Government was starting—albeit belatedly—to recognise the unique challenges that our islands face, through partial support for interisland ferries in Orkney and Shetland, albeit with annual fights for funding, and the extension of road equivalent tariff, although, as far as Orkney is concerned, the Scottish Government is now three years overdue on meeting its pledge. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 also promised new respect for island communities, although I would argue that many islanders feel that that respect is nothing more than rhetoric.

Not enough work has been done to address the backdrop of ageing infrastructure. Whether in our local interisland ferries or the CalMac Ferries fleet, vessels that are long past their operational lifespans are creaking under that load. The consequences are there for all to see.

Procurement must be a major part of any forward-looking strategy but, sadly, that is where the Scottish Government's failings have been most visible. Since the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee concluded its damning

report on the problems at Ferguson Marine, things have gone from bad to worse on the banks of the Clyde. On 30 September, Ferguson's turnaround director warned the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee of further potential problems and an "unquantifiable risk" that components in hulls 801 and 802 had further deteriorated. The situation has become a farce and I suspect that other members will focus their time on that.

What is lacking generally is a unified strategic approach to Scotland's ferries that dares to examine, spell out and cost how the long-term sustainability of those vital services will be guaranteed. That requires an acceptance that the current position is expressly unsustainable. Earlier this year, *The Times* noted that

"at the present rate of construction ... it would take more than 85 years to replace the entire CalMac fleet."

I am sure that all of us—even the minister—would agree that our communities simply cannot wait that long.

My concern is that the problems that we see now, which are largely on the west coast, are a vision of the future for other island communities as the ferries that serve them continue to be pushed to operate well beyond their projected working life. When we hear that the ferry industry advisory group has not met since October 2019, it is understandable that there is real concern.

The Scottish National Party Scottish Government has a manifesto pledge to introduce an islands connectivity plan. That is welcome but, so far, the details have been scant. An integrated approach is positive, but it must be one that considers ferries in the round and addresses the weaknesses of the ferries plan for 2012 to 2022.

From a northern isles perspective, the continuing questions of fair funding and RET for Orkney and Shetland must be resolved. We must also address the importance of ferries for the carrying of freight. For many farmers and fishermen, ferry links are what brings their produce to market and makes so many businesses viable. There should be a clear role for, and a supportive approach towards, those independent operators that are also an essential part of our ferries fleet.

A great deal of anger is being felt in communities at the extent of the crisis. That anger is justified by the real and present failure in Scotland's approach to ferry connectivity, and the many promises that have been made as easily as they have been broken.

Today, I have tried to be constructive and to outline what is needed for change to happen and the questions that will have to be tackled. However, I urge the Scottish Government not to think for one minute that the present situation has

escaped the notice of our constituents. They have paid a heavy price in business, opportunities and jobs. They see the threat of closures and depopulation looming and will not be bought off with easy promises of help down the line.

What needs to happen, and what we can expect, is for the Scottish Government to take ownership of the crisis by admitting that there is a crisis, and one that risks getting worse, and to set out to Parliament and to people in the communities that our ferry network serves, how their links will be sustained, not for tomorrow or the next financial year, but for the long term.

17:39

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I congratulate Jamie Halcro Johnston on securing a debate on this important matter.

Scotland's ferry service is perceived to be unreliable and to lack resilience. Last summer, of the 538 sailings to and from Brodick in July, not one was cancelled. In contrast, in August, Covid-19 infections among the crew of the Caledonian Isles and technical problems on the MV Isle of Arran led to the loss of 86 sailings. It is the experience of August, just as capacities were increased, that islanders and visitors remember.

Ferry reliability is vital for ensuring that residents can make essential trips to the mainland and encouraging tourists to visit our islands, which is vital to long-term business survival. Confidence is now at an all-time low. Although many factors are unforeseeable, CalMac's approach to handling bad weather, as well as Covid-19 and technical difficulties, have given rise to resentment and frustration.

We had weather cancellations only yesterday, and the Isle of Arran ferry committee feels that there is insufficient flexibility to avoid a default position that restricts the delivery of supplies and services when the forecast is likely to result in further cancellations. That should be better recognised if we are to provide a service to the island. Such challenges need creative, customer-centred solutions, and I trust that those are being considered.

Island constituents do not accept that cancellation is always the only course of action. It cannot be the case that we head into another winter in the current circumstances. Islanders are also not happy that communications about cancellations are often haphazard and late in the day. Other arrangements must be considered, particularly now that Arran has only one winter sailing per day from Lochranza to Tarbert for supplies. With a high demand for services, the minister must urgently consider what other

resources can be applied to ensure that our island communities receive an appropriate service.

Meanwhile, on the Largs to Cumbrae route, services are being halted to deep clean vessels after every third crossing. CalMac prioritises surface cleaning over the risk of airborne transmission of Covid, while pensioners are sometimes expected to queue for up to an hour for tickets. Instead, CalMac should work with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport to allow people to pre-book tickets and show valid concession cards as they board. That is a simple measure to implement, one would think, and it would be greatly appreciated by older island constituents.

Only a fortnight ago, damage to the hull of the Loch Shira meant that the smaller Loch Riddon had to take the strain on the Largs to Cumbrae route. Queues were long and, once aboard, passengers found the toilets inoperable. The MV Isle of Cumbrae also experienced technical difficulties when it was called to assist, and many irate emails from island constituents ensued.

Island constituents continually raise concerns about the lack of community engagement around service timetabling changes and details of the fleet renewal schedule, as Jamie Halcro Johnston said. CalMac must improve customer service and satisfaction. Port staff are not to blame, and they are often very helpful, but they sometimes bear the brunt of frustrations. The lack of relief staff who are available to work on the Arran service when Covid outbreaks occur has also contributed to feelings of insecurity, reduced regularity of trips and difficulties in securing bookings on ferries, which always seem to have fully-booked car decks.

In one instance that was highlighted to me by the Isle of Arran ferry committee, a sailing was supposedly fully booked 149 days in advance. In reality, relatively few sailings are fully booked in October. When I last sailed from Brodick a fortnight ago, the car deck was half empty but, if someone trying to book next week will not find it easy. The ferry committee has repeatedly asked CalMac why that is the case.

Island economies depend on tourism and, therefore, on ferry services. Following the pandemic, it is more important than ever to ensure that local businesses and communities are supported. Arran's current staff shortages are around three times higher than the mainland average, which is partly due to concerns over ferry reliability, which makes commuting to the island difficult. It also makes families reluctant to move to the island, which is necessary to boost the workforce and the economy and to maintain a sustainable population.

It is vital to ensure that the changes that CalMac introduces are in the best interests of the islanders, who depend on a lifeline service, and that issues that are raised are investigated and acted upon so that the service runs as efficiently as possible.

Services must handle recurring and preventable issues that continuously leave those living on islands fretting about when they might access to and return from the mainland. All parties who are affected by the reliability of services must be consulted, with particular—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Gibson, could you bring your remarks to a close, please?

Kenneth Gibson: —to improve the service, island connectivity and quality of life.

As for the minister, I have to say that I have always found him to be available seven days a week, early in the morning and late at night, whenever he is required, so I am not really sure about the comments regarding his holidays; he has certainly spoken to me when he has been on holiday.

17:43

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): I congratulate Jamie Halcro Johnston on securing the debate. I start by apologising, as I think I may have to leave before the end of the debate, if that is okay. I suspect that quite a lot of members speaking—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Are you asking the chair now, Mr Simpson?

Graham Simpson: I am asking for permission—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Normal courtesy would have been to let the chair know before, but there we go. Thank you.

Graham Simpson: Okay—thank you very much.

This is not the first time that we have debated ferries and it will not be the last. The fact that we have to—and we do have to—tells us that there is a problem. Too many islands have suffered a dismally poor service. Breakdowns are common, which is not surprising with our ageing fleet. The chronic lack of investment in ferries over the years has led us to where we are.

We just have not had a proper ferries replacement programme, and now we are playing catch-up. That is exacerbated by the situation at Ferguson Marine, where two ferries are languishing years behind schedule and massively over budget. We do not know for certain when they will be finished, but we know that the

nationalised yard is not considered good enough to bid to build two more ferries. They will be built in eastern Europe, and it would not surprise me at all if we see them in service before the Ferguson ferries.

We are also in the embarrassing position of having to buy a second-hand ferry from Norway to service the Craignure to Oban route. The MV Utne is being sold so that the Norwegians can replace her with a zero-emission battery vessel, so we get the gas-guzzling cast-off while they save the planet. We also have to fork out more than £3 million to prepare her to operate here. Quite what the justification is for that price tag is anyone's guess, because the Government has not told us.

Jamie Halcro Johnston rightly says that our ferry links are lifelines. He notes the problems over the summer and recounts the damning report of the former REC Committee, which said:

“the Committee believes that there has been a catastrophic failure in the management of the procurement of vessels 801 and 802, leading it to conclude that these processes and structures are no longer fit for purpose.”

The committee went on to say that there should be “a root and branch overhaul of current decision-making structures”.

It was really talking about whether we need CMAL—Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd—any more. The then minister in charge, Paul Wheelhouse, was completely dismissive of the committee and told it:

“we do not accept the Committee’s description of a ‘catastrophic failure’”.

Mr Wheelhouse is no longer here to continue the debate. I suspect that his election leaflet quoting me and Alex Rowley praising him during a debate—it was not about ferries—helped to put paid to his political career. [*Interruption.*] That is true.

Ferries are as vital to Scotland’s connectivity as decent roads and railways. The Government must accept that things have not been done properly. It must accept that there is merit in what we and others, including the REC Committee, have been saying, which is that we need to invest more in ferries; award longer contracts so that operators can procure the vessels; and consider whether we need CMAL. The issue has become a party-political football because of those failings. I make a genuine offer to the minister to put myself and maybe others on the ferry industry advisory group, which has not met for two years—I will even chair or co-chair it, if he wants—so that we can get our islands moving again.

17:47

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): For many communities, ferry services are quite literally a lifeline. Their importance is exemplified by the fact that ferry usage has remained high even in the teeth of the Covid pandemic, more so than other forms of public transport. It is shocking to see the extent to which the Government has, for years, presided over the decline, decay and neglect of Scotland’s ferry services, to such an extent that *The Times* recently reported that the worsening ferry crisis is “driving people off islands”.

There can be no doubt that the CalMac fleet is old and exhausted and is now prone to breakdowns, delays and chronic disruption. That means putting good money after bad. Reliability is damaged, so that many in those communities can simply no longer rely on the services. In my West Scotland region, the ferry services to Arran and Cumbrae are a case in point. Services are operating on such a tightrope that, on 10 October, a single positive Covid case on the Ardrossan to Brodick route cancelled all sailings, which meant that the only way on or off Arran was via the route from Lochranza to Kintyre.

Just the following day, the Largs to Cumbrae route was out of commission until the evening. A replacement vessel was eventually sent from the Coll and Tiree route, but that meant that that service in turn had to be cancelled. Meanwhile, the ferry serving Coll and Tiree recently broke down for the second time in three weeks. That is little wonder when the ferry is 30 years old and counting, which is five years older than the recommended 25-year lifespan of a ferry.

Almost half of CalMac’s fleet is now over 25 years old and prone to mechanical breakdown. Those ferries should be being replaced, not pushed and pressed beyond safe and reliable limits in a failed bid to patch over the enormous ferry failings of the Government, which sat idly by while unions and experts warned of the perfect storm of operating an ageing fleet with growing passenger numbers. Passenger numbers increased by 23 per cent between 2015 and 2019, yet only one large and two small CalMac ferries were introduced in that period.

The Government has also presided over the fiasco at Ferguson Marine Engineering Ltd, such that, as we have heard, we are now buying second-hand ferries from other countries and a Scottish yard supporting Scottish jobs and owned by the Scottish Government cannot even make the shortlist to build new ferries in Scotland. The Government just piles insult upon injury. It would be completely unacceptable if there were any further delay to the ferries that are currently being built at Ferguson’s. I ask the minister to confirm that there will be no further delays to those ferries

and to explain why he has not visited Ferguson's to see the state of the project for himself, because that is inexplicable.

The Government needs to get a grip and finally to do the right thing by our island and coastal communities. We need a national ferry building programme to replace our ageing ferry fleet and bring jobs to the lower Clyde and the communities that have been so ill-served by the Government. As we go forward, there should be representation for passengers and workers in the governance of ferry services. Finally, there should be a full review of our ferry services in Scotland to ensure that the right vessels are on the right routes at the right time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Due to the number of members who wish to speak in the debate, I am minded to accept a motion without notice under rule 8.14.3 to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Jamie Halcro Johnston*]

Motion agreed to.

17:52

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): As I represent and live in an island constituency that is entirely dependent on CalMac, it would be fair to say that ferries represent the greater part of my daily work at the best of times. It would also be fair to say that this summer was not the best of times. As a result, ferries came, properly, to represent the overwhelming majority of workload for me and my staff.

This summer, as I think we can all agree, a combination of factors made ferry services nothing short of intolerable. Without minimising any of the problems that members have rightly debated, I point out that some of those factors were well beyond normal control—chiefly, the fact that vessels were on average running at only a third of their normal capacity, due to social distancing requirements.

Tourists have the luxury of booking tickets months in advance. Most other people do not plan their lives that far ahead—nor can they. This summer, that fact led to an unfortunate tension between the needs of tourists, who are vital to the island economy, and those of islanders. I live in Lewis and I am very aware that at one point this summer people simply could not travel anywhere, for almost any reason. People elsewhere in Scotland should consider what that might mean for them, were such a thing to befall their mainland town for some unaccountable reason.

For me, the low point was reached when people started telling me that they were unable to visit even very ill relatives. CalMac staff and crews went to great efforts to find ways of transporting people in that situation, whenever those people complained through me. The most extreme situations have eased since the lifting of social distancing restrictions and the tailing off, to some extent, of the tourist season. However, nobody is under any illusions about all the challenges that lie ahead.

As I indicated in my members' business debate some weeks ago, services would be more likely to improve in future if anyone on the CalMac and CMAL boards lived on an island that depended on the ferry services that those companies provide. The minister, Mr Dey, provided a helpful reply to that debate. Indeed, the minister has been a regular recipient of my emails and phone calls and has been in regular touch, visiting the Western Isles and making clear efforts to address some of the issues.

On a more hopeful note, I hope that CalMac's new booking system, which is due in the spring, will be an improvement on what everyone acknowledges to be the entirely inadequate booking system that exists now, which Mr Gibson described. I hope that the on-going review of ferries fares reflects more equitably the deck space that different types of vehicles, including camper vans, actually take up, and that the minister is able to say something about the issue in his summing up.

The commissioning of two new vessels for Islay and other islands, together with the addition of MV Utne, purchased recently in Norway, to the CalMac fleet will certainly make the fleet more resilient, as will the small vessel-building programme budgeted for the years ahead. As the minister is aware, the challenge is how to add resilience between now and then, and I hope that he is able to say something more about his efforts in that direction.

The minister and the Parliament do not need me to explain further the importance that ferries have to every aspect of life in my constituency. I appreciate the chance to hear from the Government about the plans for the years ahead in order to continue to improve services and ensure, I hope, that we do not return to the situation that we faced this summer.

17:56

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I congratulate Jamie Halcro Johnston on securing another members' business debate, this time on my specialist subject of ferries.

Growing up in Sanday in the 70s and 80s, I developed a love-hate relationship with the MV Orcadia. She valiantly ploughed the seas around the outer north isles in Orkney every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Cargo was loaded using cranes and nets, and livestock was often marched onboard, up gangways at the steepest of angles. Weekends home from the school hostel in Kirkwall could often involve eight-hour trips round every other island before Sanday was finally reached.

Orkney's internal ferry service has come a long way, but now, as then, it remains a critical lifeline for island communities. Now, as then, services must adapt to meet the changing needs of islanders and those communities. Now, as then, those services are crucial in sustaining livelihoods and populations in our smaller isles. Therefore, it should concern the Scottish ministers that Orkney's lifeline internal ferry services fall so far below the minimum standards set out in the Government's own national ferries plan, which was published almost a decade ago.

That is no criticism of those working for Orkney ferries, who do their level best, but the fact is that those services fall below minimum standards on fares, frequency and the accessibility of the vessels themselves. Nor is the service being run on the cheap, having cost Orkney Islands Council a small fortune over the years. A commitment from the Scottish ministers to cover the shortfall in funding is welcome, if overdue and, as Jamie Halcro Johnston suggested, subject to annual horse trading. However, we are still no further forward in the procurement of replacement vessels that are now desperately needed.

The current fleet is costly to run, increasingly unreliable and a disaster in terms of the environment. Unfortunately, CalMac's calamities on the west coast have grabbed the headlines, as well as the attention of ministers, yet the situation in Orkney is scarcely less precarious. My constituents simply cannot afford for ministers to wait until crisis point before action is taken. We cannot continue with the mend-and-make-do approach to running lifeline ferry services. We need a proper, strategic plan, phased procurement of vessels and delivery on time and to budget. Sadly, none of those requirements appears to be a strong suit of this Government.

Last week, CMAL published drawings of a new hydrogen ferry earmarked to operate on the Kirkwall to Shapinsay route at some point in the future. Such innovation is certainly welcome, not least in the context of a climate emergency, but it does not reflect a strategic approach to ferry replacement in Orkney or across Scotland.

For 15 years, SNP ministers have failed to grasp either the importance or the urgency of the issue. For the sake of island communities,

islanders and our hopes of meeting our climate ambitions, that simply cannot continue. I support the motion.

17:59

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Like others, I am grateful to Jamie Halcro Johnston for securing debating time on this exceptionally important issue. I acknowledge the contributions that have been made by colleagues across the chamber. There is obviously a lot of commonality in what we are saying.

For many, if not all, people in the Highlands and Islands, ferry services are lifeline services. They connect families and friends, enable businesses to function, help to increase tourism and are integral to local economies. Although that can be said for most modes of transport, our ferry services are different. Not only are they a vital part of island and rural life, but they make living in our islands and remote areas possible.

Therefore, when such services are cancelled or delayed—for sometimes indeterminable periods of time—it not only makes people feel more remote than they often already feel, but helps to increase the rate of depopulation in our island settlements. It adds to a sense of fragility in those places.

The Scottish Government has recognised the need to reverse the trend of rural depopulation, and that is welcome. However, the Government cannot have that worthy ambition and, at the same time, comprehensively fail to ensure that the very island communities that we seek to revitalise possess a robust and reliable ferry service.

In the past few months alone, we have seen reports of a series of breakdowns, including that of the MV Loch Seaforth, which serves the critical route between Stornoway and Ullapool, and that of the MV Isle of Cumbrae, which was redeployed following another breakdown, this time of the MV Loch Shira. We have had breakdown after breakdown.

It must be acknowledged that the Government failed to do what CalMac told it to do back in 2010. I have referred to that a number of times, but it bears repeating. CalMac told the SNP Government that it would have to build a new ferry every year just to stand still. Since the SNP has been in power, it has delivered just five new vessels, of which only two can be considered major vessels. That is an appalling record.

Worse still, some 16 of the 31 active CalMac vessels are operating beyond their life expectancy of 25 years. The MV Isle of Cumbrae is now 45 years old—20 years in excess of its lifespan. All things considered, that is a damning failure of the

Government in its time in office. As a result, we are in the middle of a ferry crisis.

Although the evidence of failure is compelling, there is a human cost to the crisis, too. As other people have noted, there are hundreds of stories of constituents who have been impacted by the many issues that affect our ferry network, whether it be from the problems that occur when ferries break down, when timetables are altered, when there are delays and cancellations or when there is a lack of capacity.

Someone from the Western Isles hospitality industry told me that she has lost dozens of bookings due to the lack of capacity on the MV Loch Seaforth. A person from Islay had the same issue. A constituent from Tiree contacted me some time ago, when the MV Hebrides had been redeployed elsewhere and the island was left without a service. This August, a man from Lewis could not get off his own island for three weeks—he could not leave his home for three weeks. In any other scenario, that would be inexcusable.

There are countless such stories from people in our island communities. It is not good enough. Yes, systemic issues such as the structure of CMAL and the operations of CalMac, as Kenny Gibson mentioned, should be looked at, but I am afraid that the blame for the crisis lies fairly and squarely with the SNP Government, which has run Scotland's ferries for a decade and a half.

As Jamie Halcro Johnston and others noted, we need a Scotland-wide ferries strategy that will ensure that every island community in need of a ferry has access to a proper, reliable service. That is what the people whom we represent expect, and that is what they deserve.

18:03

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I thank Jamie Halcro Johnston for securing this important debate.

As an MSP for the Highlands and Islands, where many of Scotland's ferries operate, I am all too aware that the ever-increasing levels of disruption to Scotland's ferry fleet are causing huge distress, in particular to our island communities. Delays, cancellations, unreliability and a general lack of provision are caused, in great part, by our ageing fleet and by procurement and bidding processes that are, in the words of the session 5 Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, no longer fit for purpose.

The cumulative effect is that there is less employment for islanders, additional barriers to living on and doing business on the islands, and a deterrent to tourism, all at a time when island

communities and industries have been hit harder than most by the pandemic.

However, there is another problem with Scotland's ferries: the majority of them run on diesel, which is carbon intensive and damaging to our marine environment. There is growing recognition that that needs to change, as the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—approaches and we all focus in on the nature and climate emergencies.

I agree that there is an urgent need for a Scotland-wide ferries strategy—ideally, sooner than the publication of the islands connectivity plan in 2023. The technology and the ideas for improvement exist, but we need investment, leadership and a long-term strategy from Government. I would like that strategy to include the following.

As has been called for, we need to expand and upgrade Scotland's ferry fleet. New vessels should be zero or low carbon, as are the electric ferries that run on renewable energy in Sweden and Denmark, and Europe's first green hydrogen ferry, which is being designed in Scotland. There should also be more diesel-electric hybrid ferries until we can phase out diesel completely. We must also decarbonise our existing vessels. Retrofitting an electric motor to a diesel ferry is a win-win, as it cuts pollution, emissions, noise and running costs.

By procuring more passenger-only ferries, and improving connections with buses and trains, we can future proof our fleet for increasing levels of active and low-carbon travel by residents and visitors.

The Scottish Greens have called for an end to the costly operator bidding process that eats into CalMac's time and resources every six years and inhibits longer-term planning. Without that, the Government and CalMac could take a much more strategic approach to improving and greening our ferry services, ensuring alignment with our climate and biodiversity targets and enabling many more people to enjoy living and working on our islands.

Finally, for islanders, ferries are like buses, and I ask the minister to extend the free bus service arrangement to free ferries for under-26s.

I urge the Scottish Government to consider the need for a Scotland-wide ferries strategy, as called for by Jamie Halcro Johnston, and I support the motion.

18:07

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Jamie Halcro Johnston on securing the debate.

Ferries are lifelines to our island communities. If they do not sail, that affects every aspect of island life. Over the weekend, I watched on in horror as there was a relentless stream of cancellations and disruptions. Some were due to Covid, but most were due to technical issues and dry docking, and the knock-on impact of those.

In addition, the ferries that are providing temporary cover for those routes are not designed for them and are therefore unable to sail in bad weather. We need ferries that are built and designed for several routes so that they are suitable to cover for ferries that have broken down or are having routine maintenance.

The current situation simply cannot go on. The Scottish Government has failed to manage the services effectively, and that failure is causing untold misery to those who live on our islands. This is just the beginning of the winter, but almost two thirds of the Clyde and Hebridean ferry routes have been subject to cancellation or change in the past few days. How on earth can people plan their lives with that level of disruption?

The motion pertains to the Clyde and Hebridean services, but issues in the northern isles have also been on-going for years, as Jamie Halcro Johnston and Liam McArthur said. The boats on the interisland ferry services need to be replaced, and the freight service to the mainland is not coping with demand—another failure on the part of the Scottish Government. The issues are not due to a lack of investment. Indeed, the amount of money that has been squandered by the Government is eye watering. Had it been spent properly, the whole fleet would have been replaced.

There is a huge degree of arrogance directed at the communities by the Scottish Government and its agencies. When communities make suggestions, their ideas are ignored. Given that they use the services, they are best placed to know what would work, yet they are ignored. The community on Mull found a vessel for itself. It had research carried out on how the ferry could be made fit for purpose, yet that was ignored. Another ferry has been procured for that route, which is of course welcome, but the ferry that the community identified would have been infinitely better.

When people on Lewis asked for two smaller ferries rather than one large one, they were ignored. However, if two smaller ferries had been provided, many of the issues that we now face would be negated. We would have had a spare ferry to cover drydocking in the winter, when one ferry would manage to cover the lower demand on the Stornoway to Ullapool route. That ferry, built for the Stornoway route, would have been able to withstand adverse weather conditions on almost every other route.

The figures showing cancellations due to weather give a false impression. Cancellations are not due to weather; rather, they are due to the ferries on the route not being designed to withstand winter conditions.

On behalf of my constituents, I continually warned the Scottish Government about the issues, but it has ignored everyone. It is that arrogance that has led to this sorry state.

However, it is not the Government that faces the brunt of the anger and frustration of the travelling public; sadly, the staff who provide services hear it. Even without having to face that anger and frustration, it is incredibly stressful for staff, especially if they are part of the community, to know first hand that services are being cancelled, preventing people from getting to hospital appointments, sick relatives or family funerals. Added to that, there are empty supermarket shelves, caused by missed deliveries.

It is simply not fair—the Scottish Government is letting down hard-working staff. I appeal to people not to take out their frustrations on staff whose own lives are impacted by the Government's mismanagement. Instead, they should tell the Government about their frustrations and the impact of the mismanagement on their daily lives.

The Scottish Government's answer to all this is to have a review—to kick the can further down the road—while our communities suffer. Everyone knows the issues and they do not need a review to tell them what is wrong. This is long past being an emergency and the minister must act to save communities from catastrophe.

18:12

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands)
(Con): I thank my colleague Jamie Halcro Johnston for securing this important debate.

It is no exaggeration to say that the current ferries crisis is a disaster for islanders and for Scotland. I agree with much of what has been said already in the debate. For the past 15 years, the SNP has failed to renew our ferry fleet, and we are left with 16 ships that are more than 25 years old.

The whole sorry saga of ferry mismanagement could become a film, the title of which would be "Carry On Without the Ferries", with a working title of "£300 Million Spent With No Boats Delivered". The farce has been funded by the people of Scotland at the expense of islanders. Transport Scotland staff are the directing agents, and they are ably assisted by CMAL.

The actors in the farce are numerous, and some deserve special mention. First, perhaps, is Alex Salmond, who played a key role in Jim McColl's takeover of the Ferguson shipyard.

There is also the current First Minister, who announced the £97 million ferry contract and who went on to launch hull 801 with wooden windows, dummy funnels and no engines.

Humza Yousaf, who was the Minister for Transport and the Islands, failed to manage the contracts for hulls 801 and 802, and had no idea that they were so far behind schedule.

Derek Mackay was a key player, having signed off £127 million-worth of payments to Ferguson Marine, made up of 85 per cent of the contract payments for the two ferries. He also signed off a £45 million loan, which CMAL did not even know about. The result: half of one ferry, and even that was not fit for purpose.

Michael Matheson and Paul Wheelhouse announced delay after delay for the two vessels, but still argued that everything was fine and on budget.

Fiona Hyslop claimed that Ferguson's had a "bright future" ahead of it, despite the fact that it would not be allowed to tender for any more ferries in the meantime.

Kate Forbes has ministerial responsibility for Tim Hair, the turnaround director of Ferguson's, who is paid £2,850 a week and has received payment of more than £1 million. She has never renewed his contract and is oblivious to the fact that he has yet to deliver either vessel or that the previous company for which he was the turnaround director went into receivership.

As we have heard, Graeme Dey, who is now in charge of dealing with the situation, has failed to meet Tim Hair or even to visit the shipyard during the summer after his appointment.

The final actor in the farce is Ivan McKee, who, admittedly, has a very small walk-on part, but when he was challenged to defend the litany of failures, he said, "these things happen."

I am sorry to report that I have heard that the Scottish Government has been nominated for the cash cow award, for awarding a £97 million contract that is likely to cost in excess of £300 million. If it wins the award, I wonder who will be asked to collect it. I do not suppose that there will be many volunteers, or many members of the Cabinet who have not had a role in the process.

It is an expensive failure, which is far from a joke. It is expensive to the people of Scotland and to the islanders who rely on our ferries and who desperately need new ones. Let us get the figures right—in the past year, our ferries have had 99 breakdowns and major disruptions to services, culminating in nearly 6,000 cancelled sailings.

I am sure that I do not need to remind the Parliament that the Rural Economy and

Connectivity Committee, which I was convener of, concluded that the fiasco was caused by

"a catastrophic failure in the management of the procurement of vessels".

It also criticised the Government for not having a ferries plan; it never seems to have had one.

A resilient network of ferries is vital for the future of our island communities. For us to have such a network, we need a new, Scotland-wide ferries strategy; even more important, we need a Scottish Government that can deliver it. After 15 years of failure, it is time for the SNP to improve on its dismal record of failure. Our islanders desperately need the Government to up its game.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Could you bring your remarks to a close, please, Mr Mountain? You are a bit over time.

Edward Mountain: Indeed. My real concern is that I do not believe that the Government is capable of doing so.

18:17

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I thank Jamie Halcro Johnston for securing this important debate.

Islanders know the vital importance of Scotland's ferry services, regardless of which island community they serve. People in the central belt rely on roads for their connectivity to business and social activities, but Highland communities must rely on their lifeline services to provide the same connectivity. Caring responsibilities, hospital appointments and social situations, including funerals, weddings and holidays, all rely on robust ferry services. The same can be said for visitors to the isles. The strong tourism offer that our islands have built up over many years also relies on robust ferry services. The impact of unreliable services cannot be overestimated; it is felt across the community, socially, culturally and economically.

Shetland has growing seafood and aquaculture sectors and, with new fish markets, landings are likely to continue to increase. However, despite growth in key local sectors, the Government has failed to take that into account and deliver adequate freight capacity, even though I and local industry leaders have repeatedly warned Transport Scotland and ministers about the growing freight capacity difficulties. If products do not reach their destination on time, that impacts not only on the quality of perishables such as salmon and other seafood, but on the producers' markets. The customer is king, but customers can be lost and, once lost, they are unlikely to return. The commercial pressures that are faced by

producers, hauliers and their customers are, to quote one industry leader, “quite intolerable”.

Pinchpoints over the livestock season have been known about for years. They are clearly known and foreseen. In the summer, Liam McArthur and I warned about possible further disruption, after the MV Arrow, which previously served northern isles routes, was chartered to assist CalMac. That came just weeks before the northern isles peak season for the movement of livestock.

However, the issue is about more than just pinchpoints. The Government does not appear to recognise the contradiction in its policies between its encouragement of growth in food produce sectors and its stifling of the means by which products can be exported to the waiting global markets. When questioned about the failure to ship trailers when needed during the livestock period, the response has been that all trailers were shipped across the week. However, saying “across the week” demonstrates a lack of commercial understanding of how such markets work. If trailers are not shipped on time, the knock-on impact is very real, with local firms at risk of being hit by costly overnight levies while their trailers sit underutilised on the quayside. That happens repeatedly, despite local stakeholders feeding back information to Transport Scotland.

It would be helpful if the minister could tell me what evidence Transport Scotland has of unmet need on the freight service and the passenger service for the northern isles. How many times have companies been unable to ship their trailers or other vehicles at the time when they needed to do so? Is any system in place to record unmet need, or the number of times that customers, whether business or domestic, cannot get the booking that they need?

Just this week, I heard from a constituent who was advised by NorthLink Ferries that they cannot book their January travel because NorthLink is waiting to hear from Transport Scotland before it can open up bookings—January is just nine weeks away. I previously highlighted the case of a removals firm that had its ferry bookings cancelled at short notice. Its business reputation is just as important as that of other companies.

The construction of the Viking Energy wind farm is under way in Shetland, which means an increased volume of incoming freight. Any delay in getting construction materials into Shetland on time because of freight capacity constraints could impact contractual obligations throughout the supply chain. I note Viking’s reference to “sea freight restrictions” in the latest edition of “Building Shetland’s Energy Future”.

There is also the current policy for concessionary ferry vouchers, which has reduced the islander eligibility from two free return trips a year to one. I could continue at some length, but time is against me. Suffice it to say that islanders recognise the vital importance of Scotland’s ferries, and it is long past time that the Scottish Government acted as if it does, too.

18:22

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): The debate highlights the crisis facing lifeline ferries, which has largely been created by the failure to invest in the renewal of the fleet over the past 14 years, but also by poor decision making. As has been said, most industry experts agree that the average life expectancy of a ferry is around 25 years, but around half of the 31 working state-owned vessels are older than that. More than 1,000 ferry sailings have been delayed in the past five years for mechanical reasons and only five new ferries have been fully delivered to CalMac since 2007, but only two of those have been for major routes. In comparison, 12 vessels were launched in the 14 years up to 2007.

Although the management of the project to build the two lifeline vessels at Ferguson Marine has been shambolic and a disgrace, that is not the only problem that we have. We need to learn lessons for the future from the mistakes that have been made. CMAL scouring the globe for second-hand vessels or, out of desperation, seeking to charter vessels such as MV Pentalina from anti-union operators is not the solution to the challenge that we face. The Parliament must realise and agree that the reason why we are in this situation is a long-term failure to invest in and plan for new vessels.

The current structures, however, are a mess and dysfunctional. CMAL owns the ferries and CalMac operates most of them, but the ports are owned by trusts, private companies or public bodies, depending on the area. We therefore have a fragmented structure. North Ayrshire Council is willing to take Ardrossan harbour into municipal ownership, given the considerable delay of more than four years in getting the private owner of the relevant land to agree to what is required to develop the harbour. I appreciate the Scottish Government’s position on wanting to get the best deal for the taxpayer, but at the end of the day it is those who rely on the ferry service and, indeed, the communities of Ardrossan and Arran who suffer.

In 2017, the Scottish Government said that it would build a case for making a direct award to an in-house operator for the Clyde and Hebrides services. Earlier this year, the Scottish Government was unable to confirm whether that

was still its intention. I hope that the Government will be able to confirm that it intends to go down that path and that it will urgently produce a Scotland-wide ferry strategy to commission a new fleet and to integrate the fragmented structures that have led to poor decision making.

The Scottish Government brought in its flagship RET policy after the 2007 election. The policy cut fares but also led to a significant increase in passenger numbers, creating additional stress on the service that was not planned for or resourced. We urgently require a plan that recognises the need for long-term solutions to ensure that vessels are commissioned, ideally in Scotland, and launched over the next 20 years. The Scottish Government should put detailed proposals before Parliament for scrutiny and debate.

18:26

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): Jamie Halcro Johnston's motion is correct in recognising the importance of lifeline ferry links to Scotland's island communities. I was pleased that he also talked about the importance of mainland-to-mainland connections, such as those from Campbeltown to Ardrossan and Dunoon to Gourock. I recognise the fantastic work that CalMac staff, both on-shore and aboard vessels, do to make people's journeys as safe and enjoyable as possible. The current problems on the services have made the job more difficult for staff juggling the different travel needs and expectations of locals, businesses, visitors and public services.

I was not in Parliament when the RET debate took place, but I watched it on television and was struck by the consensus from all parties, all of whom brought possible solutions. The ferry issue is clearly hugely important to everyone who has spoken today. We should recognise how many sailings leave on time and complete their service every day.

Like Alasdair Allan, I have had regular conversations with the minister about issues that my constituents have raised. Delays directly impact on businesses' bottom lines. They cause logistical problems, as Beatrice Wishart said, and they have an impact on hospital visits. I, too, would like to know about any progress on unmet demand through the new passenger booking system.

I spent last week visiting different locations in my constituency. I met with ferry groups, farmers, businesses and individuals. It will be no surprise to members to hear that they raised concerns, and expressed anger, about ferry services. I will write in more detail to the transport minister about those

points, but it is important to give a flavour of people's lived experiences.

One haulier could not get a booking to bring cattle feed to Islay. Farmers cannot get their livestock to market from Mull. As Donald Cameron said, B and B owners are losing bookings. Passengers without debit or credit cards still cannot buy anything on board, as purchases are still by card only. People who have hospital appointments on the mainland cannot get car space on the ferry. My constituents and I have spoken to the minister about those issues, and he is now asking difficult questions of CalMac and CMAL.

There have been small but important improvements. The requirement for camper vans to have bookings and not sit in standby queues has made a difference to local people who want to travel at short notice. The reduction in cost for school minibuses taking island youngsters to the mainland for sporting and cultural events is also welcome. I also hope that we are close to finding a solution to ensure that space is allocated specifically for locals.

Some improvements have happened recently. Alasdair Allan mentioned the two ferries for the Islay route and the purchase of the MV Utne. I am slightly at a loss to explain why Tory members complain that we have a poor service and then, when something is done, they still complain.

This year, the Scottish Government has provided an increase of £7.7 million in grant support for interisland ferries and has committed to maintain RET. I have reservations about the current structures, but I am confident that the islands connectivity plan, which will be published at the end of 2022, will deliver good outcomes for communities and that the minister will take the necessary action to create the best integrated transport system for the communities that rely on ferries.

18:30

The Minister for Transport (Graeme Dey): I make it clear that the Scottish Government fully recognises the importance of our ferry services. From the lifeline services that are delivered for the residents of our island communities to the support that ferries offer to island-based businesses, including those that depend on tourism, I understand the frustration and potential economic impact during periods of disruption.

The recent issues on the Clyde and Hebrides service were unacceptable to island communities. Although every effort is made to avoid breakdowns, it is impossible to remove completely the risk of them happening in technically complex vessels and—yes—some elderly vessels. During

times of disruption, CalMac Ferries strives to provide additional sailings and to redeploy vessels if it is appropriate and possible to do so. However, I totally understand the anger felt by people who are directly impacted when the impacts cannot be fully mitigated. I assure members that I remain focused on the underlying issues with resilience on the ferry network and that we are working closely with operators in that regard.

Kenny Gibson made a good point about communication. Islanders accept that things happen at times, but I do not necessarily accept that the operator has always been as on point as it might have been in communication. I hope that we are starting to see some improvement in that regard.

To help to address those issues, the Scottish Government established a resilience fund in 2018-19 to invest in ferry services and to ensure the future reliability and availability of vessels. That funding is over and above the annual expenditure for maintenance and repairs, and it assists in ensuring the future reliability and availability of vessels. It can be invested in securing spare parts that have long lead-in times but, equally, it can be used to replace obsolete systems to avoid vessels going out of service. We continue to invest on that basis.

In addition, CalMac has now established a long-term yard strategy. The contracts involved in that allow for closer working relationships between CalMac and the respective yards, improved planning of overhaul work, improved remedies against delays and incentives for continuous improvement. CalMac is confident that the contracts will provide a tangible benefit for island communities and will deliver more resilient ferry services while we pursue the replacement programme. I expect that benefit to be delivered.

It has been a challenging summer, with additional operational demands on top of the continued impacts of Covid. As restrictions have eased, there have been outbreaks among crews, which understandably have led to disruption to timetables. I gently say to Kenny Gibson that, when that happens, deep cleaning is inevitably needed, as is testing of the crews. I know that he knows that.

The pandemic has been hard on CalMac staff. I hope that members will support me—I know that they will, because I have heard some of the comments—in thanking the front-line operatives who have been working flat out throughout the pandemic to support travellers. Over recent months, I have met and heard directly from ferry crews and ticket office staff across the network, and I have been saddened—in fact, angered—to hear of instances of them being subject to abusive behaviour. It should be said that, for the

overwhelming part, those have been isolated incidents. Nevertheless, hard-working CalMac staff should not be subjected to any form of abuse.

I also thank the staff who deliver the northern isles ferry services. I met some of them while visiting Orkney, and I place on record my appreciation of their efforts throughout the pandemic. We are entirely aware of the pressures that have been highlighted with freight on the northern isles services. That is why we are working towards the provision of replacement vessels.

We recognise the pressures, particularly during peak livestock season, and NorthLink Ferries has worked hard, along with businesses, to ensure that just-in-time products have been accommodated and that all freight shipments have been carried timeously over the recent annual busy period. As I said, we are working towards the provision of new freight vessels, with larger capacity and shorter journey times. In the interim, we continue to consider initiatives and chartering opportunities to alleviate the current situation.

In February, my predecessor took part in a debate on the construction and procurement of ferry vessels in Scotland, highlighting the range of actions that we are committed to take towards continuous improvement. My colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy has been keeping the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee up to date on the progress with the vessels that are under construction at Ferguson's, which sits within her remit. I have also recently written to that committee to provide an update on the actions that have been taken to improve ferry procurement.

Katy Clark: I have been asking the Ferguson Marine shipyard management for a number of months if I could visit, to hear their side of the story. They have been much criticised, and a great deal of public money is obviously involved in the project. I understand that they might not wish to facilitate a visit for just one MSP, but I believe that other MSPs would be interested in visiting, too. Will the minister support us in visiting the shipyard to find out more about what is happening with the contracts?

Graeme Dey: As the member knows, responsibility in the area sits with my colleague Kate Forbes, but I am happy to pass that request on to her.

Building on lessons learned, CMAL, the procuring authority for new vessels for the ferry network, has strengthened processes to include additional diligence and independent verification of preferred bidders' financial standing and ability to deliver. Financial monitoring will continue to be undertaken prior to any contract award; it will be

continued at appropriate stages throughout the contract period. CMAL has also committed to obtaining further support from independent technical consultants to work alongside its experienced in-house team when undertaking technical assessments during the procurement process. That has been done in response to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee's report. Those actions, and others, are now embedded in the approach on new procurements.

The motion calls for a "ferries strategy", but we have the ferries plan, which is supported by the vessel replacement and deployment plans from 2018. More recently, we set out up-to-date investment plans and, in February this year, the infrastructure investment plan, which identifies—*[Interruption.]*

I wish to make progress, if I may.

That plan is backed up by £580 million of investment and a five-year pipeline of vessel and harbour projects, and we are working hard to deliver them. That builds on previous investment of £2 billion in ferry operations and infrastructure. I recognise that that covers more than the next five years. We will have to have a much more long-term approach, and we are committed to delivering that.

We are actively moving forward with delivery, as is showcased by the commitment to a second new Islay vessel, which demonstrates our determination to add resilience to the fleet as a whole, including through the consequent redeployment of the Finlaggan, which will bring benefits elsewhere in the network. That will be in addition to the Glen Sannox and the sister ship, the 802.

Liam McArthur: The minister has referred to the ferries plan, which I know exists, but I also know that it makes clear how the internal ferry services in Orkney fall significantly below the minimum standards. He has referred to additional vessels being added on the west coast. Can he update the Parliament on what progress is being made to ensure that services in Orkney, on which my constituents rely, meet at least those minimum standards, if not better?

Graeme Dey: I want to come to that in a minute.

Progress has been made on the Gourrock-Dunoon-Kilcreggan vessel project and the small vessel replacement programme. Work has begun on other future major vessel projects for Craignure to Oban and Mallaig to Lochboisdale, as well as on the replacement of the two freight vessels for the northern isles services.

Members are right to hold ministers to account for shortcomings in the ferry network for which we are responsible. Equally, however, they need to

recognise that responsibility for interisland ferries lies with the relevant local authorities.

As I have indicated previously to Liam McArthur and others, we are prepared to assist when we reasonably can—perhaps in the form of assistance with design and so on—in a way that can sit alongside the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services and the northern isles ferry services contracts, for which we are responsible. We will continue to work with local authorities in that space. However, let us be clear that local authorities are responsible for the replacement of the ferries.

I have also been clear in my extensive engagement with communities and in responses in the chamber that we have heard the strong views of stakeholders and we are actively exploring further future vessel deployment.

Presiding Officer, I hope that you will indulge me, as I have a lot to respond to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is generous of you, minister, but we have a deadline of 6.45. I presume that you will be—

Graeme Dey: We shall be finished before then.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excellent.

Graeme Dey: Thank you for your indulgence.

We recognise that the new tonnage will take time to come into service, which is why we continue to task CMAL with sourcing additional second-hand vessels to improve services and bring additional resilience to the fleet serving the Clyde and Hebrides and the northern isles. I was delighted to announce that the MV Utne has been purchased by CMAL, which is proof that, when we can, we will take steps to improve matters now. I gently point out, as Jenni Minto did, that we are criticised for insufficient capacity in the fleet and then criticised for taking steps to alleviate the situation either by purchase or time charter.

Members have touched on the islands connectivity plan. We are preparing that as a replacement for the ferries plan, and we are very much taking account of the views of the communities in that regard. The connectivity plan will include an even longer-term investment programme for new ferries and developments at ports. Katy Clark is absolutely right to talk about ports, because we need to address that situation. We need to improve resilience, reliability, capacity and accessibility. We need to increase standardisation, cut emissions and meet the needs of island communities while providing value for money.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not want to interrupt your flow, minister, but, although it is excellent that several interventions were taken and

duly responded to at length, equally, the initial time that you had was seven minutes. Therefore, you should look to bring your remarks to a close, for reasons of equity of availability of time for every speaker.

Graeme Dey: I apologise, Presiding Officer. I will do so.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you.

Graeme Dey: I will finish by highlighting the fact that there have been improvements of late. We have had the purchase of the Utne, as well as measures around school minibuses, the thorny issue of motorhome carriage and enhancing the role of the community board. That refutes the idea that either I or my officials are arrogant when it comes to responding to reasonable suggestions and asks from communities. I recognise that there is much more to do but, over the past few months, we have demonstrated that we absolutely get the need for improvement and, more importantly, that we are taking tangible steps to deliver that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister. That concludes the debate.

Meeting closed at 18:42.

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