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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 28 October 2021

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]

General Question Time

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Good morning. 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 the Holyrood campus.

The first item of business is general questions.

Manufacturing

1. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to promote manufacturing in Scotland. (S6O-00293)

The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (Ivan McKee): The Scottish Government appreciates the vital importance of the manufacturing sector, which accounts for almost 170,000 jobs—6.5 per cent of all jobs in Scotland—and £12.5 billion in gross value added, and it contributes over half of our international exports. It is therefore key to successful implementation of our vision for trade, our export growth plans and the success of Scotland's economy.

The sector's importance is why we are investing significantly in support measures through our integrated programme "Making Scotland's future: A Recovery Plan For Manufacturing". Central to that programme is our £75 million investment in the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland. The advancing manufacturing challenge fund utilised European funding to draw in £15.8 million of public funding for 12 projects across Scotland, and our £26 million low-carbon manufacturing challenge fund will invite bids that encourage innovative development of low-carbon technologies or processes.

Emma Harper: I thank the minister for that detailed answer. Last week, I visited Alpha Solway in Dumfries, which has, supported by the Scottish Government, diversified its business model to production of personal protective equipment, including medical face masks for our national health service, during the pandemic. Can the minister outline further how the Scottish Government can promote its support for manufacturing in Scotland—including through Skills Development Scotland—as a positive career destination, and what action the Government is

taking to ensure resilience in the Scottish supply chain?

Ivan McKee: I am very aware of the fantastic work that has been done by Alpha Solway and have spoken to it several times over the course of the pandemic to commend it for that. Of course, other Scottish companies have responded to the demand for PPE. Our determination to build on that collective response informs planning for a range of measures that have already been outlined.

We have initiated a supply-chain development programme, which spans key sectors of the Scottish economy in which we see sustainable economic potential for resilience for future pandemic waves. It also aims to improve the capacity, capability and development of supply chains.

We work very closely with Skills Development Scotland on delivery of our manufacturing recovery plan, including work to support manufacturing as a positive career destination by targeting apprentices and graduates.

I am pleased that we were able to jointly award the NMIS and SDS £1.98 million of funding from the national transition training fund to increase opportunities in the manufacturing sector—

The Presiding Officer: Thank you, minister.

Ivan McKee: —for underrepresented groups and to upskill the manufacturing workforce.

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): In 2016, the Scottish Government highlighted the capacity for the manufacturing sector to grow through development of innovative products and services. The Government has published a manufacturing recovery plan, but Scottish Enterprise is currently not accepting applications for research and development grants. When can companies expect to be able to apply for the funding that they need?

Ivan McKee: Tess White will be aware that we have invested significant amounts to support the manufacturing sector. I have highlighted the £75 million that we put into the NMIS—whose site I visited just two weeks ago—and other funds that we are putting in place.

Of course, Scottish Enterprise supports businesses with its resources and will continue to do so. Over the past three years, we have put in an additional £45 million to support the R and D grants that Tess White asked about. Going forward, Scottish Enterprise will be awarding grants to businesses that will benefit from them.

Nightclubs (Spiking)

2. **Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to reports of people being “spiked by injection” or having their drinks spiked in nightclubs across Scotland. (S6O-00294)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans (Keith Brown): As Pauline McNeill will know from an answer that I gave earlier this week, I believe that the act of spiking is absolutely despicable and that such harmful behaviours cannot be tolerated in our society. Anyone who is found to have spiked a person can be arrested, under a range of existing criminal laws, and can be prosecuted.

Such decisions in individual cases are made independent of the Scottish Government by Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. Police Scotland is pursuing every single report of spiking. A gold command on the issue, led by an assistant chief constable, has been established and is reaching out to universities, licensed premises, Public Health Scotland and victim support organisations. Police Scotland has also established connections with the Scottish Ambulance Service to ensure that spiking cases are brought to the police’s attention.

I will chair an urgent round table next week with partners and representatives from across the sector to discuss how we can achieve the right balance of targeted and universal intervention.

Pauline McNeill: I sincerely thank the cabinet secretary for that response. Drink spiking puts victims in a situation in which they are vulnerable to being sexually assaulted, raped, robbed or accidentally injuring themselves. A spokesperson for the girls night in campaign has said that

“spiking has become an epidemic.”

They went on to say:

“Never before have we heard of so many students waking up with no memory of what had happened the night before”.

I have written to Police Scotland to get some detail on the numbers.

As the cabinet secretary said, it is important to work in collaboration with the Night Time Industries Association to find a way forward, including use of testing strips and anything else that will give women confidence and keep them safe.

Finally, does the cabinet secretary agree that the phenomenon is, unfortunately, part of a broader picture of increasing prevalence of violence against women, which we as a society need to tackle with some urgency?

Keith Brown: I agree very much with the sentiments that have been expressed by Pauline McNeill and I commend her for contacting Police Scotland. I agree that spiking is part of a wider problem in society, which is one reason why we are considering the potential for a stand-alone offence of misogyny to be considered by Baroness Kennedy in the working group that was established earlier this year. We are taking a number of other measures, but the working group will seek to get to the root of the problem. We are trying to deal with the issue partly through education—for example, by teaching pupils about consent and healthy relationships.

It is a societal problem and one that is, by and large, perpetrated by men on women, so men have to address the issue. I very much agree with Pauline McNeill’s points.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I appreciate the cabinet secretary’s recognition that, in tackling the issue, the focus needs to be on the still-existing attitudes and behaviours of some men. As recently as last week, an *Evening Express* columnist called Frank Gilfeather wrote a column blaming young women for not looking after their own safety. I thank the *Evening Express* for dealing swiftly with that, after the outcry.

I have also been disappointed to see misinformation around the law in relation to spiking, particularly from Conservative members and the media. Can the cabinet secretary clarify that spiking, or intending to do so, will be prosecuted under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which can result in a prison sentence, and that the Lord Advocate’s guidance that police officers may choose to issue a warning for simple possession of drugs has no bearing on spiking or so-called date rape?

Keith Brown: Gillian Martin has made some excellent points. We should be absolutely clear that women are not to blame, and that they should not have to change their behaviours to account for the wrongful attitudes and behaviour of men. I think that four fifths, or 80 per cent, of such cases involve action by men against women. One fifth are against men, although the perpetrator is usually a man. Any suggestion that women are in the wrong place at the wrong time is utterly wrongheaded. The onus and responsibility should be put squarely at the feet of men, who must take responsibility for their behaviour.

The whole-schools approach and the prevention interventions that I have mentioned are intended to challenge and change the attitudes that permit sexual violence, and to equip and empower young people, particularly young men, with the knowledge that they need in order to navigate consent and healthy relationships.

Gillian Martin is right to talk about the red herring—the recent announcement by the Lord Advocate—that has been brought up in relation to spiking. As I said, the police will take such cases seriously and will prosecute where they are able to do so. That commitment stands out with comments that were made by the Lord Advocate about people being found in possession of drugs.

Social Housing Providers (Support for Retrofitting)

3. Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government whether it is considering a scheme to support and incentivise social housing providers and homeowners to retrofit and refurbish long-term empty homes and bring them back into use as zero emissions housing. (S6O-00295)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison): Yes. We are making £200 million available over the next five years to support social landlords across Scotland to increase the energy efficiency of their existing stock.

In addition, the affordable housing supply programme is already funding buy-back of empty homes by local authorities and registered social landlords. Social landlords can then access further funding from the social housing net zero heat fund to install zero-emissions heating systems and energy efficiency measures in those homes.

Our “Housing to 2040” strategy includes a range of actions to support and encourage home owners to bring long-term empty homes back into use.

Ariane Burgess: I thank the cabinet secretary for that information. It is clear that local authorities need more powers to bring empty homes back into use, particularly as the need for housing becomes more urgent as we head into winter. That is recognised in the Government’s shared policy programme with the Scottish Greens. The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership is calling for local authorities to be granted compulsory sale and rental order powers in order to bring long-term empty homes back into use as social housing. Can the cabinet secretary confirm whether the Scottish Government is considering that measure?

Shona Robison: I thank Ariane Burgess for her question. We are developing proposals for compulsory purchase and sale orders in the context of the policies and actions that are set out in “Housing to 2040”, and in the route map that it includes, to tackle empty homes and vacant and derelict land. There will be more information about the timescale for that in due course.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that it

makes sense to restore and refurbish empty homes in rural and island communities rather than to build new ones? Although costs can vary significantly from property to property, has any assessment been undertaken to look at the comparable costs and community impacts in relation to new build?

Shona Robison: We need to do both things. Tackling empty homes remains a key priority. Much of our existing housing stock will still be in use by 2050, which is why it is essential that tackling empty properties is part of the solution to meeting housing demand. We want all homes to be occupied, with none being left empty without good reason. The actions in “Housing to 2040” will help to ensure that empty homes are put to the best possible use. The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership estimates that the average cost of returning an empty home to a habitable state is between £6,000 and £12,000.

Social Housing Providers (Highlands and Islands)

4. Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to support social housing providers in the Highlands and Islands. (S6O-00296)

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government (Shona Robison): We are committed to expanding social and affordable housing across Scotland. The programme for government makes clear our commitment to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which at least 70 per cent will be for social rent and 10 per cent will be in our remote, rural and island communities.

We have made over £327 million available to Highland Council and the three island local authority areas over the current session of Parliament through our affordable housing supply programme. That follows the £266 million that was made available over the previous session of Parliament, which delivered nearly 3,000 affordable homes.

Emma Roddick: I thank the cabinet secretary for her response. Will the Scottish Government make extra funding available to social housing providers in the islands to help them to comply with the new building regulations, which require sprinkler systems? The regulations require water pressure above that which is available in the islands, meaning that a water tank has to be installed with each new development.

Shona Robison: The member raises a good point. Yes—the Scottish Government will make the necessary funding available to social housing providers in the islands and elsewhere, if necessary, to help to cover the costs that are

associated with meeting building regulation standards in relation to sprinkler systems.

Although grant providers and recipients will wish to maximise the value that is obtained through the affordable housing supply programme, that does not prevent higher-cost priority projects from proceeding. Flexibility to award grant subsidies above the benchmark is available where social housing providers can demonstrate why additional grant funding is required and the nature of the higher cost.

Stirling Council (Meetings)

5. Dean Lockhart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met representatives of Stirling Council, and what was discussed. (S6O-00297)

The Minister for Social Security and Local Government (Ben Macpherson): Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives of all Scottish local authorities, including, of course, Stirling Council. That engagement enables discussion on a wide range of issues as part of our shared commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland. The cabinet secretary, finance ministers and I recently invited all council leaders to meet us as part of our commitment to strengthening the relationship between both spheres of government. Those meetings commenced in September and we hope to meet Stirling Council soon, as part of that engagement plan.

Dean Lockhart: High streets across the Stirling Council area, especially those in rural areas, have been badly impacted by the pandemic. Will the minister therefore join me in welcoming yesterday's announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that Callander visitor information centre will receive more than £100,000 from the United Kingdom Government's community ownership fund? That funding will reopen the visitor centre, help to attract more tourists and revitalise Callander's high street.

Ben Macpherson: I note the points that Mr Lockhart makes and the impact that that funding will have on the area that he represents. I also hope that he would, as a member of the Scottish Parliament, be concerned about any encroachment on the devolution settlement.

Prescribing (Medication Assisted Treatment Standards)

6. Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what plans have been made for the delivery of same-day prescribing under national medication assisted

treatment standards in Brechin, Angus. (S6O-00298)

The Minister for Drugs Policy (Angela Constance): Earlier this year, I announced a £4 million investment for implementation of the medication assisted treatment standards. That investment comes with an implementation resource in the form of the MAT implementation support team—MIST—to help local areas to focus on and embed the standards.

With regard to Brechin, I understand that MIST will meet the Angus alcohol and drugs partnership next week to discuss and agree the support that will be required for implementation of the standards, with a focus on assisting Angus to provide same-day treatment for those who ask for it.

Michael Marra: People access same-day prescription services because, at that point, they are ready to change their lives. Access to those services is therefore, as the minister said, set out in the national standards.

What consideration has the minister given to large sections of the country where the centralisation of services and a lack of resources have meant that dedicated volunteers such as the Brechin Healthcare Group are left to fill gaps? What immediate action will she take to ensure provision for my constituents?

Angela Constance: As I intimated in my initial response to Mr Marra, MIST will meet the ADP in question on 4 November. That follows an intensive assessment process, with a view to providing assistance on the shortening of assessment processes, funding models of change and issues in and around long-acting buprenorphine.

I resist Mr Marra's characterisation of the current position as "centralisation". It is imperative that we have national leadership, because I am clear that the standards—particularly standard 1, on same-day prescribing—must be implemented. There is a commitment that they will be implemented across Scotland, including in the member's constituency, by April next year.

Medical Centre (Lochgelly)

7. Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the new medical centre for Lochgelly. (S6O-00299)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): In January 2020, the Scottish Government approved NHS Fife's revised initial agreement and invited it to progress to the outline business case stage. However, further development of NHS Fife's plans was delayed by the need to respond to the global pandemic. I am

pleased to confirm that the project is now moving forward and that NHS Fife plans to submit an outline business case for review early next year.

The Scottish Government has committed to investing £10 billion in health infrastructure over the next decade, and that will include funding for a replacement health centre in Lochgelly.

Annabelle Ewing: Although I am well aware that Covid has impacted on the timetable, time is moving on. I want to double-check, therefore, given what the cabinet secretary has said, that, when the outline business case is finally received from NHS Fife, full funding will be made available for the new medical centre in Lochgelly and that some urgency will now be injected into that long-standing project.

Humza Yousaf: The member is right to express the frustration of her constituents. I know that the process has been longer than anybody would have liked. However, she will understand that it is necessary with any capital project, let alone a health infrastructure project, that we ensure that the business case stacks up.

I am sure that she also appreciates the fact that the pandemic has meant that other considerations have had to be paused. Nevertheless, I can confirm—I give her the absolute assurance that she asks for—not only that the project is moving forward but that we expect to have the outline business case soon. It may well need refinement, and we will keep going back to NHS Fife on that if necessary. However, I give the member an absolute confirmation that, when we have that outline business case, the funding will be found. It is part of our £10 billion capital infrastructure project moving forward.

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): Before we move on to First Minister's question time, I invite members to join me in welcoming to the gallery Dr Gabriele Andretta, President of the State Parliament of Lower Saxony. [*Applause.*]

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I intend to take constituency and general supplementary questions after question 2. Members who wish to ask supplementaries should press their request-to-speak buttons during question 2. I will keep a note of members who press their buttons, and I will take further supplementaries after question 7, if we have any time in hand. Members who wish to ask a supplementary to questions 3 to 7 should press their buttons during the relevant question.

Rail Services (Industrial Action)

1. Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): After months of worry about what will happen, we heard last night that the train strikes have, thankfully, been averted. Although that is a welcome relief for commuters across Scotland, that should never have taken to the 11th hour to secure. Will the First Minister explain why the additional funding and urgency to resolve the matter have been found only now, as world leaders are coming to town for the 26th UN climate change conference of the parties—COP26—and why those attendees are more important than ordinary Scots, who have had to put up with it since March?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): It is clear that Douglas Ross has not looked at or understood the nature and detail of what was agreed last night. I will come on to that.

A very reasonable offer was made to the rail unions, and negotiations have been on-going for some time. The reasonableness of the offer is evidenced by the fact that three of the four rail unions that were party to the negotiations had already accepted the offer; the outstanding union was the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers.

I am delighted to say that agreement was reached last night. The basis of that agreement is a one-year deal. That is where I do not think that Douglas Ross has looked at the detail. There is no additional funding in that one-year deal. The deal that was offered for the first year is the same as the one that was offered to the RMT earlier this week. The difference is for the second year, which the other unions have accepted. There will be further negotiations to come.

The outcome for the travelling public across Scotland is a good one. It does not simply remove the prospect of a rail strike over the period of COP; it resolves the Sunday strikes that have been on-going for some time. It is a good

outcome, and I am delighted that it has been secured over the past 24 hours.

Douglas Ross: Does the First Minister really expect us to believe that there was no funding involved in that and that the rail unions just suddenly decided to accept it? I was very clear in my question, and I hoped that the First Minister would have taken the opportunity to apologise to people across Scotland who have faced disruption since March. They have waited for a resolution for months, and the matter has been resolved only now, as world leaders are about to come to Glasgow.

COP26 presents a huge opportunity to tackle climate change, but it will disrupt the daily lives of working people across Glasgow, even with the RMT strike cancelled. The list of road closures is considerable, and there is massive potential for traffic to grind to a halt. Is the First Minister confident that Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government have done everything that they can to minimise the disruption to commuters and local residents in Glasgow who are trying to get on with their daily lives?

The First Minister: Before I come on to the questions relating to COP more substantively, let me conclude on the points relating to rail. In passing, it is worth pointing out that, as far as I understand—I will be corrected if I am wrong—south of the border, where Douglas Ross's party is in power, rail workers are getting no pay increase anywhere near the pay increase that is being offered to rail workers in Scotland. Not for the first time, there is something of an irony.

I would have thought that Douglas Ross would have considered something before asking his questions but, given that it is clear that he did not, he might want to do that after he has asked them. The agreement that the RMT accepted last night is virtually identical to the deal that had already been accepted by the other unions, for one year. That is the position. It is the same deal that was on the table at the weekend for the RMT. I am delighted that agreement has been reached, because that now removes the prospect of strikes.

Moving on, I hope that COP is successful on the objective of making real progress towards tackling climate change. All of us should want to see that success over the next two weeks.

The Scottish Government, working with the UK Government, the United Nations and Glasgow City Council, has put in place appropriate contingency measures to ensure the successful logistical operation of COP. We will not be complacent. Our resilience arrangements are stood up and there will be day-to-day monitoring of all the different aspects of the situation. However, I am as confident as it is possible to be that those

arrangements are appropriate. Of course, COP is not a Scottish Government event; it is a United Nations event. The UK Government is the formal host and we are working closely with it.

For the people of Glasgow—I am a resident of the city and a representative of part of it—there will be disruption and inconvenience over the next two weeks. That is regrettable in many ways, but I think that the majority of people in Glasgow understand the importance of the COP26 summit for the future of the planet.

I wish the United Nations negotiators, the UK COP presidency and everybody attending in an official capacity every success in reaching a deal that puts first the future of the planet and generations to come.

Douglas Ross: Let us start with what the First Minister said and, crucially, did not say in that answer. I hate to break it to her, but the deals cannot be virtually identical. Identical means that they are the same so, if they are virtually identical, they are not the same. There was clearly a difference for the deal to be accepted.

What the First Minister did not say in her first or second answer was sorry. She did not say sorry to the people of Scotland who have been waiting for months for her Government to step up and resolve the issues on the railway. They have been resolved now but should have been resolved far sooner, because people have been struggling with rail strikes since March.

The First Minister accepted that there will be disruption and inconvenience for people in Glasgow. There is real potential for disruption from protest groups at COP26 that risks public safety. Only this morning, Extinction Rebellion said that it plans "deliberate disruption" with "the most impact" possible. We all respect the right of protesters to express their views, but we cannot sit back and allow deliberate and dangerous disruption of people's lives.

Will the First Minister reassure people across Glasgow that there will be a zero-tolerance approach to protests that disrupt people who are going to their work—including doctors and nurses—and ambulances that are carrying people who are in urgent need of medical care?

The First Minister: If truth be told, what Douglas Ross is really displaying is disappointment that the rail strike has been resolved because he would rather that it had continued.

He wants to know the details of the deal, given that he did not check it before coming into the chamber. The deals that were already agreed by the other unions consisted of, for the first year, a 2.5 per cent pay rise backdated for 2021, a £300

COP26 payment and a rest-day working agreement; the deal that was agreed with the RMT last night consists of a 2.5 per cent pay rise backdated for 2021, a £300 payment for COP26 and a rest-day working agreement. That sounds to me pretty identical to the one that three of the four unions had already agreed. It is good news for the people who travel on our railways and for the Scottish population, which is probably why Douglas Ross is so deeply irritated by it.

Obviously, it is for Police Scotland to decide the appropriate approach to the policing of demonstrations. The chief constable, with whom I will have further discussions on the matter today and tomorrow, has been clear that there will be a sensitive policing operation that will do everything possible to facilitate appropriate and peaceful protest. However, Police Scotland will respond to any protests that seek to break the law and disrupt people beyond what would be considered reasonable.

People want to come and make their voices heard. That is understandable, given the importance of the issues that are under discussion. However, I say to people who are looking to come to protest in Glasgow that they should do it peacefully and with recognition that the people of Glasgow are agreeing to host the conference and suffering some disruption because of that, so they should not add to that disruption for them. Let us all get behind the people who will negotiate a good outcome—I hope—for the future of the planet.

Douglas Ross: Nicola Sturgeon speaks about disappointment and irritation. If she wants to look for disappointment and irritation, it is coming from commuters, who have been putting up with the situation since March. We have now had three attempts to get the First Minister to have some humility and to accept that the problems of the strikes have affected people up and down Scotland for months. Would she take the opportunity to recognise the disruption that that has caused to people across Scotland? The fact that the matter has been resolved at the last minute makes it look like it is more important for it to be suitably sorted for the COP26 travel arrangements, not for people across Scotland.

The First Minister also mentioned the protests that are expected over the next couple of weeks in Glasgow. There have been suggestions from some public figures, including one of Nicola Sturgeon's own ministers, that some unlawful protest will be tolerated. It is one thing to be frustrated by the lack of action on climate change, but it is another thing entirely to take that frustration and use it to disrupt people's lives. We all want COP26 to be a success. It is not just an opportunity to tackle climate change; it is a once-

in-a-generation chance to highlight the best of Glasgow to the rest of the world.

It has already been a rocky road to get to this point, from strike threats to hospital appointments being cancelled to the well-known problems with bin collections and concerns over wider travel disruption. Is the First Minister now fully confident that Glasgow is ready to grasp this opportunity?

The First Minister: Yes, I am. Obviously, the UK Government has a big part to play here. Douglas Ross is actually sounding a bit disappointed that the UK Government decided to bring COP26 to Glasgow; perhaps he wants to direct some of his concerns to the UK Government.

These are serious issues, which the Scottish Government has been focused on, with our partners—which, in the case of COP, include the UK Government, Glasgow City Council and the United Nations. I met just yesterday with the UN lead negotiator for COP26 to discuss some of the logistical issues around the conference and also the substance of the negotiations.

On the issue of rail disruption, the Scottish Government has been supporting ScotRail to bring an end to any disruption. I always regret disruption that is caused by disputes of this nature. However, I think that the offer that has been made to rail unions was a reasonable one, as evidenced by the fact that three out of the four unions had already accepted it. I am glad to say that we reached agreement with the fourth of those unions last night to take away the prospect of a strike and to end the Sunday disruption that has been suffered for some time now.

On the issue of protest, in a constitutional democracy it is not for politicians to decide how to police demonstrations; it is for the police to decide how they appropriately police demonstrations. What Douglas Ross is asking me is whether I have confidence in the ability of Police Scotland to do that appropriately and sensitively, with the interests of the people of Glasgow and Scotland at heart. Yes, I do have confidence in Police Scotland to do so.

COP26

2. Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Next week, the eyes of the world will be on Glasgow as leaders gather for our last great chance to avert the climate emergency. It is in all our interests and in those of future generations that the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—succeeds. We have the opportunity to strike a historic Glasgow agreement. However, the proposals that are currently on the table would still lead to more than 2°C of global warming. That simply is not good

enough. That is why it is important that political leaders, both at home and abroad, turn their words into meaningful action. Does the First Minister agree that that means leading by example?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, I do agree with that, and Scotland does lead by example. That is not to say that we do not have more work to do—we absolutely, most definitely, have—but our own statutory climate change targets are more than consistent with the Paris agreement, which gives us the ability to apply pressure to others. Unfortunately, we are not directly at the negotiating table, but we have a considerable degree of influence, not least through our co-convenership of the Under2 Coalition, which is bringing city, state and devolved Governments together to put maximum pressure on the discussions.

Yes, we must lead by example. There is a big job of work to do to keep 1.5°C alive, which is the aim of the COP26 summit. There is a gap on emissions right now, and there is a gap on climate finance. I know that the negotiators are very focused on trying to close those gaps as far as possible, and that is what we must hope emerges over the period of the summit.

Anas Sarwar: I will come back to the national record, but let us talk about what this means locally. I love Glasgow—it is my home—but, frankly, it has been let down by the Scottish National Party, which cannot even get the basics right. Tonnes of waste is piling up on our streets, fly-tipping is on the rise and there are more than a million rats. Glasgow deserves better.

While Nicola Sturgeon lectures the world about the global environment, she is turning a blind eye to the environment that Glaswegians are living in every day. Tomorrow, I will join cleansing workers who have been on the front line throughout the pandemic. For months, they have been crying out for Nicola Sturgeon to tackle the waste crisis, but they have been repeatedly ignored. Will she join me tomorrow in Glasgow to hear directly from them about the challenges that they face every day?

The First Minister: I will be working hard to make sure that the Scottish Government is doing everything it can to support the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and local authorities to reach—I hope—an agreement with the trade unions to resolve the issues. That is my job and my responsibility. I do not shy away from the problems and challenges that cities such as Glasgow—because Glasgow is not unique here—face in the times that we are living through right now, but nor will I stand here and allow Glasgow, which is one of the greatest cities in the world, to be talked down for political purposes in the way

that Anas Sarwar has disgracefully been doing in recent times.

Anas Sarwar: Next week, we will be talking about making history, but that was probably a historically out-of-touch answer from the First Minister. She is basically saying to Glaswegians, “That’s as good as it gets.” That is, frankly, not as good as it gets. She talks about talking to world leaders, but those people in Glasgow are on the front line, leading the fight against the environmental crisis. She should be taking them much more seriously, because she needs to lead by example.

Nicola Sturgeon is right to say that we need credible action, but, while she talks about the need for more public transport and getting people out of their cars, her Government is cutting hundreds of train services. She lectures the world on the global environment while cutting cleansing budgets and neglecting the local environment. Her Scottish National Party Government has missed its renewable heating target and has missed its gas emissions target for three years running. She promised 130,000 green jobs by 2020, but we have just over 21,000. We all want COP26 to be the moment when the world comes together to stop the climate catastrophe, so when will Nicola Sturgeon stop talking about credible action and start delivering it?

The First Minister: I will take those questions in turn. We are seeing an increase in renewable heat. The decline that was reported yesterday was driven by reduced output from large biomass systems. As the Energy Saving Trust noted yesterday, that actually masked growth in renewable heat output from other technologies, particularly heat pumps.

On greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland, we have decarbonised as a country in recent years faster than any G20 country. We have reduced our emissions by 51.5 per cent. Yes, our target said that it should have been 55 per cent, and that is why we are publishing a catch-up plan, which the law requires us to do. We have decarbonised to a greater extent and faster than most other countries in the world, which is why we are leading by example.

On rail services, there has been a consultation and ScotRail is now looking at all the responses to that consultation to make sure that we have rail services that are fit for the future. I am proud to say that it is this Government that is going to renationalise Scotland’s railways to make them fit for the future. When Labour was in government, it did not even allow us the powers to do that.

The Presiding Officer: I will now take supplementary questions.

New Zealand Trade Deal

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): In 2014, we were told that the people in Scotland benefit from the United Kingdom's influence on the world stage. However, under Westminster's control, decisions that affect our lives are constantly taken without any serious consideration of the interests of the Scottish people. The latest example of that is the New Zealand trade deal. What is the First Minister's assessment of the possible effects of the agreement on our farming industry and the wider Scottish economy?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The proposed trade agreement with New Zealand represents a significant opening up of our agriculture market to imports of New Zealand agri-food, which is produced at a lower cost and, crucially, will do nothing to offset the damage to our economy that is being caused by Brexit. The UK Government's own economic analysis concluded that a UK-New Zealand trade agreement would have a zero per cent impact on UK gross domestic product overall and would actually deliver a contraction of 0.5 per cent in GDP in Scotland's agriculture and semi-processed food sector. We were not involved in those negotiations, but the proposed deal is evidence that, when it comes to negotiating such trade deals, Scotland's interests are nowhere on the radar of the UK Government. That is utterly disgraceful, and it is yet another downside implication of the Brexit disaster.

Covid-19 Vaccination (Trial Participants)

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): As the First Minister knows, I am—along with many other Scots—taking part in the Novavax vaccine trial. It is now more than two weeks since trialists in other parts of the United Kingdom were contacted and offered an alternative vaccine; however, in Scotland there has been silence. Will the Scottish Government follow the UK Government in offering trial participants two doses of an alternative vaccine? That would give them clarity and peace of mind that they were appropriately protected.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Discussions are continuing on that matter. We have made it absolutely clear that there will be no disadvantage to those who have taken part in vaccine trials. We are deeply grateful to them. I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care is having discussions with the UK Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the chief medical officer later today. He will, of course, update the Parliament as soon as possible.

Covid-19 Vaccination (Appointments)

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): A 94-year-old woman in my constituency had to cancel her booster vaccination appointment because she caught Covid. Thankfully, she has now recovered, but her family is still trying to re-book online and on the telephone through the NHS Inform booking service. They have tried over three days, phoning several times a day. Yesterday, the operator told her that the system was down, that it had been down all week and that they did not know when it was going to be fixed. When the First Minister was telling everybody to phone NHS Inform this week to get an appointment, the system was not functioning. Can she tell us when it will be fixed?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The issue has been resolved now, I understand. There was a problem with the system. If Jackie Baillie sends the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care her constituent's details, we can get in touch to make sure that they have what they need to re-book the appointment.

Such issues will happen from time to time. They are regrettable and we fix them as quickly as possible. However, as of yesterday, almost 600,000 booster vaccinations had been given across Scotland. Every day, thousands of booster vaccinations are given, which is to the great credit of everybody who is administering the scheme across the country.

Afghanistan

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware that the people of Afghanistan are currently suffering a humanitarian crisis, with more than half the population facing acute hunger as the country is gripped in one of the world's worst food shortages. The United Nations has warned that a harsh winter looms and that more than 23 million Afghans will go hungry as a result of conflict and the economic downturn. Will the First Minister express her solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and call on the United Kingdom Government to work quickly with the UN to come to their aid?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes. I am sure that we would all want to express once again our solidarity with the people of Afghanistan. The Scottish Government has announced humanitarian funding through our own humanitarian emergency fund—we did that just last month. We are also welcoming people from Afghanistan and helping to give them refuge here. We all want to do everything possible to help, and the Scottish Government is absolutely focused on making sure that we do that.

Aberdeen City Council

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): Aberdeen City Council is £6 million out of pocket because the Scottish Government has not paid vital Covid grants from over a year ago. Ministers have pushed back the date for payment on three separate occasions. When will Aberdeen City Council get the money that it is due?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Councils are getting every penny that is due to them. I will look into the particular issue of the timing of payments to Aberdeen City Council and will write to the member, but councils have had tens of millions of pounds of Covid funding and, as I have said, they get every penny that they are entitled to.

Covid-19 Vaccination (Elderly and Vulnerable People)

Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): Last week, one of my constituents, Ms Cooper from Bishopbriggs, went to get her Covid-19 booster vaccination. She arrived on time for her appointment but the vaccination centre had no available disabled parking, no managed queuing and no seating for waiting patients. Ms Cooper, who is 83, has dementia, diabetes and reduced mobility but she was made to wait for an hour and a half outside in the cold and rain. Ms Cooper’s daughter has told me that her mother is afraid to go for any future vaccination. Ms Cooper is not alone. My inbox and the inboxes of colleagues are full of similar cases.

Forcing the elderly to wait in such conditions is turning people off getting their vaccination at a time when it is needed more than ever. What is the First Minister doing to ensure that our elderly and most vulnerable citizens are vaccinated quickly and safely and that nobody’s mother or father has to wait outside for hours in inclement weather? She will, I am sure, agree that that is unacceptable.

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has raised with national health service board chairs the issue of people having to queue or wait for appointments. It is really important that that does not happen.

Obviously, I accept that what has been recounted is not acceptable for any elderly person. However, it is also important to recognise the huge success of the vaccination programme, including the booster campaign that is under way right now, literally as we speak. Thousands of people are being vaccinated with booster jags. That is a good thing, because it is a vital part of our protection over this winter period. Health boards and vaccinators are working hard on that, and the

Scottish Government is doing and will continue to do everything it can to support that programme.

Booster Vaccination Appointments

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): NHS Borders is sending out booster vaccination invitations. Can the First Minister confirm to my constituents that, if they are registered with a Borders general practitioner, they will be notified of that appointment by NHS Borders even if they had one or both of their vaccinations in England?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Yes, that is the case. The appointment notification will be given through NHS Borders. If anybody does not receive a notification when they believe they should have done, the process allows them to check whether there is a problem.

University Staff (Mental Health)

Pam Gosal (West Scotland) (Con): A recent report revealed that 53 per cent of surveyed university staff showed possible signs of depression and that one in five academics was working at least two extra days per week. What action is the Scottish Government taking to help universities and colleges to reduce the workload of staff as restrictions persist?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We recognise that there has been a mental health impact on many people in different sectors across the country, and we are taking a range of steps to improve mental health provision. First and foremost, it is for universities and colleges to look after the wellbeing of their staff. Through the discussions that we have with the sector about funding and other support, we will—as we do in all sectors—make sure that mental health issues are properly catered for.

COP26 (Agriculture)

3. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the First Minister, in light of the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—what action the Scottish Government is taking to showcase the role that Scottish agriculture can play in reducing carbon emissions. (S6F-00377)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am sure that Rachael Hamilton will join me in welcoming the announcement that was made this morning by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands of a national test programme of measures to kick start action by farmers and crofters to reduce their carbon emissions. She also announced yesterday that the agri-environment climate scheme—AECS—will reopen for funding in 2022 to support the ambition of

doubling the amount of land under organic management. We have also published a consultation that builds on key themes from the farmer-led groups, which will help to inform future work.

I hope that Rachael Hamilton has noticed what we are not doing here in Scotland: we will not sell out Scotland's farmers and food producers in trade agreements that threaten to undermine standards and prices and we will not cut the level of payments that our farmers receive. However, we will fight Tory United Kingdom Government plans to treat agriculture payments as subsidies, unlike any other jurisdiction in the world, which further undermines the potential support that is available for farmers and crofters in Scotland for producing food.

Rachael Hamilton: Rishi Sunak's budget yesterday delivers for Scottish farmers and crofters, providing an additional £1.9 billion, which will be beneficial in fighting climate change. We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment for further AECS funding, which is a long-standing Conservative demand, but farmers urgently require the detail of that extended funding. Scottish agriculture has some of the most environmentally friendly practices in the world, but livestock producers are concerned that the industry will be used as a scapegoat. Has the Scottish Government ever considered allocating funding to accelerate the reduction of cattle numbers—yes or no?

The First Minister: Our agriculture sector is being used as a scapegoat, but not by the Scottish Government; it is being used as a scapegoat by the UK Government and has been, frankly, betrayed and let down by the UK Government. We know that agriculture is an emitter of greenhouse gases and must play its role in us meeting our net zero target, but we will do that in a way that supports the sector appropriately. We will not short change the sector in the way that the UK Government has done.

United Kingdom Budget (Scottish Government's Response)

4. **Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the United Kingdom budget. (S6F-00368)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We welcome aspects of the United Kingdom Government's budget, but there is also much to cause disappointment. It does not do enough to address the cost of living crisis that many individuals and families across the country face, and it will leave the Scottish Government with fewer resources in every year of the spending review than we have at our disposal this year. The

budget results in considerable challenges for the Scottish Government and we will set out our budget plans shortly.

Kenneth Gibson: Millions face a squeeze on living standards over the coming year. While the Chancellor cut taxes on bank profits, he failed to introduce measures to help households that are already struggling with rising food and fuel prices. The tax burden is now at its greatest since the 1950s, with raised national insurance contributions and frozen personal income tax allowances, cutting people's disposable incomes.

Does the First Minister agree with Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, who said:

"This is actually awful. Yet more years of real incomes barely growing. High inflation, rising taxes, poor growth keeping living standards virtually stagnant for another half a decade"?

[*Interruption.*] Does she agree with anti-poverty charity Z2K, which said:

"There's absolutely nothing for the 3 million plus whose disability, illness or caring responsibilities mean they can't work and will be hit hard this winter"?

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): What about a question? This is a speech.

Kenneth Gibson: Does she further agree that the UK budget was a failure in terms of delivering—

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Mr Gibson.

Kenneth Gibson: —equality, fairness and improving the lives of people in Scotland?

The Presiding Officer: Mr Gibson, could you hold on for one minute, please?

Kenneth Gibson: Sorry.

The Presiding Officer: That was an exceptionally long question, but I will decide whether we will hear your exceptionally long question. If the First Minister heard enough of the question, I would be grateful if she would respond to that. I ask members to bear in mind that there is a great deal of interest in this session. I would like to get in as many members as possible.

The First Minister: I suspect that I know why the Tories did not want to hear Kenny Gibson's question. It is because there were some deeply uncomfortable truths in it for them. When I gave my initial answer to Mr Gibson, there was laughter from the Conservative benches when I said that we would have less money in every year of the spending review than we have in this year. Let me give the detail of that. [*Interruption.*] Between this year and next year, Scotland's resource budget is being cut by 7.1 per cent in real terms. The equivalent reduction for our capital budget is 9.7 per cent in real terms. That is the reality and I am

not surprised that the Tories do not like it—
[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: First Minister, could you give me one second? I would very much like to hear the First Minister, and I would be grateful if colleagues could desist from commenting from a sedentary position. Thank you.

The First Minister: I have two final points that I suspect the Conservatives will also not want to hear. It is the case that, on the issue of living standards, the director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies said yesterday about the budget:

“This is actually awful. ... more years of real incomes barely growing. High inflation, rising taxes, poor growth keeping living standards virtually stagnant for another half a decade”.

Then, of course, we have universal credit. This is what the Resolution Foundation had to say:

“Of the 4.4 million households on Universal Credit around three-quarters ... will be worse off as a result of decisions to take away the £20 a week uplift”.

Beyond the headlines, those are the realities for individuals and families right across the country. That is why the Conservatives did not want to hear the facts.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): What is the Scottish Government’s reaction to yesterday’s call from the Scottish Tourism Alliance to extend the period of business rates relief in retail, hospitality and leisure on a similar basis to that announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday?

The First Minister: We had already extended 100 per cent rates relief, when the chancellor did not do so for other parts of the United Kingdom. The 100 per cent rates relief is already in place in this financial year. We will bring forward our budget in due course for scrutiny by Parliament and I can give a guarantee that we will be fair to the retail sector, as we have been in a way that the UK Government has not over recent months.

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): What is the First Minister’s reaction to the aviation duty cut in yesterday’s announcement? What demand management can we put in place to ensure that it does not encourage climate-polluting frequent flying within the United Kingdom?

The First Minister: I think that it was the wrong choice. A few days from the start of the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—when all of us have an obligation to think about how we contribute to reaching net zero and saving the planet, the chancellor chose to make that cut in aviation duty. It is not a choice that this Government would have

made, but it is for the UK Government to defend it in the months to come.

COP26 (Healthcare Services in Glasgow)

5. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government anticipates the impact of the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—will be on Glasgow’s healthcare services. (S6F-00378)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government is working closely with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. We have been doing so for some months to plan and prepare for COP26. Information from previous COP summits tells us that the impact on routine health services is not substantial. However, we are not complacent and we recognise the risks that are associated with hosting COP during the pandemic. We have therefore been working with the UN, the United Kingdom Government, Glasgow City Council, Public Health Scotland and others to put in place measures to mitigate the risks and the potential impact on the national health service and other public services. Arrangements are in place to closely monitor Covid cases and to respond swiftly and appropriately to any increase in cases in order to minimise the impact on healthcare services.

Pauline McNeill: Like the First Minister, I recognise the hard work that has been done by our health services. However, I had hoped that she might share my concern about what was said in a paper for Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board this week, namely that

“no specific provision has been made for additional inpatient capacity”

during COP26.

I would have hoped that the First Minister would know that COP26 is not really comparable to the G7 summit. At COP, there will be about 14,000 delegates a day and the march by activists on 6 November has been licensed for up to 100,000 people. It is obvious that, given that Covid cases are high and hospitals are already overwhelmed, there is likely to be an increase in in-patient numbers. In light of that, can the First Minister tell me today or at some other time what will be the receiving hospital for COP26? Will that hospital have additional capacity?

The First Minister has a constituency interest in the matter. I hope that she can tell me that there will be safe and guaranteed routes to accident and emergency departments not just for ambulances but for the general public who will need to attend A and E during COP26. I hope that she can give me whatever assurance that she can that she will be mindful of the need to constantly ensure that safe

routes to A and E and to our hospitals are provided.

The First Minister: On the last point, which, of course, is extremely important, all that is factored into the transport plans that are in place, as people would expect.

On the broader question, Pauline McNeill mentioned the G7 summit. I know that NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has been looking at previous COP summits to assess the likely impact on routine healthcare. However, it is important to recognise that previous COP summits have not taken place amidst a pandemic, so there might be a different impact.

A number of contingency arrangements are in place. The health secretary and I have been looking closely at the contingency arrangements that Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board has in place. There is substantial on-site health provision to try to reduce the impact on hospitals in Glasgow, and the health board is increasing the numbers of staff who will be in place during the summit. Of course, which hospitals receive patients will depend on why those patients are admitted and, of course, on the profile of the impact across the city.

Substantial contingency arrangements are in place. I hope that that gives some reassurance to Pauline McNeill and other members.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): With significant road closures and ill-timed roadworks across Glasgow, what provisions have been put in place to allow hard-working national health service staff to get to work?

The First Minister: The transport plans that are in place take account of all those things. The plans have been communicated to people in Glasgow over a significant period so that people can make arrangements. It is vital that those who work in our health service get to work, and that has been part of the consideration as the plans have been put in place.

COP26 (Global South)

6. Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government will be doing to amplify the voices of the global south at the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26. (S6F-00367)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We have committed to ensuring that our programme for COP26 is inclusive and that we work to amplify the voices of those who are too often not heard, including through the Glasgow climate dialogues, and to learn, listen and engage on the key issues for those from the global south.

We want people to be at the heart of decision making in Scotland and at COP, and we supported the Global Assembly to bring the lived experiences of global citizens directly to COP.

We are amplifying youth voices in Scotland, and those from Malawi through, for example, our Malawi climate leaders programme.

I expect to have a number of meetings with representatives of the global south over the next two weeks, to listen to their perspective on the climate crisis and hear how we can further support their voices in their ask of COP26.

Mark Ruskell: It is clear that the Scottish Government is showing leadership. However, the global south has been clear that a just transition away from fossil fuels that leaves nobody behind must also be a priority at the COP.

Let us look at what other small nations of around 5 million people are doing by using their full powers over energy. New Zealand, Denmark, Ireland and Costa Rica are all moving on from the era of oil and gas. The case for independence rests on Scotland proudly joining them as a world leader in that real just transition. Does the First Minister agree?

The First Minister: Yes, we are all in a transition away from oil and gas. As I said earlier this week, we have to accelerate that transition as far as possible. The Scottish Government has, for example, commissioned new research to look in detail at how we can do that quickly.

We have to build up the alternatives as quickly as possible but, crucially, we must support those who work in oil and gas to transition to the jobs of the future. The Scottish Government is focused on doing that and on making sure that the just transition is fast enough to be in the interests of the planet.

Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): At the most recent meeting of the cross-party group on international development, we discussed those people who are the most disproportionately affected by climate change in the global south, such as young people, women and the marginalised. It was stressed that any international aid must get to local communities, because they are best suited to ensuring that the aid is distributed where it is most needed. What steps can the Scottish Government take to ensure that aid is reaching local communities and vulnerable groups?

The First Minister: In trying to amplify those voices during COP, that will be one of the key issues. The quantum of climate finance and how that finance is used on not just mitigation, but adaptation and what is called loss and damage, is one of the significant strands of the discussions

that will take place in Glasgow during the next two weeks. Our own climate justice fund is looking to pivot towards that. We can lead by example, but also do everything that we can to make sure that the voices of the global south are heard on those issues. That is exactly what we intend to seek to do.

Facial Recognition Technology (Schools)

7. Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's position is regarding the use of facial recognition technology in schools. (S6F-00388)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Facial recognition technology in schools does not appear to be proportionate or necessary. That said, as Willie Rennie will be aware, the introduction of biometric identification systems is a matter for local authorities and schools.

The Scottish Government is clear that, prior to introducing biometric systems, an education authority should carry out a privacy impact assessment, or a proportionate equivalent, and consult pupils and parents. Information should also be provided on data protection, how to opt out, consent, and alternative systems that may be used. Schools and local authorities will also pay due attention to the Information Commissioner's Office requirements that organisations that are using facial recognition technology should comply with data protection law before, during and after its use.

Willie Rennie: The subtle change of tone from the First Minister is mildly welcome, but I am afraid that she is not doing enough on this. It is about children's rights and she does not seem to be that bothered about it.

The United Kingdom Information Commissioner's Office has called a halt to the scheme in North Ayrshire, but it should never have got this far. The SNP Government previously opposed the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner having a role in health and education. If the First Minister will not intervene on facial recognition, will she support the expansion of the remit of the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner so that he can intervene?

The First Minister: I am happy to give consideration to that suggestion. The rights of children are hugely important to all of us in the Parliament. We are committed to ensuring that their rights are protected, including their right to the fair and lawful processing of their personal information.

I am not aware of any subtle change in the tone of my answer. What I set out in my initial answer is important. It recognises the role of local authorities in schools, and it also sets out the requirements to

which local authorities need to pay heed. That is the appropriate way to deal with what I accept is a difficult and sensitive issue.

Glasgow Cleansing Workers (Meetings)

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): Like me, the First Minister has the privilege of representing Glasgow as an MSP, so I was disappointed to hear her response to Anas Sarwar's question asking her to meet cleansing workers tomorrow. Talking about the state of our streets and how rats are running around them is not talking Glasgow down; that is letting Glasgow down. As she is my representative and MSP, I again ask the First Minister to please meet the cleansing workers tomorrow and hear from them at first hand what is happening. I assure her that there are rats in our streets. There are rats in my flat. As my representative, will the First Minister please meet the cleansing workers tomorrow and show that she cares about Glasgow?

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I think that the people who live and work in Glasgow, and certainly those in my constituency, know that I care deeply about all the issues that they face. That is, I presume, one of the reasons why they have elected and re-elected me as their representative.

I listen to cleansing workers and other people across Glasgow on a daily basis. My job as a local representative is to represent those interests, which I do every day to the best of my ability. My job as First Minister is to find the solutions to their problems. That is why the Scottish Government will continue to do everything that it can to support the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to find a solution to the issues in question.

As a resident and a representative of the city of Glasgow, I do not shy away from the challenges that the city faces, but I think that some of the language that Labour is using about Glasgow and some of the ways in which Labour is seeking to characterise the city of Glasgow are doing a disservice to the city and to people who live there, and that Labour is doing that for political purposes, not in the interests of the city.

Point of Order

12:45

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries)

(Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I apologise for the late notification of my point of order.

I seek your guidance in relation to comments that were made by Graeme Dey, the Minister for Transport, about future rail services in the south-west of Scotland. In responding to a question from Emma Harper in the chamber on 22 September, the minister stated that there would be six additional services operating on the Ayr to Stranraer line. When I asked a supplementary question about that information, Mr Dey responded:

“In his haste to jump up and ask a supplementary question, Finlay Carson was clearly not listening to my first answer, so I will repeat what I said. It is proposed that there will be an additional six Ayr to Stranraer services compared to the current timetable”.—[*Official Report*, 22 September 2021; c 14.]

Subsequently, I asked the Scottish Parliament information centre to confirm that the information that the minister provided was correct. SPICe has since told me that the minister spoke in error. In its response, SPICe stated:

“To confirm, Rail officials and the Minister are aware of the error below. The error resulted from the analysis of figures by Rail officials which were then provided to Mr Dey.”

Despite the fact that the minister has apparently been informed of the error, I have received no communication or apology from Mr Dey on the matter.

Therefore, Presiding Officer, I seek your guidance. As far as you are aware, has the minister made any attempt to correct the record, now that he must surely be aware of his error? If not, given how long the information in question has formed part of the *Official Report*, can you advise how the error should be addressed and whether there has been any code of conduct breach, ministerial or otherwise?

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I thank Mr Carson for his contribution, which is now on the record. He will be aware that the content of members' contributions is not a matter for me, as Presiding Officer. However, a mechanism exists whereby members can correct any contribution that they have made.

Offshore Training Passport

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

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S6M-00522, in the name of Mercedes Villalba, on the need for an offshore training passport. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the publication of a survey of offshore oil and gas workers regarding training requirements to work in the energy sector, which was carried out by Friends of the Earth Scotland, Platform and Greenpeace; notes that 97% of the workers surveyed described themselves as concerned about the costs of training; understands that many are currently expected to duplicate their training to work in different areas of the energy sector, including oil and offshore wind; believes that the cost and duplication of training is a major barrier to a just energy transition that retains the skills and experiences of offshore workers; considers that their skills and experiences are essential to deliver the equitable and rapid transition to renewable energy in the north east and across the country, which it believes is itself essential to tackling the climate emergency; notes calls on the Scottish Government to commit to supporting the creation of an offshore training passport, align training standards across the energy sector and explore whether the National Transition Training Fund or Green Jobs Workforce Academy can rectify training barriers, and further notes the calls on the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to ensure the establishment of the offshore training passport.

12:49

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland)
(Lab): I thank all the members who supported the motion, which allowed it to be brought forward for debate at today's members' business.

I think that we all agree that our economy must shift from reliance on carbon-intensive sectors to greener alternatives and that failure to bring about such economic change will weaken our efforts to tackle the climate emergency. However, we cannot pursue that at the expense of workers such as those in the offshore oil and gas sector.

I represent offshore oil and gas workers in the north-east, so I know the importance of delivering a worker-led transition. That means a transition that will not only deliver well-paid and secure green jobs but empower workers. We are far from achieving such a transition in the offshore energy sector. In fact, offshore oil and gas workers are left in a position where their transferable skills go unrecognised. They are often asked, and at great personal expense, to duplicate skills and

qualifications that they already have. Workers continue to find themselves in that position because of on-going market failure coupled with Government inaction.

Left to their own devices, the sector's major training bodies have failed to agree common standards. They have instead developed rival standards, training modules and qualifications. Although the Scottish Government provides warm words about a skills guarantee and a just transition, there is no hint that it is willing to meaningfully intervene. That is why I have been engaging with climate campaigners from Friends of the Earth and with trade unions such as the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers.

Workers' futures can no longer be left to the whims of the market or remain unsupported by Government. Workers need Government intervention. That is why I am calling on the Scottish Government to commit to creating an offshore training passport. When I raised the issue with the First Minister last month, she described an offshore training passport as a "constructive proposal". However, when the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work later wrote to me, he failed to offer any firm commitment that the Scottish Government would support the creation of an offshore training passport. I therefore have three key asks that I hope a minister will respond to when they come to close the debate. I cannot see a minister here.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: For clarification, the minister is joining us remotely.

Mercedes Villalba: Thank you.

I referred earlier to the significant personal expense that offshore oil and gas workers face in covering training costs. Research by Friends of the Earth Scotland, Platform and Greenpeace UK suggests that an offshore oil and gas worker will pay up to £1,800 a year in training costs. Most of those workers receive no financial contribution from their employer towards training costs. As the sector offers largely insecure work, workers are often forced by new employers to duplicate training that they have previously completed.

The impact of those training costs on the lives of workers should not be underestimated. Take James, for example, who worked in the offshore oil and gas sector for almost 25 years but took the decision to transition to working primarily in offshore wind. James said:

"I bear all training costs myself, from my own pocket, and to become competitive with other divers, the more qualifications you have, the better chance you have of working".

To increase his competitiveness and meet the standards required by offshore wind employers, he

has spent £6,000 of his own money on training and certification costs in the past two years.

Like James, Jack has spent a significant period working in the offshore oil and gas sector. He has borne training costs of £3,000 in the past two years due to receiving no financial support from his employers. Jack said:

"The companies used to pay for your training costs. Once you were established with a company, they would pay for your training because they wanted you to work for them. Now it's very different. You've got to cover all these costs yourself, and the training needs redoing every couple of years, so you're in this constant cycle."

Those workers have taken a financial hit in the name of transition, but achieving the scale of change that we need will take co-ordinated Government intervention. My first ask to the minister is this: will the Scottish Government commit, in principle, to supporting the creation of an offshore training passport?

Along with the burden of costs, I spoke earlier of the market failure in the offshore energy sector that is exemplified by the two industry training bodies. The Offshore Petroleum Industry Training Organisation focuses on offshore oil and gas training while the Global Wind Organisation covers training for offshore wind. Despite a significant overlap in many of the training modules that they provide, particularly in relation to safety, they have been unable to agree common standards. That means that workers who are looking to make the transition are in the ludicrous position of regularly having to duplicate training and qualifications.

One worker, who wishes to remain anonymous, told me of the duplication of safety training that he would have to undertake if he wanted to transition from offshore oil and gas into offshore wind. He summed it up perfectly:

"Can anyone tell me what the difference is between the GWO and OPITO courses? All it leads to is confusion and very rich training providers".

My second ask for the minister is whether he will call a summit for OPITO, the GWO and the trade unions to deliver an agreement on common training standards and to resolve other issues such as the lack of sectoral collective bargaining in the offshore wind supply chain.

The Scottish Government regularly talks of its commitment to a just transition for those working in carbon-intensive sectors, but its actions to date have failed to live up to that commitment. It has provided no detail on how its planned skills guarantee will work in practice, and its much-trumpeted green jobs workforce academy has also turned out to be little more than a referral website to job adverts and training courses. In fact, when I used that website yesterday to search for offshore

jobs, at least half seemed to be for advisory roles and research posts at universities.

Given that the energy skills alliance has been tasked with creating an all-energy apprenticeship for new entrants into the sector, my final ask of the minister is whether he will look at tasking the ESA with creating an offshore training passport to benefit the existing workforce as well.

As delegates begin to arrive in Glasgow ahead of the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—we have an opportunity today to demonstrate Scotland's commitment to climate justice, underpinned by social and economic justice. I hope that the Scottish Government will grasp that opportunity and deliver the worker-led transition that our offshore oil and gas workers deserve.

12:56

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I was very interested to hear the ideas that Mercedes Villalba has put forward and I found very little to disagree with in that speech. It is good to see that she is highlighting these issues; I have highlighted many similar issues in the five years since I have been elected. I congratulate her on getting the debate today.

There are many barriers to moving from oil and gas to renewables, and certification is certainly one of them. Over the summer, I conducted a survey on transitioning, and in the next few weeks I am publishing a report of my findings, with the testimony of nearly 600 oil and gas workers on their experience. I thought, as somebody who is very much steeped in the oil and gas community of the north-east, that the debate would be a good place to air some of the thoughts of those men and women on certification and training, which may assist Ms Villalba—although I appreciate that she is doing a lot of her own research—and the minister.

I have often talked of the reports that oil and gas workers have given me about the prejudice that they face when applying for jobs in other sectors. People often report an assumption that, once the oil and gas sector picks up, workers will move back into the industry from new jobs in renewables. In fact, one recruitment agency told me that it tested that theory of bias against oil and gas workers. It would show companies a CV in which details of where and in what capacity the applicant had worked were stripped out so that only their skills were shown. When presented like that, the applicants' CVs were met with a very warm welcome and offers of interviews. However, when those CVs were shown with the applicants' previous employment records from the oil and gas sector, they were disregarded and people did not

get to the interview stage. Yet in my discussions with renewables sector, it says that it is crying out for applicants and would welcome oil and gas workers. Something is not working here.

An offshore installation manager with 25 years' experience told me:

"It is made extremely difficult as you require a different set of expensive certification, and the comprehensive training and certification received in the oil and gas industry isn't recognised. We need to enable skill sets to be recognised across both industries."

A field service supervisor with 15 years' experience said:

"Often other industries will not hire O&G workers as they think they will leave when Oil and Gas picks up again. O&G is seen to pay higher so people often presume you would not take a pay cut. Once I tried to change industry and got to the final two interviewees. I was not selected because they were worried I would not be happy with the pay cut."

A technical safety engineer said:

"It's too expensive to transition by yourself without employers paying for the training, but renewables companies expect the training to be achieved before you meet the job specs."

A drilling technician of 16 years' experience told me:

"I would like to retrain but I'm unsure what courses are best for me to do and I don't want to pay out money if it doesn't help me get work".

A woman with 18 years in the industry as a human resources manager said that workers needed to be provided with details of roles available, and that the Government needed to work with the industry to compare competence requirements. She went on to say that the Government should support a joined-up approach and that it should encourage more use of initiatives such as Connected Competence, which help to record and support transferable skills. If that means a passport, as Mercedes Villalba has suggested, so be it, but the Government needs to start working with industry, and it needs to happen a lot faster than it is now.

I look forward to continuing this discussion, because the issue is so important for my constituency and the north-east. If a passport is the way forward, let us get industry and regulatory bodies together to develop it. However, as outlined by the workers who spoke to me, there are many more barriers to transitioning, and I look forward to detailing them in my report, which I will send to the minister, Ms Villalba and everyone else who contributed to the debate.

13:01

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): At the outset, I congratulate Mercedes Villalba on securing her first members' business debate and

for doing so on such an important topic. According to Oil & Gas UK, the oil and gas industry supports around 60,000 workers in the north-east, and perhaps 100,000 more widely. The consequences of not managing the transition away from fossil fuels in a managed and fair way are, I agree, too awful to contemplate. We must ensure that the workforce can transition to those lower carbon jobs and do so easily and cost effectively.

Robert Gordon University reported earlier this year that 90 per cent of oil and gas jobs have medium to high transferability, so it is imperative that securing the training and certifications required is as efficient and straightforward as possible, with initiatives such as the passport that has been proposed. I am pleased that, to an extent, that is already being developed through the energy skills alliance and as part of the United Kingdom's transformative £16 billion North Sea transition deal. OPITO is leading work on the development of a people and skills plan to look at how safety and technical standards can align with the energy skills passport—a core element of its work. Similar programmes are already under development in the offshore wind and nuclear industries, so that very much complements existing efforts.

Crucially, the energy industry is working with RGU to use its figures to model supply and demand to 2030. By doing so, a timeline for ramping up the likes of hydrogen production and use in the wind sector can be plotted in order that the industry can bottom out what the capital expenditure profile will look like. From there, the industry can isolate what skills are required, where and how. OPITO tells me that that work will be completed by March 2022, and it will fit into the work that is already being done by the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board. Indeed, when I met companies such as Shell and TotalEnergies recently, it became clear that significant investment is already going into transitioning products, productions and skills. Just this morning, I was corresponding with Tech-Terra, an Aberdeen company, which told me that it has just used oil and gas skills, infrastructure and ideas from the north-east of Scotland to carry out a geothermal mapping project in India.

In my view, the transition requires that industry itself can see a future and that the transition is managed and supported politically. That means investors and businesses not being confronted with mixed messages from the Scottish Government about the industry's future; nor should there be a potentially damaging failure to recognise the Climate Change Committee's conclusions on the long-term demand of the UK for domestically produced gas.

In the wider debate over the future of the UK oil and gas industry, it is extremely important that knee-jerk positions are not adopted and that genuine appraisal of issues such as the carbon footprint of imported liquefied natural gas, as against domestic production, underpin our thought processes. Furthermore, where support is offered, it must be properly thought through. Mercedes Villalba rightly flagged a couple of failures in that regard, but I would add to that, because the Scottish Government has trumpeted its announcement of a £500 million just transition fund and plan but remains unable to tell anyone who will get it, where, how they should apply or any detail whatsoever, and does not propose to do so until spring 2022. That contrasts with the UK Government, which immediately announced its key commitments when it revealed the £16 billion North Sea transition deal. It is really important that the Scottish Government ensures that, when it makes an announcement, it has substance and does not appear to simply be—what did the First Minister call it?—a face-saving slogan.

In summary, a fair, managed transition is not only an economic essential but a moral imperative. The member's motion recognises that and proposes part of the solution. For that, it is to be commended.

13:05

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I congratulate my colleague Mercedes Villalba on securing this debate, which has been excellent so far. It has been a pleasure to see new members come to the Parliament, hit the ground running and get their motions for members' business debates supported, and in Mercedes Villalba we see a real champion for the north-east, for workers and for the socialist green new deal that we badly need to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. This debate is also timely, with COP26 beginning in just three days' time. We have heard good speeches from Gillian Martin about the work that she is doing, and from Liam Kerr, and I am sure that we will hear others from members who are about to speak.

Mercedes Villalba has been given credit by the First Minister for being constructive in her approach. I think that we hit a bit of a road bump with some of the responses from the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work, Richard Lochhead, but I am pleased to see the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, Lorna Slater, on the screen today, because I know that she has a real insight and interest in the matter and I feel hopeful that she will respond to the solutions that have been proposed. Clearly, Mercedes Villalba has not come up with the proposals on her own. The

report is the work of Friends of the Earth Scotland, Greenpeace, Platform and the RMT, and the proposals have come from workers themselves.

I was shocked to hear the account of the oil and gas worker James, who had to pay an eye-watering £6,000 to make the transition to offshore wind. What we are tackling is really an injustice—it is the opposite of a just transition. Given how big the agenda is, we need every member of this Parliament to do the heavy lifting, bringing the solutions to the chamber and giving a voice to workers. I hope that this will be quite an easy debate for the minister to respond to, because Mercedes Villalba has set out three clear asks, and some of the solutions are laid bare in the report, “Training & Tickets: The Hidden Costs For Offshore Oil & Gas Workers”. I am sure that it will not come as a surprise to the minister, but she is now in a position to do something, and many of us in the Parliament want to help.

I am grateful to the RMT for its helpful briefing and I echo its calls. There is an urgent need for an offshore training passport. We see in the findings that 94 per cent of offshore oil and gas workers are in favour of that. We have heard about some of the costs that workers have had to bear and, as I said, it is a real injustice. I said in our debate yesterday on COP26 that Scotland has the potential to lead Europe’s green energy revolution over the coming years and decades, but we need well-paid green jobs in order to be at the heart of that.

I am pleased that we have a chance today to talk a bit more about what a just transition actually means and what it needs to look like in practice. We have heard about a real fragmentation in training and a lot of profiteering that needs to be rooted out. I am also pleased that Mercedes Villalba talked about the green jobs workforce academy, because right now it does just look like a bit of a glorified website. When I asked Scottish Enterprise recently what a green job is, it said that it does not really have a definition of that, so we have some work to do.

As I said, this has been a good debate, because the asks are very clear. This is an urgent matter, and I hope that, in her response, the minister will be able to give a firm commitment to the member and to all of us who have a keen interest in making sure that we get a genuine, transformative, worker-led just transition, because we need that now.

13:09

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): I thank Mercedes Villalba for bringing this important debate to the chamber. I, too, represent a constituency in which oil and gas is a significant

contributor to our economy and an employer of many people, whether they are working at local installations, in the North Sea or further afield.

Seas are rising and the world is getting hotter, and if we want to reverse that, we have to reduce our energy needs by reducing demand for fossil fuels. Decisions to be made shortly, in Glasgow, and over the next 10 years will either make our planet or break it. We need a just transition to ensure that people are not left on the scrapheap as their jobs disappear. We saw that happen when the coal mines were closed; some communities never recovered, and some still struggle four decades on.

The Scottish Government estimates that there are roughly 100,000 jobs in which people are employed directly or indirectly by the oil and gas sector. The Scottish Liberal Democrats have been calling for a successor to the just transition commission. I have also called for a northern isles just transition commission, with a mission to avoid workers being piled on the scrapheap, a decline in communities because of a loss of jobs and a loss of expertise in the energy sector. The commission’s membership would consist of workers and communities, trade unions and environmental interest groups. That is how we make the switch to renewables and save workers and communities from a repeat of the past.

Offshore training passports can help to secure that. As the motion points out, one of the barriers to a truly just transition is the cost that workers must incur in order to gain qualifications in the renewables sector; Mercedes Villalba rightly highlights the eye-watering figures in that regard. People in the oil and gas sector may already have those qualifications, and a passport that recognises their training would cut costs for workers and allow for seamless intersectoral job prospects. Friends of the Earth found that 81 per cent of workers said that they would consider switching to the renewables sector—a redeployment of skills that we urgently need. As other members have mentioned, there is a shared commonality of skills.

Scotland was to be the “Saudi Arabia of renewables”. I hope that the Scottish Government does not miss another opportunity, and I hope that ministers will see the merits in offshore training passports.

13:11

Maggie Chapman (North East Scotland) (Green): I thank Mercedes Villalba for bringing the debate to the chamber and giving us the opportunity to discuss the economic, social and environmental imperative that is the just transition—a managed process of economic

change that is fair and equitable, and which means that no one is left behind.

Many of us in this place and beyond have been talking about a just transition and a green new deal, and have for years been campaigning for climate justice and for the structural changes that are needed to avert climate catastrophe. We have been frustrated by the slow pace of change and the reluctance to act. We really need to stop talking and start doing, because meeting our climate targets and achieving a sustainable world requires a fundamental transformation of our economy and society. The energy sector probably needs to make some of the biggest shifts.

We need to transition to renewables in order to build our economy on an energy system that does not cost the earth. Building a new economy that is green and fair, and which serves everyone rather than just the wealthy elite, must start with a new deal for workers. The just transition that we—along with Mercedes Villalba and others—want must be worker led, and workers must get the support that they need.

As other members have highlighted, we value hugely the skills and experience of our current offshore workforce, and we have to support them to develop the new skills and expertise that will be the cornerstone of a renewables-based economy. I support the motion's call for the establishment of an offshore skills passport and for a coherent strategy to ensure that all workers can access the training and professional development that they need, without being out of pocket through doing so.

Many workers in our energy sector are living with a precarious and uncertain future, and many people in the north-east have already lost their jobs over the past couple of years. We cannot, and must not, leave oil and gas workers at the mercy of market forces. We must not leave them to face the end of oil and gas without support and without a plan, or leave them and their communities to face devastation that would be similar to that which was faced—as my colleague Beatrice Wishart outlined—by mining communities in the 1980s and 1990s.

I urge the Scottish Government to act quickly to support workers in the energy sector. I ask the minister, in her closing speech, to outline how we can use some of the £500 million just transition fund to provide the training and skills development that workers need.

I also urge the Scottish Government to stress in its on-going discussions with the United Kingdom Government the importance of offshore workers to Scotland's future economy. However, I find it deeply frustrating that we have to ask, and to beg and plead with the UK Government to deliver the

things that we need to secure a just transition. I take Mercedes Villalba's motion in good faith, but it points to the weakness of letting British nationalism trump democracy. We need the powers that I and others have argued for, if we are to deliver for our workers.

We have our work cut out for us. With COP26 starting in just a few days, let us put offshore workers and other energy sector workers at the centre not only of our plans, but of our actions, to deliver the just transition that we all so desperately need.

13:15

Tess White (North East Scotland) (Con): I, too, thank Mercedes Villalba for bringing the debate to Parliament.

I have worked in the energy sector for many years, so I recognise that the transition to renewables is vital in order to safeguard the future and to safeguard jobs. As a North East Scotland MSP, the livelihoods of thousands of energy sector workers and their families are at the front of my mind.

I, too, am interested in the workability of an offshore training passport, but I am cautious. We should not jump straight from A to Z: scoping must come first. Safety is of paramount importance. Any proposal that looks at competency and skills training needs also to consider the implications for health and safety, as well as at accreditation for the specific competencies and skill sets that must be identified for the new type of work.

The north-east can become the role model for the world in that transition. We all recognise that, as renewables become more embedded, we cannot afford to lose the talent and technical expertise of the people who work in the energy sector; they are essential to facilitating that shift. That is why there must be a properly managed transition that takes in the contributions of all the key stakeholders working together.

I know that the energy skills alliance, which was established last year by the energy sector skills and safety standards body OPITO, is looking at future energy skills demand and supply as part of its work framework. That includes understanding the training and support that are needed to deliver the energy transition. It is a cross-industry group that includes representatives from the Oil and Gas Authority, Oil & Gas UK, the Scottish Government, Scottish Renewables and the unions. That will produce an important body of work, so we must look at its recommendations carefully.

I am pleased to see that BP, which has ambitious plans for offshore wind in the north-east, has signed a five-year deal with an Aberdeen-

based energy consultancy to provide a skills capability accelerator. Its remit is to create energy-level transition roles, and to facilitate the reskilling of oil and gas workers, graduates and technicians with skills that are transferable to the renewables sector.

The expectation should be that the education sector can rise to that challenge. Further education and higher education are key to that work. Nobody should work in a silo.

As part of the UK Government's North Sea transition deal, OPITO is also leading the development of a people and skills plan that will address a number of the issues that have been raised today.

As we transition to an integrated energy sector, we must listen to the concerns of all stakeholders, and we must act collaboratively across Government, regulators, industry and the third sector to address those concerns. I strongly believe that collaboration is key, so I look forward to engaging with members on the issues over the coming months.

13:19

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

I thank my comrade Mercedes Villalba for securing this as her first members' business debate. She has done so as a committed environmentalist and as a principled democratic socialist, but also as a conscientious representative in Parliament for North East Scotland.

To Mercedes Villalba's constituents and to many other working people, the establishment of an offshore training passport is a test; it is a test of whether we are really serious about a just transition, because there can be no better example of how we must make the shift from the carbon economy to the post-carbon economy in a just way than the active redeployment of offshore oil and gas workers to jobs in offshore renewables.

As we prepare to host the UN's conference on climate change in Glasgow next week, as decisions are taken about the future, as agreements are reached, as targets are set and as treaties are signed, we need to expose the yawning gap between high-falutin' statements of future political intent and the real present-day lived economic experience of the people whom we are sent here to represent.

Although Oil & Gas UK has expressed support for the Connected Competence initiative, only eight contracting companies have signed up and the offshore wind industry has given it no support.

Although it is true, as has been said, that OPITO is overseeing a North Sea transition deal and has recently joined RenewableUK, when it did so, it put out a press release in which it set out its view that

"different parts of the energy sector have different skills requirements".

What about all the common skills requirements? What about all the common health and safety requirements? Instead of seeing the glass as half empty, what about seeing it as half full?

The chief executive officer of RenewableUK told us, in the same press release, that when it comes to the offshore wind sector, the experience of the oil and gas workforce is, in his words, "most prized". However, for those most prized of workers, there is no collective agreement with the trade unions. Those most-prized workers are mostly contracted out. Some are even on the national minimum wage—if they can get a job, at all.

That is why I tell members that it cannot be left to commercially driven private limited companies and the forces of the market to equip oil and gas workers with the training and certification that they need to work in renewables. They will not do it and it will not work.

That is why we need Government action. We do not need a Government that simply talks about planning "a programme of events"; as the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport told us in this morning's newspapers, we need action. I say to the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity that the Scottish Government cannot just pronounce its support for a just transition in principle, establish a commission and all the rest of it if it will not support that practically by providing the means.

That means that it is time for Government leadership. That means bringing into line the powerful global corporations that have, for many years, dominated UK continental shelf oil and gas energy production, and which are now set to dominate UK continental shelf renewable energy production. This, in the end, is the job of Government: it is to use its power and to use all of its considerable influence on behalf of the people, so that the vision of a net zero carbon future is accompanied by a radical but credible plan of action that puts people first, is on the side of the offshore workers and gives hope to communities—hope of climate action, justice and jobs.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Due to the number of members who still wish to speak, I am minded to accept a motion without notice 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.—[*Mercedes Villalba*.]

Motion agreed to.

13:24

Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab): I congratulate my good friend Ms Villalba on securing the debate and speaking with such expertise, insight and passion about an issue that is critical to skilled workers throughout Scotland.

With COP26 just a matter of days away, our transition to a green economy, with a detailed plan for a green new deal, is more important than ever. The topic of this debate will be vital if Scotland is to keep pace on its climate targets while ensuring a just transition for workers and communities.

We all know how important the oil and gas industry has been for the country, and particularly for the north-east of Scotland. The latest “Workforce & Employment Insight” to be published by Oil & Gas UK estimates that, in 2020, the industry supported almost 120,000 jobs across the UK, 36 per cent of which are based in Scotland. Of those workers, 55 per cent are under the age of 45 and 92 per cent are under the age of 60. All those people will have to live through the transition, and we must be there for them.

Just this week, the Scottish Government announced that unlimited extraction of oil and gas from the North Sea is “fundamentally wrong”. I completely agree with that position, and I only wish that the First Minister would be more steadfast in her opposition by opposing the new Cambo oil field.

Liam Kerr: Apparently, around 3,500 jobs would be connected with Cambo. Where is the just transition that Mr Sweeney proposes for them?

Paul Sweeney: It is an important challenge, and one that we must respond to robustly. That is the backdrop that I will now come on to.

In the debate, we keep talking about the just transition, but where is it? Yes, we must move to a green economy at a rapid rate, but sadly we are not seeing the renewable energy jobs appear at the pace that is necessary to drive a true green industrial revolution. It is all well and good to prepare the ground for the skills, but if there is not the demand from new sectors to pull in that labour, we are simply on a hiding to nothing.

It will not surprise the Parliament that I think that there has been precisely no just transition for workers and communities. In this country we like to talk a good game, but the actions of the Government simply do not live up to the rhetoric. In fact, we have surrendered sovereignty over these matters to faceless men, in boardrooms far from Scotland, who determine the key investment

decisions over the sector. We have been found wanting, as a branch plant economy in the sector.

In 2010, the Scottish Government’s low carbon strategy predicted that there would be 130,000 low carbon and renewable energy jobs in the country by 2020, with 28,000 direct jobs in the offshore wind sector alone. The reality is that there are 23,000 direct jobs in the entire low carbon and renewable energy economy. Are we going to say that that is good enough, when we face such pressure? Is it any wonder that workers in the oil and gas industry have no faith whatsoever in the Government when it says that jobs will be available to them when the extraction of oil and gas inevitably comes to an end?

The mess that has been made of the opportunity to develop Scotland’s manufacturing base on the back of our transition to a green economy is no longer even contested by the Government. The facts speak for themselves, and they are embarrassing. We see it in every single offshore wind development.

For SSE Renewables and Total’s £5.7 billion Seagreen project off the coast of Angus, how many of the 114 turbine jackets were manufactured in Scotland? None. Each and every one of them was offshored to China and the United Arab Emirates, only to be transported back to Scotland on diesel-burning barges. For the Neart na Gaoithe wind farm off the coast of Fife, the 54 complex Siemens Gamesa turbines will be manufactured abroad. The Harland and Wolff yards in Methil, which are merely 10 miles away from the development, will manufacture just 15 per cent of the steel jacket foundations.

That is not good enough. I could not be more supportive of the calls that have been made today, but we need to match them with a demand to ramp up the offshore renewable energy sectors so that they can pull that workforce into them. The Scottish Government needs to get a grip on that, and it needs to provide certainty to workers in the oil and gas sector that it will address those barriers to entry.

A standardised offshore training passport would do just that. We also need to place obligations on industry bodies, such as OPITO, to step up to the challenge. We need to enable those workers to begin the skills transition that needs to happen if we are to meet our climate ambitions and ensure that there is a just transition.

I strongly urge the minister to commit to that agenda and to the demands that my colleagues have made today, if the Government is in any way serious about ensuring that workers are protected during our inevitable transition to a new green economy. I am afraid that the rhetoric will just not

do any more. Those workers have been strung along for far—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Sweeney, could you please bring your remarks to a close. You have gone over your time.

Paul Sweeney: I commend the motion in Mercedes Villalba's name.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Katy Clark will be the last speaker before the minister responds. You have up to four minutes, Ms Clark.

13:29

Katy Clark (West Scotland) (Lab): It is my great pleasure to congratulate Mercedes Villalba on securing what is a very timely debate, now that COP26 delegates are arriving in Scotland for what will be vital negotiations for all of us who live on this planet.

It is my particular pleasure to add my name to the call for offshore training passports. One of the key points about this demand is that the proposal has come from both climate change activists and trade unionists representing offshore workers. That model of working together is one that we should be endorsing; indeed, we should not only support it but push for it to happen in what we do as we move forward. We need to work together and bring together those with key interests.

As has already been said, there has never been a more important time for us to have a green new deal. Since this Parliament declared a climate emergency, North Sea production has increased by 15 per cent. In reality, very few green jobs have been created over that period, and there have been other debates in which some of those statistics have been cited. However, that is not because there is no potential for green jobs. The Scottish Trades Union Congress, for example, has estimated that up to 350,000 new green jobs could be created in Scotland, with the right policies on renewable energy, hydrogen storage, building and retrofitting social housing and upgrading and expanding public transport. There is therefore massive capacity for job creation with just transition and a green economy. However, as working-class communities know from what has happened in the past, it is ordinary working people who usually pay the price for economic change. The reality is that there has never been a just transition.

A recent survey of offshore oil and gas workers that was published earlier this year revealed that over 90 per cent of them are concerned about training costs in the UK offshore energy industry and the fact that they are paying in the region of £1,800 a year each in training. It says much about workers' rights in this country that nearly two thirds

of those workers are receiving no financial contribution to that training from their employers. The insecure nature of the work in the sector is exacerbating the problem; 75 per cent of the workforce are hired as contractors on an ad hoc basis and 60 per cent of those who get a new job are required by employers to duplicate training and get qualifications that they already possess.

That is a central issue for the sector, and the Scottish Government needs to act, particularly because of the way in which this demand has come about. The UK and Scottish Governments have failed to deliver the strategic training bodies that would agree common industry standards, or to push for the creation of an offshore training passport. The Scottish Government's programme for government failed to provide any detail on how its proposed skills guarantee will work in practice and what funding it will receive. As we have heard, the green jobs workforce academy has done little more than create a website. Moreover, the UK Government's offshore wind sector deal and recently published net zero strategy offers only warm words on the need for a skills transition.

With COP26 about to start and a Green MSP in the ministerial seat, I hope that the Scottish Government will start to look at whether the energy skills alliance can be tasked with creating an offshore training passport. It is already undertaking a programme of work to develop energy apprenticeships that standardise training for new entrants into the industry—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Clark, could you please conclude? You are over your time.

Katy Clark: I urge the minister to come forward with a proposal for standardisation to assist all workers in this sector.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call the minister, who, as has been noted, is joining us remotely.

13:34

The Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (Lorna Slater): I thank Mercedes Villalba for securing the debate and everybody who has contributed to it. I am so sorry not to be joining members in the chamber in person.

I would be delighted to meet Ms Villalba to discuss her three points. I agree that the costs that she described are prohibitive and that the duplication of training is frustrating. In my speech, I will follow up on the current related work of the energy skills alliance.

I have been looking into offshore passports under the green skills element of my portfolio. I really value members' input on that matter, and I

will certainly follow up with Maggie Chapman on the funding that she referenced. Having worked offshore in marine energy, I know how much potential there is in Scotland for the sector and how important offshore passports will be for my former colleagues and all offshore workers.

One of the developments in recent months that I am really pleased about is that we are starting to see references to “offshore energy” and the “offshore energy industry”. That seems to be in the spirit of what we are talking about today. It is not about pitting oil and gas workers against offshore renewables workers; it is about recognising the overlap of skills and expertise in all offshore energy industries. I know first hand the hazards of working offshore and how much training, experience and sheer hard work is needed to develop the expertise to work safely in harsh conditions to keep providing the energy that we all depend on. I absolutely agree that we need to make it as easy as possible for workers to transition their skills between different sources of offshore energy.

This is an issue of particular importance now, as the eyes of the world look to Scotland in the run-up to COP26, and it is part of our commitment to a just transition to net zero emissions that delivers for communities and businesses across Scotland. However, the question of skills passports is long-standing; it has been an issue since the previous downturn, in 2014. I understand that it is a complicated issue and that even the term “skills passport” is somewhat contentious in the energy sector.

All workers want a common set of safety, technical and work site standards across the whole offshore energy sector, as well as the simplification of certification, recognition and transferability between roles. Members who have spoken in the debate will be pleased to hear that, although there are a number of existing passport schemes provided by industry bodies across the offshore energy industry, further work is in progress.

OPITO—the global, not-for-profit, skills body for the oil and gas industry—through the energy skills alliance, which includes representation from trade unions, industry and the UK and Scottish Governments, is working with industry bodies to create a solution that enables easier skills transferability across offshore energy. The purpose of the work that the ESA is undertaking is to create the safe, skilled and mobile workforce that is needed to deliver the energy transition and retain those high-value jobs in Scotland. We recognise that training, standards and certification are critical to safe working offshore, and we want to ease the transition of workers in a just and affordable way.

The ESA work programme was established to create an integrated skills strategy for a net zero energy industry across Scotland and the UK. It will address the mapping of future energy skills demand, the development of all-energy training and standards, the implementation of all-energy apprenticeships and the launch of the my energy future programme.

The question of skills transferability is also central to the North Sea transition deal, which includes the on-going work of the ESA and the commitment to creating an integrated people and skills plan, with measurable objectives, to support its transition and diversification.

The work that I have been describing, which is led by OPITO, will seek to link up—where it will add value—with initiatives on workforce transition and skills that are being undertaken through other sector deals, such as the offshore wind sector deal. The collective findings and recommendations will be presented to the UK Government by March 2022 as part of the people and skills plan for the North Sea transition deal.

The fundamental question is how we as a Government can complement and accelerate those efforts, and I appreciate members’ support and enthusiasm for that. I have asked officials to arrange for me to engage with OPITO and the ESA, in particular, to find out how I and the Scottish Government can support their work on skills transferability.

We are committed to achieving a transition to net zero emissions in a just, inclusive and managed way, ensuring that no worker or community is left behind. Previous transitions have seen spikes in unemployment and social ferment; they have damaged trust and diminished opportunities. As a Government, we will not repeat those mistakes. Instead, we will work with partners across Scotland to collectively seize the opportunities that the transition presents to us.

It is our intention that our recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic is a green one, with support for new roles to support the transition to net zero. We are currently supporting retraining opportunities in vibrant, growing industries such as forestry and land management, green construction and heat decarbonisation. In doing so, we are promoting not only high-quality, skilled jobs but a recovery that contributes to a greener future for all.

Equipping people with the skills that they need to shape their careers is critical to our collective success, as is ensuring that individuals are confident that they will be supported as and when they need assistance.

13:40

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Portfolio Question Time

Rural Affairs and Islands

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

The next item of business is portfolio questions. In order to get as many people in as possible, I would prefer short and succinct questions, and answers to match.

Islands Bond

1. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what specific targets it will apply to the islands bond. (S6O-00285)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): One of the key measures in the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 is to ensure that we engage and involve people in businesses from our island communities and other stakeholders, including local authorities, in consultation on the development of new policies such as the islands bond. That process is under way, and I expect that matters such as targets, as well as other indicators and desirable outcomes that we might all wish to see from the policy, are being discussed. Should there be a strong appetite to have targets included in how we deliver the commitment, we will give that full consideration.

Richard Leonard: I thank the cabinet secretary for that response. I accept that the consultation on the practicalities of providing 100 islands bonds of up to £50,000 just closed on Monday of this week, but does the cabinet secretary not accept that— notwithstanding that some progress has been made in recent days—if it dropped its plan to centralise air traffic control in the Highlands, the Scottish Government would keep more than 100 families on the islands, and that it would cost considerably less? Further, does she accept that the bonds will risk inflating island house prices, driving them up even further, beyond the reach of young locals—so having the opposite effect to the one intended? Why is the Government giving with one hand and taking away with the other?

Mairi Gougeon: That is not the case at all. I suggest that, if Mr Leonard has particular issues around Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd, he should raise them with the Minister for Transport, Graeme Dey.

We are undertaking that process with the islands bond and consulting to ensure that we get the measure right when the bond is introduced. Of course, it cannot tackle depopulation in isolation, and that is why a host of other measures are being considered. For example, the production of an action plan on rural and islands housing, which we committed to, should go some way towards addressing some of the concerns that Mr Leonard has raised.

The islands bond is not something that we are doing in isolation. We also have a population task force, which has been established to consider, across Government, what we are doing to tackle many of the issues, so that we can give a full and considered response and tackle a lot of the problems.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Making communities more resilient is the best way of attracting and retaining population in our islands. Rather than bribing individuals to remain in or move to islands, will the cabinet secretary commit to ring fencing the funding for that gimmick to support broadband and transport links instead, as they allow people to live, work and study in our islands?

Mairi Gougeon: I have to refute the language used by Liam McArthur. The bond represents a really positive step, to which we committed in our manifesto as one tool to tackle depopulation and protect our fragile communities. It is not a bribe or a gimmick; it is meant to work alongside some of the initiatives that I mentioned in response to Mr Leonard. It is about job opportunities and housing, as well as a number of funding strands that we have through the islands programme to tackle many of the problems that we see on our islands.

I tried to get out and about as much as I could over the summer to speak directly to people who live in our island communities and to understand more about the issues there. The measure is one initiative that we hope will help to tackle some of the problems that we see. We are determined and absolutely committed to listen to communities as we develop our proposals.

The Presiding Officer: I call Craig Hoy.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration the rural affairs secretary has given to ensure that fish farms have the support they need to meet environment standards, in light of reports that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency has rated one in 10 as “unsatisfactory”.

The Presiding Officer: Sorry—I think that there has been a misunderstanding, Mr Hoy. You have question 5, but your question appeared as a supplementary. We will come back to you in due course.

We will move on to question 2. I call Christine Grahame.

Rural Economy (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale)

2. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): Craig Hoy is a lucky man: he gets two bites at the fish.

To ask the Scottish Government what measures it has taken to improve the rural economy in the Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale constituency. (S6O-00286)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The Scottish Government is investing in a range of activities across Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale to create jobs and support businesses and communities.

Through our regeneration capital grant fund, we have invested almost £2 million in various locally developed projects, each as part of wider place-based approaches, in order to deliver regeneration and economic growth.

Our enterprise agencies are providing support to businesses across the area to promote and create jobs. Since April last year, South of Scotland Enterprise has provided grant funding of £2.1 million to sustain businesses and communities in the constituency, including funding for the Pavilion Cinema in Galashiels and the Peebles Community Trust.

The constituency will also benefit from our support for the Borderlands deal, in which we are investing £85 million, and the Edinburgh and south-east Scotland deal, in which we are investing £300 million, to support a range of projects and programmes across those regions that are designed to stimulate economic growth.

Christine Grahame: I welcome the support for the various businesses across my constituency. However, connectivity is essential for people living in my constituency—for business, pleasure and essential medical treatment, for example. I welcome any funding that the Government has recently put into rural buses, but in the forthcoming Cabinet deliberations on the budget, can the cabinet secretary use her considerable skill and charm to push the case for extra funding for rural bus services in the remoter areas of my constituency?

Mairi Gougeon: I thank Ms Grahame for her compliment. We recognise the distinct challenges in delivering viable bus services in rural areas, which is why we continue to provide financial support, including up to £210 million to maintain services while patronage is reduced. We also set out in the programme for government that we

would introduce a community bus fund to support local transport authorities to improve public transport in their areas. We are also supporting pilots of digital solutions through the mobility as a service investment fund.

I am happy to raise Ms Grahame's question with the Minister for Transport, Graeme Dey.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): My constituency and Ms Grahame's constituency have experienced heavy rain and flooding in the past 24 hours. Hawick now has a major incident situation and the situation in Newcastleton is of particular concern—the water is close to homes and a number of people are being advised to evacuate.

Given the debacle of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency cyberattack, climate change, the increased risk of flooding and the risk to rural livelihoods and the economy, can the cabinet secretary tell me what the Scottish Government has done since the most recent flood and storm damage, which I know she was involved in addressing?

Mairi Gougeon: I am sorry to hear about the events happening in Rachael Hamilton's constituency right now. As she mentioned, I visited Newcastleton after the most recent flooding incident there, which I know was devastating for the community.

On the activity that has taken place since then, I am happy to look into that and come back to Rachael Hamilton with further information and, of course, to see what support, if any, we can offer those communities if they are struggling further because of those events.

Rural Poverty

3. Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support sectors in the rural economy to tackle rural poverty. (S6O-00287)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): We are committed to doing all that we can to tackle poverty in Scotland, including in rural and island communities, and, through specific measures in the programme for government, to strengthen our rural economy and address rural poverty. Our new 10-year national strategy for economic transformation will set out the steps that we will take to deliver our economic recovery and to support new green jobs, businesses and industries that will deliver sustainable and inclusive economic prosperity for all of Scotland's people and places.

However, as Ms Duncan-Glancy will be aware, we have only limited powers and resources available to us. Rural Scotland is particularly

vulnerable and fragile to the harmful impact of Brexit, as well as to issues such as hikes in the cost of fuel and food. We know that the Westminster Government's policy decisions have a huge effect on rural poverty.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: The cabinet secretary will be aware that fuel poverty in rural areas is 5 per cent higher than it is in urban areas, and that levels of fuel poverty for rural households are higher than they are for households in all other locations and have been increasing. I am sure that she will agree that ensuring that people have enough money to heat their homes through winter must be a priority. What action does the Government intend to take to reduce levels of rural fuel poverty this winter and to support those in rural areas to meet the costs of their rising energy bills?

Mairi Gougeon: We recognise the unique challenge that households in Scotland's islands and remote communities face when it comes to keeping their homes warm for an affordable price.

In developing the legislation that became the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019, we undertook an islands community impact assessment in order to fully consider the implications for households on our islands. The feedback that we received contributed to our decision to incorporate adjustments to the United Kingdom minimum income standard element of the new fuel poverty definition, in order to take account of the generally higher costs of living in Scotland's remote and island communities.

Through our energy efficiency schemes, we already spend more, per head, on energy efficiency in remote rural and island areas, where installation and labour costs are higher. Our warmer homes Scotland scheme has introduced additional renewable enabling measures, including ground-source heat pumps and microwind, microhydro and micro-combined heat and power systems, which will be of particular benefit to households that are living off the gas grid, as is the case for most island-based communities.

As we prepare our fuel poverty strategy, we are committed to continuing to take full account of the special circumstances that are faced by those who live in our rural and island communities.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): The benefits of digital inclusion are well documented and have been proven not only to reduce social exclusion, loneliness and depression but to produce higher employability, increase earnings and, therefore, reduce poverty. A report that was produced by the third sector in Dumfries and Galloway has revealed that more than 20,000 people are missing out on being able to access

key services for improving employability that are now on offer on digital platforms.

What can the cabinet secretary do to ensure that my constituents do not lose out? How can she mitigate the impact of the broken commitment to roll out superfast broadband in my constituency? That will now not be completed until 2025—four years after the date that was originally pledged by the Scottish Government.

Mairi Gougeon: The opportunities that come with digital connectivity—to better connect us all, to improve employment opportunities and to open up opportunities for remote healthcare—are all vital. That is why a number of pieces of work have been under way to tackle the digital divide that can sometimes exist. In order to sustain our rural communities, we want people to live and work in those areas. It has been proven that we can work remotely and in a hybrid fashion. Such work should be open and accessible to everyone, and we need to address the challenges where they exist.

As I have said, a number of pieces of work are under way to tackle the digital divide. I will be happy to update the member and to give him further information on the work that is under way.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary share my concern that one of the biggest contributors to poverty in rural and island communities for years to come will be the economic and social harm caused by the loss of freedom of movement and trade following Brexit? What does she make of the many UK parties, including Labour, that appear to have enabled that Brexit?

Mairi Gougeon: Exit from the European Union has absolutely led to challenges, including the labour and skills shortages that have, of course, had an impact on food supplies, costs and household incomes. That issue has been raised with me at pretty much every stakeholder meeting that I have attended in the past few months.

According to the chairman of the Office for Budget Responsibility—the UK's fiscal watchdog—the impact of Brexit on the UK economy will be worse than that which has been caused by the pandemic. Yesterday, he stated that

“In the long term it is the case that Brexit has a bigger impact than the pandemic”.

The OBR reported that leaving the EU will reduce UK gross domestic product by about 4 per cent, whereas the effect of the pandemic will reduce GDP output by a further 2 per cent.

Despite agreeing to meaningful engagement on migration, the UK Government has dismissed our proposals for addressing the acute labour

shortage crisis. It should re-engage in good faith with the EU to find pragmatic solutions to the blockages that are confronting businesses.

As a supporter of Brexit, the Labour Party is deeply complicit in the difficult financial circumstances in which many of our communities find themselves.

Food and Drink Producers (Support)

4. **Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it can support Scottish food and drink producers, in light of reports of empty supermarket shelves. (S6O-00288)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): We have committed support of £10 million between 2020 and 2022 for the food and drink sector's recovery plan, which contains 50 actions to help businesses across Scotland to recover from Covid-19 and the disruptions of Brexit. We are in regular dialogue with the industry through our food sector resilience group meetings in order to understand how best we can further support the sector.

However, the most important solutions to combating the supply chain issues that we face lie with the United Kingdom Government. We will continue to press it to take urgent action to address labour shortages, which we have already discussed, and other significant issues that businesses face.

Willie Coffey: Many fabulous locally produced Ayrshire products do not feature on the shelves of our biggest supermarkets—for example, Dunlop cheese, Ballochmyle brie, Mossiel and Coo Shed milk, many brands of Ayrshire tatties from Dowhill farm and others and the world-famous Kilmarnock pie, which only Sainsbury's has the good sense to stock. Will the cabinet secretary encourage supermarket operators to procure more food locally, so that we are less reliant on transporting food over great distances, and to put more local products such as those that I have described on their shelves, so that local food producers can play their full part in feeding the nation?

Mairi Gougeon: Willie Coffey raises a hugely important point. Over the past 18 months, the Scottish Government has had positive engagement with grocery retailers and Scotland Food and Drink in order to do exactly what he suggests and to explore how best retailers can provide support for our hard-working Scottish food and drink producers and get more Scottish produce on their shelves.

The importance of ensuring that quality local produce is available to Scottish consumers has never been greater, and I encourage retailers to continue the work that they are doing in the area

and to explore all the opportunities for sourcing as much of our fantastic Scottish produce as possible, including the many great products that are available from Ayrshire, which Willie Coffey has delightfully taken us through.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Pig farmers have been hit hard by Brexit. Their processing factories were staffed by eastern European butchers, many of whom have understandably returned home. We are now importing pork to meet public demand while our domestic producers struggle to get their pork to market. What further support can the Scottish Government give to that important industry?

Mairi Gougeon: We continue to engage with the industry on the pressures that it encounters as a result of labour shortages that have been caused by Brexit and on what we can do to alleviate the situation. This morning, I announced a private storage aid scheme for pig meat to aid with the backlog of pigs on farms. That will sit alongside the £715,000 that we provided to the sector earlier in the summer to help with costs and issues arising from the pandemic. The levy holiday that Quality Meat Scotland is providing for producers, which the Scottish Government supports, amounts to, approximately, an additional £40,000 of support.

I highlight to the member that, in addition to that, we will provide additional support to assist increased abattoir throughput. I will provide more details on that in due course.

Fish Farms (Environmental Standards)

5. **Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what consideration the rural affairs secretary has given to ensure that fish farms have the support they need to meet environment standards, in light of reports that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency has rated one in 10 as "unsatisfactory". (S6O-00289)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The report that the member refers to is stolen information and I cannot therefore comment on its contents.

However, in answer to the question, I can say that the Scottish Government provides financial assistance to the sector, funding projects that aim to reduce the environmental impacts of fish farming. Past projects have included the development of non-medicinal treatment technologies such as the thermolicer and trialling of freshwater treatments for gill disease.

We established the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre to support the sustainability of Scottish aquaculture and improve understanding of environmental interactions and the sector's environmental performance. For example, SAIC

recently announced a project that aims to more accurately model salmon farms' environmental impact, and it launched another project to develop DNA-based environmental monitoring.

Other key initiatives include the farmed fish health framework, which brings together regulators, salmon and trout producers, the Scottish Government and the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre to collaboratively address key health and welfare issues, which has influenced changes to sea lice policy and regulation.

Craig Hoy: The industry is worth millions of pounds to the Scottish economy and accounts for more than 12,000 Scottish jobs, including in my region. To support the industry, will the cabinet secretary accelerate the implementation of the SEPA environmental framework for controlled activities regulations licences, which will show the progress that the industry has made?

Mairi Gougeon: I understand how vital the aquaculture sector is to our remote and rural communities, in particular. As part of the co-operation with the Scottish Green Party, we have set out a number of actions that we are looking to take on that, because, as much as we support the sector, it has to develop in an environmentally sustainable way. We have undertaken a number of commitments and actions in relation to that. I would, again, be happy to get in touch with Craig Hoy to outline all of that, but he is probably already aware of some of the actions that we have initiated. We have given a response to the salmon interactions working group that also contains a number of actions, and we are undertaking an external regulatory review. That will contribute to the sector as a whole and make it more environmentally sustainable.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The salmon farming industry has made investments that have benefited communities across the Highlands and Islands. Homes and businesses on the Knoydart peninsula and Loch Nevis have benefited from superfast broadband thanks to a collaboration between Scottish Sea Farms and a rural broadband company. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the aquaculture industry has a positive role to play in sustaining the social and economic vitality of many rural and island communities?

Mairi Gougeon: Yes, I do recognise that. As I illustrated in my response to Craig Hoy, I recognise how important the industry is to our remote and rural communities. It has a really positive role to play in sustaining the social and economic vitality of communities. I talked about the contribution that it makes. Aquaculture and its wider supply chain generated £885 million gross value added in 2018 and supported 11,700 jobs,

many of which are well-paid, highly skilled roles in some of our most fragile and rural communities.

I welcome the support that is provided to communities by the fish farming industry and commend its commitment to do even more through the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation's sustainability charter. I was delighted to have the opportunity to see some of that work in the summer, when I visited Colonsay, where I saw in action the positive impact that the sector can have on local communities through affordable housing investment. That is vital for economic growth and it is helping to sustain that remote community.

Illegal Trawling

6. Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it will take to address illegal trawling. (S6O-00290)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The Marine Scotland directorate of the Scottish Government uses its air, sea and land assets, including a 24/7 monitoring centre, to respond to reports of illegal fishing and associated activity. Any evidence that is gathered through monitoring and inspection at sea and in ports that suggests illegal activity will, depending on the severity, result in one of a number of enforcement options ranging from fixed penalties to criminal proceedings by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

Our approach to sea fisheries compliance is already world class, but we want to enhance our capabilities and demonstrate our role as a leading fishing nation. As is reflected in our fisheries management strategy, the introduction of remote electronic monitoring to key fishing fleet segments will play an important role in that. The Scottish Government will shortly consult on the mandatory roll-out of REM to the scallop and pelagic sectors in 2022, along with consideration of further roll-out to other fleet segments using a proportionate and risk-based approach.

Gillian Mackay: The cabinet secretary will be aware that Loch Gairloch has suffered several times from illegal dredgers and trawlers and that, following the destruction caused by two dredgers in 2018, Parliament voted to deliver robust and tamper-proof vessel tracking on all Scottish fishing vessels. However, three years later, not all of those vessels have been fitted with any additional equipment.

The first of last week's incidents was reported to Marine Scotland officers in the morning, but there was no officer available to visit and the protected area was breached again that very evening. There are also reports that the £2,000 fine for abusing no-take zones is inadequate and too easily

dismissed as a business expense. As the current measures are not posing a sufficient deterrent, is the Scottish Government considering additional measures to prevent illegal fishing, particularly in our marine protected areas?

Mairi Gougeon: I thank Gillian Mackay for raising that point. In relation to the reported activities, it was really unfortunate that an officer was not able to attend and look at the circumstances. I outlined the assets that are available to us—three vessels and two air assets—but they have a vast area to cover. I would have to look into the particular circumstances, but I am happy to do that and get back to the member with further information, so I do not want to comment much on that now. Of course, we want to ensure that we are doing the monitoring that we need to do with the resources that we have.

I have no doubt that Marine Scotland follows up every report of illegal activity that it gets. I really want to give an assurance to the member on that, so, as I said, I will get back to her with further information about the specific incident that she mentioned.

The Presiding Officer: Question 7 has been withdrawn.

Rural Economy (Workforce)

8. **Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it is supporting the rural economy in light of the reported increased workforce pressures. (S6O-00292)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands (Mairi Gougeon): The United Kingdom Government's position of driving forward a hard European Union exit has led to challenges in Scotland's workforce, resulting in labour and skills shortages across a number of sectors. That happened at a time when the country was facing impacts on our society, economy and labour market as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

My ministerial colleagues and I have made repeated representations to the UK Government to make not only emergency changes to the UK immigration system to combat skills and labour shortages but fundamental changes to the way in which immigration works. We need an immigration system that is fit for Scotland's needs and that gives Scottish ministers a formal role in determining what works for Scotland.

We are supporting the rural economy. "Covid Recovery Strategy: For a fairer future" sets out our actions to ensure that existing economic, social and regional inequalities are not worsened. During this parliamentary session, we will invest an additional £500 million to support new jobs and

skills. Over 2020-22, we have also committed support of £10 million to specifically support Scotland's food and drink sector's recovery plan.

Stephanie Callaghan: Does the cabinet secretary agree with me that the unfettered access afforded by the Tory UK Government to Australia and New Zealand in recent trade deals will merely add to the workforce pressures that have been identified, which will place further constraints on the rural sector, with potentially devastating consequences for our farming communities and the supply chains that also service Scotland's urban areas?

Mairi Gougeon: Absolutely—I could not agree more with the member. This morning, I attended the NFU Scotland autumn conference, at which exactly those concerns were reiterated. There is serious concern about the trade deals, which have been made without any involvement of, or consultation with, the Scottish Government let alone the Scottish industry that they affect.

Scottish ministers have repeatedly highlighted our concerns about the impact on Scottish agriculture of the UK free trade agreements that have been agreed in principle with Australia and now with New Zealand. However, the concerns that we and the industry have repeatedly expressed have been continually ignored.

The deals will lead to a sustained increase in imports of agri-food from Australia and New Zealand that is produced to lower standards and with lesser environmental commitments than those to which we expect our farmers and producers to work—all for a negligible benefit. The Australian trade deal is expected to benefit gross domestic product by 0.02 per cent and the New Zealand trade deal to benefit GDP by 0.01 per cent.

We have serious concerns, but we will continue to stand up for our industry in the face of those challenges, as we always do.

National Health Service Endowment Funds

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a statement by Humza Yousaf on NHS endowment funds. The cabinet secretary will take questions after his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:58

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care (Humza Yousaf): I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an update to members on the independent review of governance of NHS endowment funds.

In 2019, the then Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport commissioned the review to consider and provide recommendations on changes that could be enacted to strengthen governance arrangements for NHS endowment funds. The review is being published today. I will summarise the key findings and recommendations, alongside our next steps. Before I do so, it is important to provide some context, both on the need for the review and for the resulting recommendations.

Members will be aware that NHS endowment funds are charities. There are sixteen such NHS-linked charities in Scotland, each of which is registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

The underlying legislation is the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978, which gives power to a health board

“to accept, hold and administer any property on trust for purposes relating to any service which it is their function to make arrangements for, administer or provide, or to their functions with respect to research.”

Each charity is therefore a trust. In line with the 1978 act, the charity trustee of each NHS-linked charity is the related NHS health board, which acts as a single corporate trustee. That means that board members of the NHS board also act as trustees of the related charity.

As members will remember, the decision to commission the review was prompted by a report from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator in February 2019, following its inquiry into use of endowment funds by NHS Tayside. OSCAR found that although charitable assets were used only for the purposes of the charity, which are the same as those of the health board, there was inadequate separation of the interests of the charity and of the NHS board in decision making.

OSCAR considered that to be an issue that is inherent in the structure of the charities that have health boards as corporate trustees, and

recommended a review of the governance arrangements of endowment funds and of the 1978 act.

Before I turn to the findings and recommendations of the review, I place on record my sincere thanks to the chair, Julie Hutchison, and to the project team, the reference group, the specialist sub-groups and all those who have been involved for the time and care that has gone into the review.

I would also like to pick up on a point that was made by the chair of the review, although it is more of a reflection than a recommendation. In the chair’s words,

“This report shines a light on a particular group of charities in Scotland which deserve to be better known.”

That is reflected in comments from one donor, who observed that people might not know that they can raise and donate funds to their local NHS charity, and that beneficiaries might not know that charitable funds have provided something from which they have benefited.

The review considers governance arrangements. In doing so, it highlights the importance of the work of the charities and provides us with recommendations to support that work in the future.

I now turn now to the findings and recommendations of the review. The review found—as did OSCAR—that an “inherent conflict of interest” exists in the structure of the funds. First, that is seen in the dual role of NHS board members, who are also officers of the corporate trustee of the related NHS charity. In those dual roles, they are required to make decisions on how to direct charitable funds, and on managing board finances to deliver required services and to meet the statutory requirement of financial break-even at year end.

I want to be clear that it neither OSCAR nor the review found widespread issues with decisions that were being made on use of charitable funds. Rather, as is reflected in the findings, it is the case that the current situation puts health boards in a difficult position and leaves them open to criticism when they make spending decisions on behalf of NHS charities.

It is also the case that, under current legislation, the statutory purpose of the health board and the related charity are the same. As a result, the same item of expenditure could validly be incurred by the health board or by the related NHS charity.

Although there is no legal requirement to do so, in order to address that overlap health boards have established practices to separate core spending from non-core spending—items that are to be publicly funded by the health board and

enhancements that are to be funded by the linked charities, respectively. However, there is no legally binding governing document for those NHS charities. It is the lack of separation between the health boards and the related NHS charities that needs to be addressed.

The review makes 28 recommendations to do that and to improve the overall governance arrangements of the NHS charities. The most significant of the recommendations is that the existing corporate trustee should be replaced with a charitable board that would comprise an independent chair and a majority of independent members—which means a chair and a majority of members who are not drawn from the executive or non-executive membership of the related NHS board.

The review also recommends publicly available and legally governing documents for each endowment fund, and the introduction of limited liability for board members of the endowment funds.

It makes further related recommendations on recruitment and training of trustees and on communication, including on-going interaction between the health board and the charity.

I turn to our response to the review and how we will take forward its recommendations. I absolutely accept the review's recommendations in principle, but there is work to be done on precisely how we take forward the recommendations to ensure that there is appropriate consultation and no unintended consequences, and to ensure that we support our NHS boards through implementation. The legislation that governs the NHS charities dates back to the 1970s. As the review rightly sets out, times have moved on, and so must we.

There are significant sums held in the funds. It is not just the money that we must protect, but the intent behind those funds. Since their establishment, many people have donated to them. Often, the people are friends and family members of loved ones who have received care from the related health board. Some are people who have received care and have donated in order to give back and to support the people and services that supported them in their hour of need, and to improve the experience of others in the future. That has never been more true than it is now, with unprecedented levels of donations having been made to NHS charities throughout the pandemic. As the chair of the review reflects, such charities are

“uniquely placed to play a creative and much-needed role in supporting how we cope with and recover from COVID-19”.

Trustees are required to consider the interests of the charity separately and distinctly from those

of the related health board. I fully accept that we need to ensure that structures and governance arrangements safeguard endowment funds and that they support those who are responsible to act in the best interests of the charities at all times. I also accept that the current legislation does not adequately provide for that, and that taking forward the review's recommendations to separate the people and the purpose of the charity would address the inherent conflict of interests that I have spoken about extensively.

As the review sets out, the creation of an independent board would provide trustees whose focus would no longer be split between the health board and the charity, and would allow the charity to shape its own strategy, which would, of course, be linked to, but be separate from, that of the health board.

Fully adopting the recommendations will require legislative change and will first require the precise mechanisms for that change to be determined. It will also involve significant work for our health boards. It will not necessarily be the quickest process, but we will ensure that it proceeds at pace. Consultation of stakeholders, including OSCR, NHS boards and people who donate to our NHS charities will be required, as will support for our NHS boards in taking forward the changes, when the time comes.

Although the changes will take time, I want to emphasise to members my commitment to improving the governance structures and frameworks for our NHS charities. I will urgently explore what can be done by Parliament now, before legislation is passed—as I hope it will be—to improve governance and accountability on these important matters. Our commitment is one that is shared by, and that we will progress with, our NHS boards and OSCR.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business. It would be helpful if members who wish to ask a question could press their request-to-speak buttons or—if they are joining us online—put an R in the chat function now or as soon as possible.

Craig Hoy (South Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for providing advance sight of his statement.

We welcome the publication of the review. The review was first announced in 2019, with the aim of looking into how health boards use funds that are donated to NHS endowments, following a scandal at NHS Tayside the year before. As the cabinet secretary set out in his statement,

“There are significant sums held in these funds. It is not just the money that we must protect, but the intent behind those funds.”

Therefore, can the cabinet secretary give us concrete assurances that all accounts of the charities will be made public, including income and detailed expenditures? Going forward, will he guarantee that any changes to NHS board endowments will have transparency at their heart?

Humza Yousaf: Craig Hoy asks a fair question. I hope that I was able to give some detail in my statement about what boards are doing now. I can emphasise a few safeguards. All trustees are required to act in the best interests of the charity. They are also required to publish an annual report and accounts and to set out their spending plans and future strategy within those. Those are publicly available and open to scrutiny.

Given how much interest there is in this, I will impress on the chairs and chief executives of boards when I next meet them, as I do regularly, how important it is that any changes that are made in advance of legislation are publicly communicated. That is a reasonable expectation.

Carol Mochan (South Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary’s statement should be welcomed. Scottish Labour will take time to consider the range of recommendations that are made in today’s report. The cabinet secretary rightly states that the process will not be a quick one. Will he say when he expects to complete consultations with relevant stakeholders and to bring draft legislation to the chamber? Will he give more detail about who he expects to consult as part of the process? Will he include patients and their family members as well as those with a genuine interest in making NHS trusts work on behalf of local communities?

Humza Yousaf: To answer Carol Mochan’s last question, consultation should of course be with donors, patients, their families, OSCR and the NHS boards themselves.

Regarding Ms Mochan’s substantial question, it would be wrong for me to suggest a date today. She asked when she could expect the Government to bring forward draft legislation. It may be that we can make those changes alongside other legislation that we are already considering, such as reforms to charity law. We may be able to make that change; I cannot say for sure. If we are able to do that and to have the relevant consultation in advance of legislation, that would speed up the process. I can promise Ms Mochan that we will do that as quickly as possible, because I understand how important the issue is to all concerned.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): To follow on from Craig Hoy’s question,

can the cabinet secretary outline how a statutory incorporation route for endowment funds would stop any repeat of issues such as those with the Tayside fund?

Humza Yousaf: I could not entirely hear Stuart McMillan; I think that he was asking about statutory incorporation, which is one of the review’s recommendations. I think that that would help, particularly with issues of conflict of interest. That is one area in which I want to consider whether we can take the recommendation forward or achieve its outcomes through another route. For example, it might be possible to set up new NHS charity boards as Scottish charitable incorporated organisations, rather than as statutory corporations. There are benefits to both routes. The core of the recommendation, as I said in my statement, is to help us to deal with inherent conflicts of interest.

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): Until recently, I was on the board of NHS Grampian. I have seen at first hand the valuable work that is done by endowment funds. Does the cabinet secretary have an estimate of how much the changes announced today will cost the endowment funds? That will mean charities having less money to spend on patients and staff. Would chairs and board members be paid? Will new members of staff who go to work for those charities be subject to NHS terms and conditions?

Humza Yousaf: Douglas Lumsden is right to raise those issues. That is why we must take some time to work through them. I would not want any NHS endowment fund to be reduced because of changes that we make. The Government will look at how we can fund health boards to absorb those costs, as opposed to taking costs from endowment funds. That is not why people give money to NHS endowment funds. That is a reasonable point.

I cannot yet give a definitive answer to Mr Lumsden’s second question. That is why we want to consult all relevant stakeholders.

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): It is clear that the serious governance flaws stem back to 1978 and the UK Government legislation of that time that enshrined the conflict of interest. I note that the cabinet secretary said:

“Fully adopting the recommendations will require legislative change and it will first require the precise mechanisms for that change to be determined.”

I have a couple of questions. Can the cabinet secretary give any further guidance on that further legislation and any challenges around it? Furthermore, is he issuing interim guidance to boards regarding the conflict of interest, or is he relying on the OSCR report?

Humza Yousaf: Those are both very important questions. On the first question, I will not rehearse what I said to Carol Mochan, but we will look to see whether there is another legislative avenue that we can use to move this forward at pace, as opposed to introducing completely new primary legislation.

On the second question, it should be said that, since the issues first surfaced in relation to NHS Tayside, it has absolutely been the case that NHS boards have looked at their own governance and accountability processes and made changes themselves. It is also important to note—I am sure that the member has this impression—from the OSCR report on the NHS Tayside issue that there were not widespread issues with the conduct of trustees. In fact, OSCR said:

“The picture that has emerged from our analysis is generally positive and encouraging, and we hope this will help reassure existing and potential supporters of these charities. By and large, the NHS endowments charities in Scotland have appropriate charters, operating instructions, policies and terms of reference in place.”

Those documents exist. Of course, where they need to be updated on the back of the review, my expectation would be that NHS chairs and boards look thoroughly at the review and make the appropriate changes if necessary.

Paul O’Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): Public confidence in NHS charities is vital and we must learn the lessons of what happened at NHS Tayside. I recognise that the review by Julie Hutchison is a key part of that.

I am sure that we were all inspired in the first lockdown by the fundraising efforts of Captain Sir Tom Moore. NHS Scotland boards received a share of £4.4 million of that fundraising money, which shows the importance of endowment funds. Although the public might not know much about them, they have likely supported them and would want to see the money well spent.

I welcome the cabinet secretary’s intention to accept the recommendation to create independent boards of trustees to governance charities. Does he agree that those boards must be more representative of patients and family carers? What steps will he take to ensure that boards are representative of the communities that they serve?

Humza Yousaf: Again, that was a set of very good questions. On the first point that Paul O’Kane raised, that suggests to me that people still have confidence in our NHS endowment charities—that is why they have donated record sums, inspired by the likes of the late Sir Tom Moore and others.

On Paul O’Kane’s substantial question, that is an issue that I have raised with NHS boards. As he would imagine, they all have equality policies

that they follow. If I can be frank with him, I would like to see progress being made quicker and faster, although our boards absolutely have at their heart equality—and not just racial equality, which I know has been an interest of this Parliament recently, but representation right across the protected characteristics.

Policies are in place, but I am challenging boards to make sure that they are more representative. Paul O’Kane is right that the new boards that are created for charities must be representative, but we do not need to wait for those charity boards to be set up before we can see what we can do with the current structures that are in place. In short, we can do more and probably go faster in this regard.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): As the cabinet secretary has noted, huge funds have been donated to NHS charities during the pandemic. We also know that our boards are under intense pressure, including financial pressure, so what safeguards are in place to ensure that the funds are used as they were intended to be used?

Humza Yousaf: Of course, our funding of the NHS is at record levels, and we will continue to ensure that it is funded adequately, given the pressures that it is currently under.

I spoke to some of the safeguards when I answered Craig Hoy’s questions. It should be said that, as I mentioned in my statement, all trustees are required to act in the best interests of the charity. That is the first and primary safeguard, but they are also required to publish an annual report and accounts, which have to set out in detail the charity’s spending plans. Of course, those are publicly available and open to scrutiny. Those are the safeguards that currently exist.

On the back of the review, my expectation will certainly be that each NHS board looks in detail at the review, and if it has to update its procedures and governance structure, it should absolutely do that.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): We have heard several times today that, in 2019, NHS Tayside was forced to give money back to the endowment fund following allegations of mismanagement. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that no other Scottish health board has been required to return money to the endowment fund on the same terms?

Humza Yousaf: Certainly not that I am aware of.

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): Given the pressure on NHS boards for remobilisation, is the cabinet secretary confident

that the timescales for the recommendations being taken forward can be met?

Humza Yousaf: That is a fair question, because we all know and debate regularly in Parliament just how under pressure our NHS boards are. This is an issue of extreme importance and therefore I expect urgency to be attached to the recommendations. As a number of members have said, this is about public confidence. While boards remobilise, I would expect there to be some pace and urgency around the recommendations and, as this will involve legislative change, I will do my best to ensure that there is pace and urgency on the part of the Government, too.

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): Apologies for being late—I have experienced what all Glaswegians are experiencing at the moment, which is severe delays on ScotRail.

NHS-linked charities have given valuable equipment that I personally have benefited from in hospitals, and I thank all those who have donated equipment. One of the recommendations is that each charity should put in place a code of conduct to provide guidance and set expectations on board behaviours. What is the timescale for putting those codes of conduct in place, who will review them before their implementation and will they vary from health board to health board?

Humza Yousaf: That goes back to my answer to the member's colleague Douglas Lumsden and other members, which was that we will need to take a bit of time to work through the recommendations and consult the appropriate individuals. However, there are already codes of conduct relating to our current public appointments, including appointments to NHS boards, which we expect board members to abide by. We will ensure that the codes of conduct are absolutely robust.

On who we will consult, as I said in response to questions from a number of members, we will want to talk to as wide a group as possible. However, I perhaps left out clinicians. It is important that those who are working in our health service, such as Dr Gulhane, are consulted on all these matters, including a code of conduct.

Gillian Mackay (Central Scotland) (Green): Among the recommendations of the review are that NHS-linked charities should put in place induction training for all charity trustees and that the need for on-going training and support should be considered. Such training and support will be an important step towards widening access and ensuring a more diverse membership of NHS-linked charity boards. I appreciate the cabinet secretary's earlier answers to Paul O'Kane and Douglas Lumsden, but what measures, such as paying trustees and implementing training, will the

cabinet secretary employ to ensure that our boards are more representative of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnic minority backgrounds and disabled people?

Humza Yousaf: As I said to other members, I cannot provide absolute specifics, because we will take some time to review the recommendations. However, the points raised by Gillian Mackay are exceptionally important. We know from a number of people, particularly in our diverse groups in society, that there is not the appropriate training and capacity building. There are perhaps financial disincentives for members of diverse groups to get involved in boards such as NHS-linked charity boards. Those are all important issues on which I will take time to reflect, because, as Paul O'Kane and others have said, our boards should be as reflective as possible of the societies that they represent.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary outline what steps have been taken to improve the management of the funds in advance of the recommendations being taken forward?

Humza Yousaf: I can probably be relatively brief, because I have probably already answered the question in response to a couple of members. Since the issue first surfaced, all boards have looked at their own internal processes and governance relating to the issue. Changes have been made, but probably the most important safeguard that we have in place is that the spending plans are published and open to scrutiny.

A range of steps have been taken by boards since the NHS Tayside issue in particular surfaced. If I can give some reassurance to Ms Roddick, my expectation would be that NHS boards will look urgently at the review to see whether their processes and governance need updated and, if so, to do so at pace.

Covid Recovery Strategy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): I remind members of the Covid-related measures that are in place, and that face coverings should be worn while moving around the chamber and the Holyrood campus.

The next item of business is a debate on motion S6M-01803, in the name of John Swinney, on the Covid recovery strategy.

15:25

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery (John Swinney): On 5 October, I set out to Parliament the Scottish Government's Covid recovery strategy. The strategy sets out the Government's vision for recovery and our commitment to supporting those who have been most affected during the pandemic. I very much hope that members across the chamber will support the strategy and this Government's wider efforts to bring about a fairer future for the people of Scotland.

As we look towards an uncertain and challenging winter period ahead, it is clear that the pandemic is not yet over. We must all continue to take the appropriate steps to keep ourselves, our loved ones and our communities safe, and I warmly thank all those who are continuing to play their part to protect Scotland. However, because of the measures that we have taken to control the virus and the incredible success of the vaccination programme, life for many will feel much more normal than it has done for quite some time. As a consequence, while we continue to focus on responding to the pandemic, the Government is able to take the necessary steps to support and enable a fair recovery from the pandemic. I will set out today how the Covid recovery strategy will bring about that fairer future, particularly for those who have been most impacted during the pandemic.

As I set out in my previous statement, the pandemic has dramatically affected every aspect of our lives. The Government has asked people to change where and how they work, conduct business and socialise with friends and family. Although the past 18 months have taken a significant toll on people across the country, there have been positive examples of collaborative working and people solving problems in creative and imaginative ways in all the communities that we have the privilege to represent. Alongside addressing the harms of the pandemic, the Government will learn from and build on the positives that have emerged from it.

Although it is true that the pandemic has affected us all and required much sacrifice from

many, it is not the case that all have been impacted equally. The pandemic has highlighted and worsened inequalities across our country, and for many, the past 18 months have been incredibly challenging. People who were disadvantaged before the pandemic have been hardest hit during it. Those individuals—our neighbours, friends and constituents—were more likely to become seriously ill and, sadly, to die from Covid, and they were the hardest hit socially and economically as a result of the necessary restrictions that were introduced to control the spread of the virus.

People living in low-income households have been able to save less, have taken on more debt and have been significantly impacted by labour market pressures. Our children and young people have been affected through school closures and uncertainty about their learning, training and employment. We also know that many unpaid carers have faced added pressure during the pandemic and it has been an incredibly difficult time for them. We are in regular touch with carers' representatives, including Carers Scotland, to make sure that we understand carers' concerns and can act accordingly. We have invested an additional £28.5 million for local carer support in this year's budget, bringing total investment under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 to £68 million per year.

The pandemic also resulted in an unprecedented shock to Scotland's economy and job market, and existing job market inequalities have been exacerbated, with Brexit reinforcing those inequalities.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): One of my concerns is that people may look at the increase in vacancies and think that there are no issues with unemployment. Does the cabinet secretary acknowledge that it is possible to have both increasing unemployment and increasing vacancies, because there is not an efficient interaction between those two factors?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have quite a bit of time in hand this afternoon, cabinet secretary, so you will be reimbursed for your time.

John Swinney: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I agree whole-heartedly with Mr Johnson—he makes a substantial point that poses a challenge to Government and to a variety of institutions around the country to ensure that the interventions that we put in place can directly and satisfactorily address the issue that he cites. There are vacancies in the labour market; Mr Johnson will know from speaking to businesses in his constituency, as I speak to those in my constituency and around the country, that they are facing real challenges around vacancies.

Equally, however—as Murdo Fraser and I discussed at portfolio question time yesterday—there will be individuals who are unemployed or whose jobs have come to an end after furlough but who may not have the ideal skills to enable them to move into another sector. Our colleges and institutions, and our training interventions such as the young persons guarantee and the transition training fund, must all be efficient and focused in order to address the issue that Mr Johnson fairly puts to me. I give him an assurance that the Government is constantly addressing those questions.

In addition, we must also focus—I made this point to Mr Fraser yesterday—on people in our society who are currently economically inactive and who, with appropriate levels of support, assistance and perhaps additional public services, could be assisted to enter the labour market. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has regularly raised concerns about the availability of the social care workforce, which is critical to ensuring that the demand for care packages in our community is satisfactorily met—a point that I discussed with Jackie Baillie at question time yesterday.

We can potentially enable some of those economically inactive individuals to gain access to the labour market with the proper support that they require. Indeed, ministers were wrestling yesterday with some of the issues in respect of wraparound childcare, which I recognise to be a significant issue. In closing the debate today, the Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights will talk about housing supply issues, which are material to ensuring that individuals can find the stability to enable them to enter the labour market. Mr Johnson makes a very fair point.

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I recently visited the Raploch centre in Stirling, which is funded directly through the Scottish Government. It is a brilliant project that is trying to reach those people who are furthest away from the labour market. How do we ensure that we start to get funding going directly into community organisations that are able to deliver the kind of success that we see from the Raploch centre?

John Swinney: Mr Rowley puts his finger on an important point. He highlights the Raploch centre, which is a perfect example of exactly the point that I tried to make to Mr Johnson. However, I acknowledge that Raploch-style centres do not exist in every part of the country. We have to ensure that best practice is shared around the country and that we encourage different institutions and community planning partnerships at a local level to adopt those techniques, because it is clear that the Raploch centre model can assist

individuals to enter the labour market with the necessary support. I commend that initiative, and I give Mr Rowley an assurance that, as part of the wider Covid recovery strategy, we are trying to ensure that more of those interventions are available around the country to support individuals.

We cannot return to how things were before the pandemic, when some people, because of their income, health, disability, race or gender, were less secure and less able to protect themselves and their families from circumstances beyond their control. Our recovery from the pandemic must be focused on creating a fairer future for everyone. It is critical that we deliver the type of recovery that people want and need.

During the summer, the Government heard from people that they wanted a recovery that addresses the harms caused by the pandemic; supports health and wellbeing; supports economic development; and provides financial security. The Government has listened to the valuable messages that have been shared through the Citizens Assembly of Scotland and the social renewal advisory board. I am grateful to all who have shared their views and experiences so openly and honestly. The message is clear: the people of Scotland want a fairer future for all fellow members of our community. That message is central to the Covid recovery strategy, which has a clear vision that will bring about a fairer future. We will address the inequalities that have been made worse by Covid, make progress towards a wellbeing economy in which our success is based on more than gross domestic product, and accelerate inclusive, person-centred public services.

The strategy details three outcomes that are central to achieving that vision of a fairer future: to increase financial security for low-income households; to enhance the wellbeing of children and young people; and to create good, green jobs and fair work. Those three outcomes are supported by an overarching ambition to rebuild public services and ensure that they are person centred in design and delivery. That very much relates to the point that Mr Rowley made about the approach that is taken at the Raploch centre. There are already examples of public services being delivered in that way. The Government's ambition is that every person in Scotland should be able to access and benefit from public services in a way that meets their individual needs.

Our renewed and enhanced collaboration and partnership with local government, business organisations and the third sector will be critical to achieving our vision. We must build on the spirit of collaboration, urgency and flexibility that characterised our collective response to the

pandemic. The challenge that I have put to Government, which we are sharing with our colleagues in local government, business organisations, the third sector and our communities, is that, if we can move so fast collectively and collaboratively to tackle a pandemic that was a direct threat to the lives and livelihoods of all of us in March 2020, surely we can deploy the same collaborative energy and focus in tackling poverty in our society and in the delivery of a fairer future.

The Covid recovery strategy details how the Government will work with partners to prioritise, co-ordinate and target actions most effectively over the next 18 months to meet the needs of those most affected during the pandemic. To ensure financial security for low-income families, we will roll out the Scottish child payment to children under 16 by the end of next year and double the payment to £20 a week per child as soon as possible in this parliamentary session. We will also commence work to expand funded early learning and childcare to children aged 1 and 2, and we will design a system of wraparound childcare in which the least well-off families will pay nothing. That can perhaps address some of the issues that Mr Johnson raised about supporting people into the labour market.

To further reduce the costs of the school day, we will expand the provision of free breakfasts and lunches and increase the school clothing grant each year.

To enhance the wellbeing of our children and young people, we will invest at least £500 million over this parliamentary session to create a whole family wellbeing fund. That fund will provide universal and holistic support services that will be available in communities across Scotland and give families access to the help that they need where and when they need it.

We will also deliver our young persons guarantee by providing up to £70 million this year so that every person aged between 16 and 24 has the opportunity to study or take up an apprenticeship, employment or work experience. That will include targeted measures to support care-experienced young people, disabled young people and those from low socioeconomic groups. The Government will also provide £120 million of further funding through the mental health recovery and renewal fund, which includes increased support for child and adolescent mental health services.

To create good, green jobs and fair work, we will support the creation of more jobs through the green jobs fund and the green jobs workforce academy. The forthcoming 10-year national strategy for economic transformation will set out plans for strengthening Scotland's economy,

recognising that a strong and sustainable economy goes hand in hand with a fair and equal society.

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): The point about a strong and sustainable economy is a really important one as we come out of the pandemic. The third sector makes about the same contribution in terms of employment and economics to the country as the national health service does. On that basis, will the cabinet secretary include the third sector in the next Scottish Government economic strategy, given what we have seen that it has been able to do at short notice and under pressure in the past year?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should begin to wind up reasonably soon, cabinet secretary.

John Swinney: Yes is the short answer to Pam Duncan-Glancy's question, because I am struck by the opportunities. I was looking at material on that the other day from some of our social enterprise organisations, for example. Some of those ideas might be able to assist in the challenge of expanding the social care workforce, which the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has clearly been actively focused on addressing, because of the reach of some of those organisations into our communities in delivering locally based employment, which perhaps saves transport costs for individuals. I very much welcome that. I have just agreed to meet Social Investment Scotland and Social Enterprise Scotland to continue some of the discussions with them that I greatly enjoyed when I was the finance secretary to establish how they can contribute to the Covid recovery strategy. I look forward to those discussions.

The strategy must be viewed as a national effort. Therefore, it requires collaboration. I have signalled in it the Government's willingness to work closely with our local authority partners. We intend to establish a joint oversight board with local government to share in the implementation and application of the strategy not through any form of top-down approach but by engagement and collaboration involving the third and private sectors, to ensure that we put as much effort into tackling poverty and delivering a fairer future as we put into tackling a pandemic that was a threat to all our lives.

I encourage the Parliament to support the Government's Covid recovery strategy.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Covid Recovery Strategy, published on 5 October 2021, which sets out the Scottish Government's ambitious vision for a green recovery and details the actions that will be taken in partnership with local government, business

organisations, the third sector and others across Scotland to address systemic inequalities made worse during the pandemic, make progress towards a wellbeing economy, and accelerate inclusive person-centred public services by focusing on improving financial security for low-income households, supporting the wellbeing of children and young people, and creating good, green jobs and fair work.

15:41

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): When the Scottish Government publishes a new strategy, the first question to ask is always, what is new here? In this case the answer is, not a lot. We have an extensive document that runs to 47 pages. There are a lot of reannouncements of existing policies but there is little in the document that is new. Nor is there much in the way of timescales for the delivery of many of the initiatives that are being announced or reannounced.

We should be united in the Parliament by a shared ambition for Covid recovery to be as quick and comprehensive as possible. In that respect, there is little that I would disagree with in what the Deputy First Minister just said. However, I will focus on two key areas in which the Scottish Government needs to do more as a matter of urgency.

The first is the situation in the NHS, which is covered in the strategy document. We have long argued, and it is now well understood and agreed, that the best route out of the pandemic is through the vaccination programme. That is why it has been so important. Its success up to now has been instrumental in allowing us to make progress and relax restrictions. However, we are undeniably now encountering challenges with the programme.

We learned this week that more than 100,000 people who should be receiving their booster jags are still waiting. Those boosters are essential, particularly for reassuring the older population that they are safe. Indeed, we heard at First Minister's question time some examples of the situation on the ground. We also heard in the COVID-19 Recovery Committee examples of older people who expected to get the booster jag and were very concerned that it had not yet been forthcoming.

Today, we learned from NHS Fife that one fifth of people aged over 80 in that health board area, which I represent, who are eligible for a booster and the flu vaccine have still to receive an appointment. That is a stark illustration of the point that I am making. Older people are worried. They have been told that they need to get the booster to give them crucial extra protection over the winter months but are still waiting to hear when they will get one. That needs to be the focus of attention for the Government.

That is only one aspect of the wider issues that affect the NHS. It is now well understood that we are at a crisis point within the NHS in Scotland, with hospitals bursting at the seams and record waits at accident and emergency departments. This week, we again heard shocking statistics, which show that there is now a wait of up to 40 hours at some hospitals for A and E admissions.

This week, NHS Lothian told people not to attend A and E unless their condition was life threatening. That is a really concerning line for the NHS to put out to the general public. How is any individual with a serious injury or sudden chest pains supposed to know whether what they face falls in the category of being life threatening? There is a real danger that lives could be lost as a result of that sort of messaging. If an elderly person falls over and breaks their ankle, their life might not be at risk but, clearly, they are in a lot of distress. What are they then supposed to do? Are they not meant to call an ambulance or try to attend an accident and emergency department?

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): On the other hand, would the member accept that, in Greater Glasgow and Clyde, 32 per cent of those turning up at A and E were reckoned to have minor ailments, so there is a bit of space for people not to go to A and E?

Murdo Fraser: I do not disagree with the statistic that the member has quoted, which I am sure is accurate. The danger is that we could effectively be asking people, through a public message from an NHS board, to self-diagnose, which I think is really concerning. There is then a real risk that people who have a very serious injury or something life threatening do not attend A and E. We need to be very careful about that message.

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): This is not the be-all and end-all, I accept that, but the Scottish Ambulance Service has helpful guidance on its website as to where people can call if they have certain injuries. I am not saying, "Don't ever call an ambulance," but there is some guidance so that, if people are in doubt, they can check. The website directs them to other services if necessary.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give Murdo Fraser the time back.

Murdo Fraser: I thank Christine Grahame for that intervention, but the difficulty with all of this is that people will often see only one message. They might see a message on social media, in this case from NHS Lothian, which is telling people, "Do not attend A and E unless your condition is life threatening." That is all that people see. That is really concerning, and the Government needs to

be very clear about the message that it is sending out to people. We will end up with people in much worse health situations than would otherwise be the case, and lives might be lost.

John Swinney: There is a substantial issue here. I hope that Mr Fraser understands that the Government and health boards have to say to people that there must be good and appropriate reason for individuals to use accident and emergency. They are not called “accident and emergency” departments for any casual reason; they are for when people have had an accident or for a situation that is an emergency. There are many other aspects of healthcare available.

I encourage Mr Fraser to take a considered view—which is the point that both Christine Grahame and John Mason made—as to the judgments that people should make in seeking the appropriate healthcare for the circumstances and difficulties that they face.

Murdo Fraser: That message needs to be given to health boards such as NHS Lothian, which is putting out messages to people, saying “Do not attend A and E unless your condition is life threatening.” How are the public supposed to know what a life-threatening situation is? If somebody has chest pains or thinks that they might be having the symptoms of a stroke or has suffered a serious injury, how do they know whether it is life threatening? That is the message that the Government needs to take away.

I have taken up a lot of time on that, and I wish to move on to discuss an important economic issue, specifically, support for business.

Throughout the lockdown, we saw generous financial support to the business community, to the self-employed and to workers through the furlough scheme and other initiatives. There was also extensive grant support. That is now mostly coming to an end, as the economy recovers and businesses are allowed to reopen.

There are still sectors of the economy under pressure, however. The introduction of the vaccination passport scheme in Scotland is unique in that, unlike in any other part of Europe, it does not allow a negative Covid test as an alternative to vaccination as the price of entry. That is having a negative impact on the night-time industry. According to the Scottish hospitality group this week, turnover is down at some premises by 40 per cent, following the introduction of the vaccination passport scheme, and there have been reports of a growing level of abuse towards door staff, some of whom are walking off the job as a result.

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): Will the member give way on that point?

Murdo Fraser: I have already taken three interventions. Mr Fairlie will forgive me, but I need to make some progress.

I have made the case to the Scottish Government on numerous previous occasions that, if it wants to have a vaccination passport scheme, it needs to offer the alternative of a negative test. If it is not going to do that, there will continue to be a negative and substantial economic impact on businesses, which have already been suffering due to 18 months of restrictions and closures, and the Government will then need to step up with financial compensation.

In the budget yesterday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an extension of rates relief for businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector at a rate of 50 per cent for a further year across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Yesterday, the Scottish Tourism Alliance called on the Scottish Government to follow suit. I hope that it will. We need to consider how those businesses that are directly affected by the vaccination passport scheme might also be supported.

There is a need to go beyond that, with wider support for economic recovery. I was surprised to see that, in the 47 pages of the recovery strategy document, there is not one mention of the Scottish National Investment Bank, a flagship policy to assist with sustainable economic growth that is now seemingly slipping off the radar.

It is all too reminiscent of the much-vaunted public energy company, launched once with great fanfare, but then delivering nothing. What is the role of SNIB in relation to Covid recovery? Should it not be there to address market failures in the provision of finance to all types of enterprises that deliver beneficial outcomes for the public good and Covid recovery?

For example, I have been engaging with The Growth Partnership, which is promoting social impact investment bonds, an innovative and imaginative initiative delivering real benefits for the public sector and helping progress towards a wellbeing economy, but it is struggling to attract commercial support. Groups in that sphere could benefit substantially from support from SNIB, but at present it is unclear whether SNIB has a role in providing that level of support. That is one clear area where the strategy is lacking and could be improved.

In his remarks earlier, the cabinet secretary talked a lot about the role of the third sector in reply to an intervention from the Labour benches and made it very clear that he prizes the third sector. I have just given a good example of a third sector initiative that could help with Covid recovery but currently cannot because it is not getting

support. However, it could get support from SNIB. I hope that the cabinet secretary will look into that.

I am well over my time, Presiding Officer, so I will conclude. Although there is little in the strategy that we would object to, overall it fails to meet the challenge before us, particularly the immediate pressures that face our NHS and economy.

I move amendment S6M-01803.2, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“notes the publication of the Covid Recovery Strategy, published on 5 October 2021; regrets the lack of new policy or clear timeline within the strategy, and calls on the Scottish Government to take immediate steps to accelerate the vaccine booster roll-out, tackle the current crisis within the NHS, and to bring forward a detailed recovery strategy with specific proposals for businesses, including widening access to full fibreoptic broadband, and a comprehensive suite of measures to allow school children to catch up swiftly, such as a national tutoring programme.”

15:51

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): In 2016, within weeks of the election, the newly appointed education secretary published a plan for education that set out a number of detailed milestones backed by detailed analysis of where we needed to improve our schools. Five years on, we have that minister now in charge of Covid recovery, a job in every way more important, urgent and profound, but the plan took months to publish and, in my view and that of other Labour members, it is less specific and, in some ways, less ambitious. As Mr Fraser pointed out, many of the initiatives in the plan are simply repeats from not just the election but before the election.

I profoundly believe that Mr Swinney is a serious politician and that the mission that he has been charged with is a serious one, but I believe that by his own yardstick, the plan is not ambitious enough and nor does it contain the detail that the recovery requires. Further, I do not believe that we have recovery plans of sufficient detail within portfolio areas. So far, we have had an education recovery plan that seems to commit to little more than glacial implementation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report and a health recovery plan that is already in tatters.

We need a recovery plan that reflects the time that the recovery will take, the ambition required and the complexity of the potentially permanent impact that Covid has wrought in Scotland. That is what, fundamentally, our amendment proposes. Like the Conservatives, we do not fundamentally disagree with the Covid recovery strategy as set out, but it does not go far enough. It does not have the concrete milestones or the concrete analysis that is required if we are to recover from the consequences of the pandemic. Without those

specific targeted actions being set out, the Government motion is largely meaningless.

Michelle Thomson (Falkirk East) (SNP): I am sure that Mr Johnson recognises that the Scottish Government is fatally constricted by not having borrowing powers. When we are faced with a crisis such as the current one, being able to borrow in order to grow the economy is utterly fundamental. Will Mr Johnson join me in asking the UK Government to grant those powers?

Daniel Johnson: Even by the standards of our own Government, the plan does not go far enough. It contains the same level of ambition as the one set out for education in the previous session of Parliament. The budget is coming up in a matter of weeks and we will have consideration of the processes around the fiscal framework. I am happy to have the debates on those issues, but there is scope within the envelope of the Scottish Government to go further. Funds were announced in the budget just yesterday that have yet to be allocated. There is sufficient scope to go much further and be much more ambitious than the plan set out by the Government.

I will set out three elements whereby Labour would seek to go further. First, as is suggested in our amendment, we need to do much more to contain and suppress the virus. Throughout the autumn, Scotland had one of the highest infection rates in the whole of Europe. We must stop using the benchmark of the hopeless Conservative Government in Westminster. We know what works, and we should be comparing ourselves to what other countries, such as Germany, have been doing. Germany's excess death rate has been roughly half that of Scotland, because it invested properly in testing and in track and trace. We must contain the virus by resourcing such systems to stop it in its tracks.

Likewise, the vaccination programme has done an amazing job, but we must now redouble our efforts to complete it, taking jabs to where people are—in schools, colleges and universities. What is most important, as has been alluded to by Murdo Fraser, is that we must recognise the severe challenges and issues in the booster and flu vaccination programmes. I have constituents who were vaccinated more than six months ago and who have no idea when their booster is meant to take place. Likewise, constituents are being asked to make two-hour round trips to get their flu shots. Quite simply, not only is that not good enough, but it represents a failure to learn the lessons of the first vaccination programme.

Secondly, we must address the issues that are faced more broadly in our public services, because they are on the front line in dealing with the pandemic and for delivering that recovery. However, the challenges that are faced by the

health service are profound. As has been pointed out by NHS Lothian, and as we know from other areas, that is being exacerbated by a lack of capacity. That is why, in our amendment, we have put forward the call for a plan for £15 per hour for care workers—raising their pay immediately to £12 an hour and working in short order towards that £15 an hour mark. That would boost recruitment, improve pay and secure the conditions of care workers. It is a disgrace that those who are doing such an important job are being paid little more than pennies above the minimum wage.

Thirdly, it is important to realise what the economic impacts of the pandemic are. As I stated in my intervention, they are complicated, in that we can have vacancies and unemployment. Indeed, 93,900 people were still on furlough when that scheme ended, yet the programmes that have been announced by the Government for reskilling and retraining address little more than a third of those people. We need to literally double our efforts to reskill and redeploy people. Entire sectors have changed permanently. Those people and industries need action from Government in order to transition. That is why we need to increase our provision for job creation schemes and retraining.

We need to stop name checking recovery and start taking steps to deliver it. We need a clear analysis of what recovery requires, clear targets to track our progress and a defined timetable for delivery. We need a recovery that focuses on jobs and that reinforces our public services.

I move amendment S6M-01803.1, to insert at end:

“; considers that failure to contain and suppress the virus will risk undermining Scotland’s recovery; insists that the Covid Recovery Strategy be backed up by interventions to prevent long-term economic scarring, and so calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward a plan to increase pay for social care workers to £15/hr, and to increase access to the national transition training fund and jobs guarantee scheme to ensure that places are available for all those impacted by the end of furlough to find employment.”

15:58

Beatrice Wishart (Shetland Islands) (LD): We must put the recovery from Covid first. The pandemic has disrupted everything, from schools and shopping to weddings and the Parliament. It has highlighted great pre-existing divides in our society and has made them worse. What is worse still, almost 10,000 Scots have lost their lives, leaving behind grieving families and broken friends. For some of us, it is hard to imagine the feeling of losing someone close due to Covid; for others among us, it is a reality.

My constituents are still contacting me about long Covid symptoms and queries; still asking for financial assistance, given the impact on their businesses; and still facing restrictions that impact on their finances and entitlements as they travel to the mainland.

I make a plea for an island-proofed recovery. Throughout the pandemic, there has been frustration that island needs have appeared to be an afterthought in some Scottish Government decision-making processes. Announcements that were made with a wealth of detail about restrictions that affected central belt communities often failed to include any mention of important differences for island communities that were working under different rules. That created confusion. As we look ahead to dealing with the impacts of the pandemic and shaping the recovery, it is important that that work fully reflects the islands dimension.

We must make the country unrecognisable from where we are. We need to repair the damage to our economy, communities and public services and focus on jobs, mental health, our NHS, schools and the climate crisis. We must create a liberal country where every individual is able to achieve their potential.

As others have said, we have seen great uptake of the Covid-19 vaccine in Scotland and across the UK, but we cannot be complacent, because having the vaccine does not mean that people cannot catch and spread Covid. Covid has had a significant impact on young people, with schools closed, qualifications disrupted and job prospects shattered. University, which should be an exciting prospect, turned into hotspot chaos, and students experienced endless isolation and classes online. We must work hard to ensure that the Covid generation are not stuck with that label as an unfortunate description of lives forever impacted.

Recovery does not have to look like anything in the past. We have had time to think about what we want, assess what would be better and invest in ourselves, so let us invest in one another as well. We should invest in mental health treatment provision so that it is comparable with physical health treatment, and in an education bounce back to allow the next generation to step forward. We should invest in our public services to thank our front-line workers for all that they have done.

We have shown what we can do when we all pull together. We stayed at home and we clapped in the street. Let us not lose that sense of community and common purpose. Let us make the next decade and beyond be about not only what unites us but what makes our lives better and fairer. Let us put the recovery first.

16:02

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): The past 19 months have been difficult for everyone, but they have been extremely difficult for some people. Certain groups in society suffered much more during Covid than others did, and generally those were people who were already disadvantaged—for example, those who are less well off financially, women and ethnic minorities.

As we seek to recover from Covid, we have the opportunity to do things differently. I very much want to see a fairer society, and most of us here would probably agree. However, the question remains whether the majority of people in Scottish society are willing to pay the price for that.

During Covid, people were willing to make a lot of sacrifices—they did not go on foreign holidays, go out for meals, shop as much or meet friends, family and work colleagues, because they understood that we faced an emergency. The question now is whether people are willing to make such lifestyle changes in the longer term—for example, having fewer foreign holidays or not buying clothes as often for the good of the environment. Changes might also be required so that income and wealth are shared around more equitably. Maybe those of us who are well paid, such as members of the Scottish Parliament, should make do with a bit less in the next few years so that those with less can get a fairer deal.

There are still many things that we do not know about the future. Will office workers go back to city centres or will they work partly or entirely at home? The answer could mean that we need fewer shops and restaurants in our towns and city centres for those office workers, and we might need fewer commuter trains to take them to work and back home.

When the chancellor delivered the UK budget yesterday, he certainly seemed upbeat. It is good that forecast unemployment is lower and that the economy seems to be recovering faster than many of us expected less than a year ago. Inflation is rising, which is a concern, but we need to see whether that is a temporary blip—we do not know.

My gut instinct is that money will be tight in the next few years. Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life have lost a considerable amount of income because of the pandemic and cannot afford to reopen all the services that they previously offered. Passenger numbers on railways are still well down, which means that the budgeted income is just not there.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: Would John Mason accept that Glasgow Life has also made representations to the First Minister and the Scottish Government, asking for more money so

that it can open the remaining libraries, for example, and other remaining services in Glasgow, and that so far it has not been given that money?

John Mason: I accept that a lot of sectors—that certainly includes Glasgow City Council and probably all other councils in Scotland, Glasgow Life and the railways—have needed and are needing more money; so, too, is the NHS, in order to catch up with its backlog. That is what I am just coming on to. It is great that we got a bit more money from yesterday's budget, but it will still be limited and we will have to choose priorities over the coming years.

I was talking about the railways, where income is well down and passenger numbers are only about 50 per cent of previous levels. The Scottish Government cannot plug all those gaps. That is not possible. I think that we are all sympathetic to the people who worked extra hard during the pandemic and put themselves at risk, and we would say that many people in the NHS, local government, public transport and so on deserve a pay increase, but the question still is where the money will come from for all that. As I said, the NHS has a backlog and other sectors will probably need support for longer—tourism and other sectors that will take longer to get back to full strength.

Therefore, we will have to choose priorities in the coming years and there will be some difficult decisions to make. Should the aviation sector return to where it was and keep growing, or should we accept that it should remain smaller in the longer term? Immigration, or the lack of it, is a problem for Scotland. It is hard to grow the economy if the population is not increasing. That has been a challenge for many years, not just because of Covid, and leaving the European Union has made it worse.

Overall, we face many challenges in the coming few years. Some people want things to go back to the way they were before, because they were doing very nicely. However, I, for one, do not want a repeat of the past. I want to see a fairer and more inclusive society, and I believe that we can achieve that.

16:06

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The Deputy First Minister, Murdo Fraser and Daniel Johnson all said in their opening remarks that the key priority has to be minimising the Covid threat and addressing the many other health issues arising from it, and that is right. However, I am just as certain that the second priority for the public and the Scottish business sector is to ensure that we have a strong economic recovery—one that is

sustainable in the future, not just in the short term, and we have to be mindful that predictions are showing that growth rates may well slow in that future.

The good news, as we saw in yesterday's budget, is that the current economic forecasts on growth are much better than was previously thought might be the case. However, as the chancellor said yesterday, that needs to be set against the inflationary pressures, the rise in the cost of living and the rise in national insurance charges, even if it is generally accepted that those have a part to play in addressing the huge issue in health and social care spending.

Those inflationary pressures are strong—we only have to look at the petrol prices over the past 10 days to realise how strong they are—so growth is critical not just for jobs, investment and tax revenues, but to encourage greater economic optimism. One thing that would immediately provide some optimism is for the Scottish Government to continue to provide business rates relief for the retail and hospitality sectors for longer. The Scottish Government was very generous in the past financial year and it would be good to hear from the Deputy First Minister what it intends to do now.

The overwhelming message from the retail and hospitality sectors, and from some of the witnesses who have appeared at the Finance and Public Administration Committee, is that business continues to need considerable support. The Scottish Retail Consortium tells us that footfall is still 20 per cent below the pre-pandemic level and that serious questions remain about the viability of some businesses. Many of them have incurred substantial debt burdens and this is a difficult time for them, wondering whether they will continue in the future. That is why the Scottish Government's business rates waiver was very welcome. I urge the Government to concentrate on that for the immediate future, because business is crying out for it.

We have also been told by several key stakeholders that much more has to be done to stimulate local economies. That, of course, is the main reason why we have the levelling-up programme, and it was good to see more detail about that yesterday. It was also good to hear Kate Forbes welcoming that funding on the radio this morning.

This Parliament may be united in its support for schemes such as the Scotland Loves Local fund, but if our local economies are to be truly successful, a lot more must be done. The Conservatives persistently argue for much more to be done to encourage our schools, hospitals and other public bodies to procure more local produce. Yesterday, the higher education rankings came

out. Those were interesting not only for the usual reasons, but because they looked at the wellbeing aspects of our universities. It was good to see two Scottish universities high up the table in relation to the measure on improving local procurement. There are lots of lessons to be learned from them.

One of the biggest issues is labour. Unemployment has not risen in the way that it was expected to and job vacancies continue to be very high. That tells us that there is a mismatch of skills and problems with flexibility in the labour force. I was interested to hear the Deputy First Minister's comments about education and skills. He is absolutely right in that regard, but we need to look in much greater detail at what to do, and at the timeframe in which to do that work, because the issue is crucial.

Finally, the provision of greater "certainty and stability"—I use those words because they are the words that Kate Forbes used—is critical when it comes to taking a much more coherent and holistic approach to economic policy making and ensuring that Scotland remains fully competitive with other economies. That is most especially the case in relation to England's economy, given just how important it is, as we know from last week's export statistics.

The Scottish Government, as it knows, was recently criticised for not listening sufficiently well to business, whether on the broad scope of economic policy, difficulties with vaccination passports or the ability to access available support.

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

Liz Smith: The criticism focused on the weakness of detail, policy timescales and significant contradictions in Covid recovery policy, which is one of the reasons why our amendment focuses on those aspects.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We had a bit of time in hand, but we have almost none now. If members take interventions, which is entirely up to them, those will need to be absorbed into their speaking time.

16:12

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I will refer to two planks of the Covid recovery strategy: addressing the systemic inequalities that have been made worse by Covid, and progress towards a wellbeing economy. Those aspects go hand-in-hand in a socially just society, from cradle to grave.

Some policies are already in train. I applaud the focus on early years, with substantial investment

for learning in the broadest sense, including investment in free school meals. I applaud the £100 minimum grant for families for school clothing, which will help 120,000 families. I applaud the fact that no Scottish student pays tuition fees—by comparison, fees in England are at least £9,000 a year. I applaud free personal care for the elderly.

Covid has propelled us towards a national care service. We know that getting there will not be easy—the integration of health and social care was not easy—but it is a target that we must aim for.

What does the term “wellbeing economy” mean? Does it mean regenerative development, a circular economy or an economy for the common good? I rather prefer the latter, which must also mean “for the good of the planet”.

Of course, we need to generate revenue to fuel Government policies and initiatives, but questions are linked to that. How do we do that? For whose benefit will it be? What is that benefit?

Post war, in the 1950s, the UK Government, which was up to its neck in debt, focused on building social housing and infrastructure, broadening access to university, including free university education, which I benefited from, and undertaking basic health initiatives. All those were, first and foremost, policies that were about not just rebuilding physically after a devastating world war, but rebuilding priorities.

That continued into the 1960s, when there was a sense of egalitarianism, which was part real and part perception only. However, over decades, we have moved to a society—indeed, to a UK economy—that is predicated on consumerism, fuelled by cheap credit. That must have, throwaway society has widened the gap between the haves and the have nots.

There are close parallels between the post-war and post-pandemic situations. UK debt is staggering. We still need social housing, infrastructure and, for too many, the wherewithal for the basics of life and an income that provides for food and fuel. In 2021, we have food banks and folk unable to heat their homes—they can either eat or heat. What an indictment of the priorities of successive UK Governments—it is quite indefensible. Ironically, their approach has accelerated global warming, because the detritus of consumerism is filling our lands and seas. Growth cannot simply be for growth's sake.

The built-in limitations of devolution prevent this institution from radically redirecting the priorities of Scotland's economy. There are lessons to be learned from the 50s and 60s—I should know, because I was there—but the biggest lesson of all is that only as a nation with the economic powers

that independence brings can Scotland have that socially just society. Until then, whoever is in government here, all we can do is mitigate, mitigate, mitigate. We cannot change the direction of Scottish society to go where it really wants to go.

16:15

Pam Duncan-Glancy (Glasgow) (Lab): I just want to say to the member who has just spoken that when people tell me that I cannot do something, I think it is because they cannot see my potential, and we have a lot of potential in Scotland to act, so I urge the Government to do all that it can to improve the lives of people in Scotland.

We are now 17 months on from the onset of the pandemic and the extent of the damage that has been done becomes clearer with every passing day. The number of cases continues to rise, and it is clear that our fight is not yet over. However, it is important to look to the future so that the lessons that can be learned from the pandemic can be used in the big job of rebuilding that lies before us.

For too many people, things were already impossibly hard before the pandemic. Poverty and inequality were rife, insecure and precarious work was too common, and the social care system was on its knees. The pandemic has made all those things worse. As we look to rebuild, we must use the opportunity to harness the innovation that has been necessary this year, and build on it a better Scotland than the one we had previously.

To do that, it is vital that we do not just talk the talk on human rights. We need to put them at the heart of our recovery journey. Members have talked previously about a land of opportunity and, although Scotland is not yet a land of opportunity for all our fellow citizens, if we truly make that the focus and aim of our rebuild, we can get there.

There is an unprecedented moment in front of us and we in the chamber have the opportunity to grasp it and, in doing so, to create a Scotland in which we can all enjoy our human rights and live up to our potential. We have all come through the collective trauma of the pandemic and of living in lockdowns with restrictions on our freedom, and none of us liked it.

The truth is that people in our country have been living for years with restrictions on their freedoms and have been blocked by barriers that we have, so far, failed to pull down. Poverty and oppression have left disabled people, women, LGBT people, and black and minority ethnic people struggling just to get by. We came together as a country to fight back against the virus and claim back our freedoms, so now we must come together to fight back against the deep poverty

and inequality that are preventing our fellow citizens from claiming back theirs.

Our vision for the future must be bold, and I support the three aims that the Government has set out today. However, that means that far more needs to be done to help us to realise those aims, and it means taking ambitious and transformative action. I welcome the fact that the Government has a plan, but it does not go hard or fast enough. It is neither bold nor ambitious enough. It will not make Scotland the land of opportunity that we all know it can be.

Tackling systemic poverty needs sustained progressive action, which is why Labour has been calling for the Scottish Government to double the Scottish child payment immediately and to do that again next year.

Christine Grahame: I share every sentiment that the member has expressed, but does she accept that, without full economic power over jobs, benefits and taxation, and without borrowing powers, we cannot really tackle systemic poverty that has come about as a consequence of successive UK Governments?

Pam Duncan-Glancy: I am sorry but I do not agree. We have a number of significant powers that we can use right here today in Scotland to challenge the poverty that many of our citizens are facing.

We cannot allow our fight against systemic inequalities to fall by the wayside either. If we want to begin to tackle those, we have to enforce equal pay, workplace inequalities must be addressed, and the Gender Recognition Act 2004 must be reformed. We can also improve the lives of thousands of young disabled people by supporting a bill that gives them a fighting chance of a future.

Progression towards a wellbeing economy will require more than just words. It will require ensuring payment of the living wage in procurement and business support, ending zero-hours contracts, and closing the disability employment gap. It needs good, well-paid, and unionised jobs through investment in areas such as care.

If we invest in our social care system—that includes paying workers £15 an hour—we can create a person-centred health and social care service that values disabled people and workers' human rights, and takes the pressure off Scotland's 1 million unpaid carers. We have an opportunity to support all those who can get into work and to ensure that they are well paid, valued and supported to stay in work. For those who cannot get into work, we must use all the powers and levers that we have to build a social security system that includes a guaranteed minimum income that no one will fall below.

The pandemic has been one of the worst periods of any of our lifetimes—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Duncan-Glancy, could you please bring your remarks to a close? You have had a bit of extra time for taking an intervention.

Pam Duncan-Glancy: It has provided us with a unique moment for change. It is time to step back and look at how the people of Scotland want to live, and to live up to our full potential. Today, I ask the Government to be bold, not to waste the opportunity that we have and to seize the moment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Paul McLennan, to be followed by Ross Greer. You have up to four minutes, Mr McLennan, and that means “up to” four minutes.

16:20

Paul McLennan (East Lothian) (SNP): I am delighted to speak in the debate. As Christine Grahame did, I want to focus on how we move towards a wellbeing economy.

I welcome the publication of the Covid recovery strategy, which sets out our priorities as we recover from the pandemic. It allows us to take a step back and define what the Parliament is all about: what Scotland can and should be. It sets out our aspirations as a nation.

For many decades, Scotland has had systemic inequalities, which have been made worse during the pandemic. The strategy and, more important, the actions that are outlined will help us to make progress towards a wellbeing economy and will move us towards more inclusive, person-centred public services by focusing on improving financial security for low-income households, supporting the wellbeing of children and young people, and encouraging fair work.

Since my election six months ago, I have heard many comments from all parties in the chamber about how we can progress towards a wellbeing economy. I recently convened the first meeting of the cross-party group on the wellbeing economy, whose secretariat is being provided by the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. I offer an open invitation to all members to join us.

I have had several fantastic meetings with the alliance's founder, Katherine Trebeck. It has just published a paper entitled “Failure Demand”, which states:

“Of course, governments will always need to be reactive to immediate needs. There will always be unavoidable demands on public spending. That is not in dispute. This report is concerned with demands that are avoidable: damages incurred through economic choices—the purpose and structure of the economy.”

Only today, the Office for Budget Responsibility stated that Brexit would have a bigger impact than the pandemic. Brexit was a political choice.

“Failure Demand” goes on to say:

“These are damages that necessitate deployment of a government’s financial resources, but which could have been avoided in a Wellbeing Economy scenario.

The report asks the questions: is this the best we can hope for? Is it good enough just to help people survive and cope with the current system? ... Are payments that allow us to survive all that we should be using our taxes for, rather than investments and configurations that help us to thrive?”

The research focuses on key interlinked sectors that illustrate the direct and indirect impacts on the financial resources of a state. It finds that, in Scotland, because of the existence of low pay alone, the state provided nearly £600 million in 2014-15, £635 million in 2015-16, nearly £900 million in 2016-17, £840 million in 2017-18 and £775 million in 2018-19 in welfare payments, free school meals and work-related ill health payments.

The report seeks to demonstrate that taking a wellbeing economy approach also makes financial sense, by reducing avoidable demands so that public spending has a longer-term positive impact.

The Scottish Government has set out the steps that it will take to ensure financial security for low-income families, which include rolling out the Scottish child payment to children under the age of 16 by the end of next year and doubling it to £20 per week per child as quickly as possible during the current parliamentary session; providing expanded funding for early learning and childcare for children aged one and two; and designing a wraparound childcare system to provide care before and after school.

To improve the wellbeing of children and young people, the strategy includes commitments to invest at least £500 million over the parliamentary session to create a whole-family wellbeing fund and a shift to preventative interventions.

The Scottish Government is committed to working with its partners in local government, the business community, health services, the third sector and our communities as part of an energetic national recovery endeavour.

David Hume said:

“A wise man proportions his beliefs to the evidence.”

The Scottish Government is doing so with its Covid recovery strategy.

16:24

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I understand why we use the language of recovery and rebuilding when we discuss our response to

the toll that the pandemic has taken on our society and economy, but I am not convinced that that captures what we are trying to do. Our goal should not be to return to what we had in March 2020. Most, if not all, of us agree on that point. The pandemic has had a devastating effect on many people’s livelihoods and on their families’ financial security, but Scotland and the UK were blighted by insecure contracts and poverty wages before the pandemic.

In sectors such as hospitality, our ambition must not be to return to the old normal. That is why growth in trade union membership should be a key indicator of the success of our recovery plans. Financial security is rightly one of the primary objectives of the recovery strategy. Whether that is shown by Unite’s hospitality branch or by the four rail unions that have won significant victories in recent weeks, there is no doubt that the most effective tool at our disposal for creating a high-wage economy is a strong trade union movement.

I am proud of the actions that were committed to in the shared policy programme agreed by my party and the Scottish Government, many of which will underpin the recovery strategy.

Daniel Johnson: Will the member take an intervention?

Ross Greer: I apologise: I have only four minutes and I am the only speaker for my party.

We will triple the funding for the Scottish Trades Union Congress’s unions into schools project, which is a fantastic initiative that prepares young people for entering the workplace by letting them know their rights and what trade unions can do for them. I refer members to my entry in the register of interests and specifically to my membership of an STUC-affiliated union.

We will also expand family income maximisation and other advice services, building on the success of projects such as healthier wealthier children in Glasgow and the fantastic work of NHS Lothian. Those projects will help some of the lowest-income and most at risk families make full use the social security and other support services that they are entitled to, but that many are unaware of or do not know how to access.

As the business minister announced earlier this month, we will use the powers available to us to directly address the issue of low pay. Although we cannot yet set minimum wage rates in Scotland, we will require the many thousands of businesses that receive support from the Scottish Government or that provide services via public procurement contracts to pay their staff at least the real living wage. For obvious and understandable reasons, the private sector has received unprecedented public support in the past 18 months, but businesses should not expect to receive public

money or contracts if they are simultaneously forcing Government to use the social security system to subsidise the poverty wages that companies pay their staff. If we are to achieve the objective of good green jobs and fair work, we will require more of that kind of interventionist economic policy.

One policy that does not appear in the recovery strategy paper, but that makes for an excellent example of how we will meet the paper's headline objectives, is the introduction of free bus travel for young people. That is not technically a Covid recovery initiative—we had agreed on it during budget negotiations in early 2020 before the pandemic hit us—but the launch was delayed for obvious reasons. Now scheduled for 31 January, the scheme will provide considerable economic, social and environmental benefits. It will expand young people's access to the workforce because it will be easier for them to get to where jobs or training opportunities are. It will reduce the financial burden on low-income families, who are disproportionately reliant on buses, and it will shift more journeys from private cars on to buses, helping to meet both our climate and local air quality targets.

I encourage the Government to consider how that strategy and its headline objectives align with the national performance framework. I highlighted to the Deputy First Minister a few weeks ago that the NPF contains almost nothing on transport. A significant shift in transport policy is essential if we are to meet the Covid recovery objectives, our climate targets and far more besides. The upcoming review of NPF indicators is an opportunity to better align that framework with the Government's strategic priorities.

Recovery cannot mean returning to an economic system that left one in four Scottish children in poverty and that has brought our planet to the brink of catastrophe. The strategy is a strong start, but I encourage colleagues in the Government to consider at every stage whether they could go further and faster. Given what is at stake, an overly cautious approach would be a far greater threat to our shared objective of a greener, fairer society.

16:28

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I welcome the Covid recovery strategy. It is undeniable that Covid is the greatest challenge of our time. Living and dealing with Covid and with the recovery from it has provided us with a continually changing policy platform. That is a fact.

I am sure that members from across the chamber will have heard people say that they look forward to life getting back to the way it was before

the pandemic. However, as other members have said today, recovery must go further than how life was before Covid. The recovery strategy will help us to do that by working with local government, the third sector and businesses large and small.

Although the strategy is focused over the next 18 months, it includes a series of actions over the course of this parliamentary session to make significant progress towards net zero, to deliver substantial reductions in child poverty and to secure an economic recovery that is fair and green.

Those who were already the most disadvantaged have suffered disproportionately. They have been more likely to get seriously ill, more likely to be hospitalised and, sadly, more likely to die from Covid. They have also been the hardest hit socially, educationally and economically by the restrictions that were brought in to control the spread of the virus. For many people, the disadvantages that they faced have been made worse by the pandemic. Our recovery must be about how we make life better for them.

Yesterday, I asked the Deputy First Minister about his recent visit to the Belville Community Garden Trust, in my constituency, and his reply was extremely positive. I know how essential Belville was to many people, as were other local organisations. MSPs from across the chamber will be able to point to examples in their constituencies and regions, but it is clear that my constituency went through some particularly stark challenges in the earlier part of the pandemic. The community rallied round and the joint working of all partners was immense, and we, as a community, are stronger for that joint working.

Some of the social and economic challenges that my community faced before the pandemic have not gone away, and the recent Skills Development Scotland report indicated that our economy will not fully recover until 2031, which is later than the estimate for neighbouring local authorities. That is why the strategy is an important first step. A strong, sustainable economy goes hand in hand with a fair and equal society.

I am pleased that that understanding will be at the centre of the new 10-year national strategy for economic transformation, which the Scottish Government will publish later this year. I look forward to reading that document when it is published.

Some of the actions in the Covid recovery strategy will certainly help my community. Those include investing £200 million in adult upskilling and opportunities to retrain and reskill workers in areas of the economy that are particularly impacted by the pandemic and the transition to net zero; help for low-income families who are most at

risk of experiencing poverty, with £8.65 million for the parental employability support fund in 2021-22 and at least a further £15 million from 2022 to 2024; and rolling out the Scottish child payment to children under 16 by the end of 2022, which will be hugely beneficial. I could go on, because there are many positive examples in the strategy.

I know that the strategy can be helpful for my Greenock and Inverclyde constituency and that its roll-out will help many people. However, it has to be rolled out properly. I am certainly happy to support it and ensure that many people in my constituency benefit from it.

16:32

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, which shows that I am still a member of Aberdeen City Council.

I welcome this debate on Covid recovery, but it is important to acknowledge that those who are working in our front-line services are still under a huge amount of pressure as a result of Covid. They do not yet feel that they are in the recovery phase, nor do they feel that they are being supported or valued by this devolved Government.

We are all aware of the pressure that care workers and NHS staff are continuing to work under. Hospitals are at capacity, and three health boards have support from the British Army. NHS Grampian has requested support but is waiting for that request to be passed on by the Scottish Government. The Scottish National Party Government and the health secretary are failing our sick, vulnerable and infirm, and it is only our NHS workers' passion and sheer commitment to public service that are keeping our hospitals and health boards afloat.

There is little in the recovery strategy on how the Government is planning to deal with the recovery in our NHS; there is little detail on waiting times, including cancer treatment waiting times; and there is nothing on A and E waiting times or on how we will tackle the crisis in our Ambulance Service. NHS boards are telling people not to come to hospital unless their problem is life threatening, and the cabinet secretary is asking Scots to think twice about calling an ambulance. What are people supposed to do, and where are they supposed to turn?

The strategy document contains some nice words, but, after reading it, I am left with more questions than answers. An example of that is on page 4, which says that the strategy will

"address the systemic inequalities made worse by Covid."

I have been contacted by a family who has a son at school who is deaf. There are more than 3,800

deaf children in Scotland. Deafness is not classed as a learning disability, yet a significant attainment gap continues to exist for deaf learners. The latest Scottish Government data shows that, last year, 6.5 per cent of deaf learners left school with no qualifications compared with 2.4 per cent of all pupils and that 45 per cent obtained highers compared with 59 per cent of all pupils. The continued use of face masks in our schools disproportionately affects that group of learners and risks increasing the attainment gap that already exists, and I see nothing in the strategy that tells us how that inequality will be addressed. I plead with the cabinet secretary to look at ways of addressing that issue before more deaf children are left behind.

Presiding Officer, please do not laugh, but I nearly fell off my seat when I read about partnership working with local government. The SNP Government's definition of partnership working with local government is telling councils what to do and when to do it. That is not a partnership. When this devolved Government introduced the botched vaccine passport scheme, it was left to local authorities to enforce it—there was no debate, no discussion, just, "Go and do it." That is not partnership working.

Aberdeen City Council has been left with a £6 million hole in its finances due to the devolved Scottish Government delaying payment of money that it asked the council to distribute to businesses during the pandemic, £1 million of which has been due since the First Minister imposed an unjustified local lockdown in August 2020. That is not partnership working. It is an absolute disgrace, and the cabinet secretary should be ashamed, as it impacts directly on the council's ability to deliver key services to its communities.

The cabinet secretary comes here today with some warm words but offers no direct action. He has some ideas but no concrete proposals—nothing that will help my constituents in Aberdeen, businesses in the north-east, the most vulnerable in our schools or our NHS. Every single group has been let down by this devolved SNP Government, despite the UK Government ploughing billions of pounds into its coffers. We need more than warm words from the cabinet secretary to tackle our recovery from the pandemic. We need direct action, and we need it now.

16:37

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in the debate, but I have to say that, once I had read the Tory amendment to the Scottish Government's motion last night, I became quite concerned—not, I hasten to add, because I saw something in it that was uncharacteristically supportive of the

Government. The amendment is predictably negative and lacks understanding of the reality of what it takes to run Scotland's devolved Government effectively during a worldwide pandemic.

As always, the amendment completely fails to recognise the good work that the Scottish Government—and Nicola Sturgeon, in particular—have done in leading us through the pandemic. That should come as no surprise, because, during the election campaign, the Tories made it quite clear that they had no hope or expectation—let alone intention—of trying to win and form a Government. If the Tories' only objective was to run along the sidelines shouting, "Offside!", folk may be forgiven for asking what the point was in standing.

Rather, my concern was for my fellow member of the COVID-19 Recovery Committee, Murdo Fraser, in whose name the Tory amendment appears. It would appear, from the amendment and from Mr Fraser's demands for the roll-out of more fibre optic broadband, that he is confused about which Parliament he is a member of. Although the Scottish Government has already invested more than £600 million in broadband roll-out, telecommunications is a reserved matter. Once again, the Scottish Government is mitigating Westminster neglect in Scottish communities.

I am pleased to report that, when I saw Mr Fraser this morning in the aforementioned COVID-19 Recovery Committee, he was his usual ebullient self—insightful, in his own Murdo way, and very clear of thought. I have concluded, therefore, that there was no need to worry that he was genuinely confused when he lodged the amendment in this Parliament. It is now clear that he is simply using the old, tried-and-tested Tory trick of failing the Scottish people so abysmally that the Scottish Government has to spend hundreds of millions of pounds mitigating that failing only for the Tories to come back and accuse the Scottish Government of not doing enough.

Were I a teacher, I would be issuing Mr Fraser with punishment homework tonight and telling him to write out 100 times: "Telecommunications is a reserved matter, and we, in the Tory party, are grateful to the Scottish Government for spending more than £600 million to mitigate a UK Government failure to provide the properly funded roll-out of broadband. We will stop trying to mislead the Scottish people with these false claims." Perhaps, after Mr Fraser has finished those lines, he will be finished with the hypocrisy of criticising the Scottish Government for sorting out many of the Westminster failings that continue to hurt the people of Scotland.

Murdo Fraser: I gently remind Mr Fairlie that the delivery of broadband services in Scotland is a devolved matter and a responsibility of the Scottish Government.

Jim Fairlie: Telecommunications is a reserved matter.

I then read the amendment in the name of Daniel Johnson. Although I can sympathise, to an extent, with the intent behind it, it again fails to recognise, as Labour amendments often do, the realities and the constraints of a devolved Government with a fixed budget. I urge Labour members to look at their continually depleting seats in this place and their near extinction in the other place and conclude that, if they want to be taken seriously as a political force ever again, shifting their dial on the democratic right of the people of Scotland to decide their constitutional future might just be the start they need to change the fortunes of their failing party. However, let it not be thought for one second that I am trying to give the Labour Party any advice—I will simply say that Len McCluskey agrees with me.

On a more serious note, we have learned some tragic lessons in coming through the pandemic, not least about how incredibly fragile we can be when nature decides to turn on us. That should be at the forefront of the mind of every world leader who attends COP26 over the next fortnight.

The Deputy First Minister has laid out some of the very positive things that are going to come forward under the strategy. Many of my colleagues have also talked about the good things that are coming, and I endorse all of them. However, as we have learned so much about the pandemic, we have also learned bits about ourselves. We have learned that, when the will is there, we can make things happen at pace and without reservation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Fairlie, will you please bring your remarks to a conclusion?

Jim Fairlie: Rough sleeping was eradicated because we had to do it, so we did.

The Scottish Government's Covid recovery strategy is an excellent start that allows the people of Scotland to see a new beginning, and I support it in full.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the winding-up speeches. I call Alex Rowley to wind up for Scottish Labour. You have up to five minutes, Mr Rowley.

16:41

Alex Rowley (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): As Murdo Fraser, Daniel Johnson and a few others have said, "Covid Recovery Strategy: For a fairer future" contains very little with which we

would disagree. The same applies to the Deputy First Minister's motion. We lodged an amendment to add to the motion because we believe that it needs to be firmed up with some commitments.

I heard Jim Fairlie talking about fixed budgets, but the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care said to me at the COVID-19 Recovery Committee a few weeks ago that a large amount of the money that is going into the health service will go into health and social care. As Daniel Johnson rightly said, the budget announcements that were made yesterday, regardless of what we think of them, will mean that significantly more funding will come to Scotland, which can be prioritised for social care.

The baffling thing for me is this: why would we put all those resources into social care but not tackle the fundamental problem—low pay—in the sector? I have just scribbled down that if the majority of carers were men, they would be paid the rate for the job. However, as Engender often points out, the majority of carers in Scotland are women and are paid well below the rate for the job. We lodged our amendment in all seriousness because we believe that unless we tackle poor pay and low pay in social care, the recruitment and retention problems that exist in it will continue.

John Swinney: I acknowledge the line of argument that Mr Rowley is pursuing, but will he acknowledge that the Government has taken steps in recent weeks, with the announcements from the health secretary, to improve the pay of social care workers, and that we are actively involved in discussions on the issue with our local authority partners?

Alex Rowley: The steps that have been taken, although they are welcome, are not enough; we will not tackle the problem unless we do more. We need the Scottish Government to step up and introduce a national pay scale for all social care workers. If we do that, we will be able to start to tackle the recruitment and retention problems.

I am not the only person who says that. Scottish Care, among many others, has singled out low pay in social care as the key issue. Let us think for a moment about the impact that that is having. I know that in Fife the waiting lists of people who have been assessed as needing a care package in the community, but are unable to get one, are becoming longer month by month. If those people do not get support to enable them to live in the community, they will eventually end up knocking on the door of the hospital. As we know, 1,500 individuals are stuck in hospitals right now who have no medical reason to be there, but cannot get out because they cannot get a care package in the community.

As I said, the key issue is that people who work in social care are not being paid the rate for the job. We will therefore be unable to recruit, and the retention issues will get worse. If the Deputy First Minister wants Labour's support for much of what is in the recovery strategy, he will get it, but he and the Government need to look seriously at tackling the problem of low pay and people in social care not being paid the rate for the job. We do not have two or three years to wait for a national care strategy or for a national care service to be set up. The issue must be addressed now.

Thank you for the additional time, Presiding Officer.

That is the plea: we need to address social care and we need to increase pay. It is not just desirable—it is essential that we do so if we are to tackle social care issues.

16:46

Sandesh Gulhane (Glasgow) (Con): I begin my summing up by speaking about some of the excellent speeches that we have heard in the debate. My colleague Murdo Fraser spoke about how much of the strategy is new. I agree with him that almost nothing in it is new; things have just been slightly tweaked. An example is the previous target of building 100,000 homes, which has been tweaked to make it 110,000 homes.

There has been a lot of debate about patients being asked not to attend A and E unless they are suffering from life-threatening conditions. The worry is what happens when people have vague symptoms. If someone has voided themselves after some minor back pain, that is not life-threatening, but it might be cauda equina syndrome, for which treatment is time sensitive. We must be careful in what we say, and we need to be nuanced and give clear alternatives. The answer cannot be self-diagnosis.

John Swinney: I am grateful to Dr Gulhane for giving way, because I could not agree more with the words that he has just said, which were exactly what I said when I intervened on Mr Fraser. There are well-advertised alternatives to appearing at accident and emergency departments that people should pursue. I am arguing not for self-diagnosis, but for people to use the available alternative routes in order to avoid presenting at accident and emergency.

Sandesh Gulhane: I wish that NHS Lothian had said that as well, because that is what I mean about being nuanced in giving out information.

Daniel Johnson spoke about patients who are struggling to get their boosters because of long journeys; I have asked the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care about that previously. I

know that patients, including the most vulnerable people in our society, are waiting two or three hours in the cold and wet to get their boosters, and some arrive to find a closed vaccination centre. We must do better.

John Mason spoke truth about ethnic minorities being disadvantaged by Covid. I question, therefore, why he supports the Covid vaccination certification scheme, which almost creates second-class citizens. People from ethnic minority backgrounds are among the most sceptical about getting the vaccine, so a vaccination passport could further entrench their position and prevent them from engaging in normal Scottish life.

My colleague Douglas Lumsden made an important point about how people being deaf has led to a widening of the attainment gap. That is simply not good enough in our modern Scotland.

Liz Smith spoke eloquently about the importance of a strong economic recovery. A strong economy means that people have money to spend, which allows us to fund vital services including our NHS.

A Covid recovery strategy for Scotland should have at its heart a credible road map that delivers sustained recovery for our NHS. There will be no Covid recovery unless our trusted NHS nurses, paramedics, doctors and support staff are resourced and supported. My colleagues joined the medical profession to deliver a world-class public service, but they are now at breaking point.

According to October's "Understanding Scotland" survey by the Diffley Partnership, the NHS is our country's most trusted institution. Conversely, the Scottish Government is among the least-trusted institutions. That untrusted Government is failing the NHS and failing families across the country. We know that Scotland's health service was in crisis before the Covid pandemic. Now, under the watch of the SNP-Green Government, it is in peril. It is no wonder that, just six months into a new parliamentary session, trust has hit rock bottom.

We have heard many statements, reassurances and promises of money in relation to our NHS, but where are the improvements and the innovations, and what are the timelines? Regardless of our party membership, we would not be doing our job if we did not call that out in the chamber.

A and E waiting times continue to fall short of the Government's targets. Public Health Scotland statistics for the week ending 17 October show that 7,000 Scots were left waiting for more than four hours for A and E treatment, 1,786 waited for eight hours, and 515 patients waited for half a day. This week, Edinburgh's flagship hospital was so overwhelmed that there was not a four-hour wait for treatment, but a 40-hour wait.

Let us consider the Scottish Ambulance Service, whose exhausted crews are under sustained pressure and are working up to 10 hours without breaks.

I am, of course, happy that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care listened to my proposal to support specialised treatment for people who are suffering with long Covid. That is a good start; we can even say that it is a victory for patients. However, more needs to be done on that front, so I look forward to working constructively with the Scottish Government on that.

I urge the Government to grasp the opportunity to be bold and innovative in its thinking, as we recover from the pandemic. We cannot just tinker around the edges in healthcare. Scotland's healthcare needs are growing, and we do not have enough staff. We cannot conjure up staff, no matter how much money the cabinet secretary pledges to that.

We can, of course, get staff from overseas. I understand that the UK Government is keen to relocate the best global talent in science to our shores. Organisations such as the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin provide a fellowship programme for doctors to work in Scotland. I am pleased to say that the First Minister agreed to look into that urgently, after I raised it with her.

However, more doctors is not the only solution. People are the NHS's most valuable asset in terms of cost and skills, so the Government should be optimising our use of that valuable resource by changing our systems so that highly qualified doctors and nurses are not burdened by tasks that can be carried out by other means. That means redesigning our clinical pathways and deciding how we evaluate and deploy medical technology.

I see little in the way of details on how more patients will move through primary care. I have already proposed in the chamber that the Government focus on recruiting anaesthetists, because the shortage is causing a bottleneck. I offer another solution that many general practitioners will welcome: faster internet. Accessing patient data can be time consuming, and we simply do not have time to spare. GP surgeries should have ultrafast broadband—200 megabits per second should be standard.

In conclusion, it is clear that we have a long way to go in our recovery. We need clear plans for our NHS, our schools and our economy. We need to increase our NHS workforce with a clear plan, we need to act now to future proof our NHS infrastructure, and we need to ensure that patients get the help that they deserve.

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests; I am a practising doctor.

16:53

The Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights (Patrick Harvie): It is still a relatively new experience for me to end such a debate with all my notes about members' speeches that I would like to respond to as well as a speech that has been written for me. I will not have time for both—I will have to let someone down. I give my apologies to members whom I do not mention and to the officials if I do not use all the words that they have provided for me.

Obviously, it is always important at any time, and more so as we face recovery from a historic pandemic, that Opposition MSPs—in fact, all MSPs—urge the Government to go further and faster and to be bolder. That is absolutely as it should be. I was really heartened by the number of speeches that showed that, although we may have our differences, many members do not want us to be distracted by those differences and do not want them to prevent us from working together where we can, being bold and taking a transformational approach to the agenda.

On Mr Rowley's closing speech for Labour in particular, I hope and believe that every member, regardless of their political party, wants us to go further and faster on the issues that he mentioned, including properly valuing the historically undervalued care work in our society that is so critical to us. He welcomes the work that has been done on that and I welcome the passion that he and other colleagues bring to the topic. That work is best advanced by making credible, workable and costed proposals for achieving it, and I hope that the Labour Party will do that rather than making an uncosted £1.8 billion proposal in an amendment in a debate. However, we will be able to do work on the matter if we choose to work together.

Daniel Johnson: Does Mr Harvie accept that the proposal has been costed by his civil servants? I have been in a meeting where they took me through the numbers. Will he support the amendment? I am not asking him to be as ambitious as to support implementing £15 an hour for care workers but to support a plan for implementing it. Will he vote for it?

Patrick Harvie: Mr Johnson knows that when we say "costed" we mean where the money is coming from, not just where it is going. We will aim to work together. We have a budget and a national care service bill ahead of us and those are places where we will continue to make progress.

I emphasise the scale of opportunity that there is to make change, whether on financial security for low-income households or through the actions that the Government is taking on public transport

costs, which several members mentioned, school meals, school uniforms, rent and housing affordability. Christine Grahame mentioned some of the work that has been done throughout the Parliament's existence on taking a universalist approach on issues such as social care and higher education. Those are all measures that will help to address affordability and financial security, but there is much more that we need to do.

Christine Grahame went on to challenge us all. In questioning what we mean by wellbeing, she challenged us all to be ambitious, take the approach that the post-war generation took and take the opportunity to move beyond what she described as today's unsustainable, consumerist, growth-for-growth's-sake economy. That is the scale of ambition that we should have and should capture as we seek to build a wellbeing economy.

Pam Duncan-Glancy, in an excellent speech, talked about harnessing the innovation that has been necessary due to Covid and described us as having an unprecedented moment of opportunity. I agree and hope that we can all seek to capture that spirit while acknowledging our other differences on many issues.

Pam Duncan-Glancy's description of marginalisation and inequality as a form of lockdown was important. It recognises the reality that the freedoms that were restricted as a result of Covid were not equally shared in the first place. If we want to overcome that, we need to do what the Government wants to do as its second core objective of Covid recovery, which is to make the wellbeing of children and young people the priority.

A number of members mentioned fair work and good green jobs. There will be a great deal more work to do on that. As members know, the Covid recovery strategy is not a stand-alone document. It will connect with many others, including the national strategy for economic transformation.

I reassure my colleague Ross Greer that we do not seek a return to the old normal. He is right to question whether recovery is always the right word. Perhaps it is not. The national strategy for economic transformation will be focused on just that: transformation. He is right that the review of the national performance framework is another opportunity to address that.

Aspects of that work will, I hope, cut across the political spectrum. For example, Liz Smith was right to raise issues in relation to the retail and hospitality sectors. A retail strategy is coming and is due quite soon, and I hope that members across the spectrum will engage with that. However, we must recognise that retail and hospitality have suffered from deep, long-standing problems of poverty wages, insecure incomes and low rates of

unionisation. Those are the conditions that lead people to have precarious lives, just as precarious housing does. The actions that the Government wants to take on tenants' rights, and the rented sector strategy that will be coming soon, will aim to address precarious living.

I thank members who have engaged with the debate in an attempt to capture the shared moment of opportunity, challenging the Government to go further and faster and be bolder. Members should keep doing that. I do not have to urge them; I know that all members will. However, the Covid recovery strategy sets out a clear, ambitious vision for Scotland's recovery from the pandemic. We will focus on the people who have been affected most over the past 18 or so months, increasing financial security for low-income households, enhancing the wellbeing of children and young people and creating good, green jobs and fair work.

I hope that all members across the spectrum share those three goals and want to help the Government to go further and faster. Central to the recovery from the pandemic is our Government's focus on achieving those three goals. That is the future that Scotland needs and deserves, and I believe that, together, we can and will ensure that Scotland can achieve it.

Points of Order

17:00

Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. On 5 October we had a members' business debate on the big noise programme in Wester Hailes. Unfortunately, the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, who was meant to be responding to the debate, did not turn up until the last speaker was speaking. He was then encouraged by the Deputy Presiding Officer to watch the debate back and to write to all members who took part regarding the issues raised in their speeches. I have received nothing.

Standing order 7.3.1 states:

"Members shall at all times conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner and shall respect the authority of the Presiding Officer."

I ask first whether, through ignoring the advice of the Deputy Presiding Officer to write to members, Mr Robertson has breached that standing order. Secondly, what is your ruling on the disrespect shown by the cabinet secretary to members who wished to debate the issues properly but could not do so, due to the lack of his attendance?

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): I thank the member for his point of order. Regarding the fact that the cabinet secretary has not written to Mr Lumsden, I am sure that he will now be made aware that the member has not yet received a response, and I would hope that a response will now follow. I would certainly have hoped that all members who were taking part in that debate would have received such a response.

On the second point, the Presiding Officer who was in the chair at the time dealt with the issue and received an apology from the cabinet secretary. The cabinet secretary made an apology in person at that time to all members who were in the chamber. He has subsequently also written to me and apologised for his error, which is certainly one that I would not want to see repeated. The member is absolutely right: at all times, all members of the Parliament must treat one another with the greatest courtesy and respect.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I wish to raise a point of order about the First Minister's response to my question about NHS Inform's national vaccination booking system. I apologise to you for the short notice of this point of order.

The First Minister told the Parliament that the system was fixed. My constituent's family were delighted and they phoned NHS Inform this

afternoon, but the system is still broken. The operator told them not to call back until Sunday, but they did not know whether it would be fixed even by then. The First Minister may want to correct the record to avoid giving misleading information to the Parliament, but can I ask this: can somebody in the Government tell us when the system will actually be fixed?

The Presiding Officer: I thank Ms Baillie for her point of order. She will know, however, that the content of members' contributions is not a matter for the chair, although a mechanism exists by which members can correct any inaccurate information that has been shared in the chamber.

I thought that I heard another point of order, but I did not.

Business Motion

17:04

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S6M-01847, in the name of George Adam, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a change to next week's business.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Tuesday 2 November 2021—

delete

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

and insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: COVID-19 Update—[George Adam]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:04

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S6M-01848, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel and Operator Liability) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/322) be approved.—[George Adam]

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

Decision Time

17:05

The Presiding Officer (Alison Johnstone): There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S6M-01803.2, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01803, in the name of John Swinney, on the Covid recovery strategy, 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.

17:05

Meeting suspended.

17:11

On resuming—

The Presiding Officer: We come to the division on Murdo Fraser's amendment S6M-01803.2. 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)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (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)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (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)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (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)
 Gray, Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thomson, Michelle (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Tweed, Evelyn (Stirling) (SNP)
 Whitham, Elena (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (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-01803.2, in the name of Murdo Fraser, is: For 31, Against 65, Abstentions 18.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S6M-01803.1, in the name of Daniel Johnson, which seeks to amend motion S6M-01803, in the name of John Swinney, on the Covid recovery strategy, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Michael (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mochan, Carol (South Scotland) (Lab)
 O'Kane, Paul (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Rowley, Alex (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Villalba, Mercedes (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Whitfield, Martin (South Scotland) (Lab)

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)
 Burgess, Ariane (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Callaghan, Stephanie (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Maggie (North East Scotland) (Green)
 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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (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)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 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, Gillian (Central Scotland) (Green)
 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)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McLennan, Paul (East Lothian) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNair, Marie (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Minto, Jenni (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Nicoll, Audrey (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Regan, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Roddick, Emma (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Slater, Lorna (Lothian) (Green)
 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)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (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

Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on amendment S6M-01803.1, in the name of Daniel Johnson, is: For 18, Against 93, Abstentions 4.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S6M-01803, in the name of John Swinney, on the Covid recovery strategy, 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)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 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)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (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)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)

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)
 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)
 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)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Collette (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kaukab (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 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)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (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)
 Gulhane, Sandesh (Glasgow) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Hoy, Craig (South Scotland) (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)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division on motion S6M-01803, in the name of John Swinney, on the Covid recovery strategy, is: For 85, Against 28, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Covid Recovery Strategy, published on 5 October 2021, which sets out the Scottish Government's ambitious vision for a green recovery and details the actions that will be taken in partnership with local government, business organisations, the third sector and others across Scotland to address systemic inequalities made worse during the pandemic, make progress towards a wellbeing economy, and accelerate inclusive person-centred public services by focusing on improving financial security for low-income households, supporting the wellbeing of children and young people, and creating good, green jobs and fair work.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S6M-01848, in the name of George Adam, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (International Travel and Operator Liability) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (SSI 2021/322) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Meeting closed at 17:19.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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